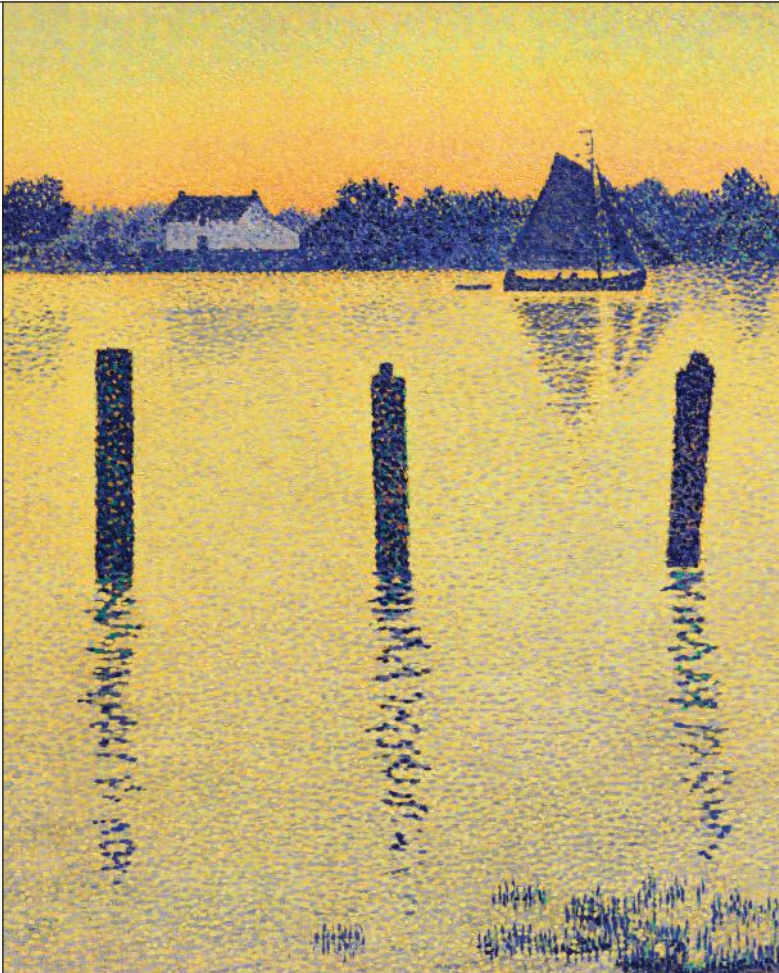


The Frontiers of Theory

The Paul de Man Notebooks

Paul de Man

Edited by Martin McQuillan



The Paul de Man Notebooks

The Frontiers of Theory

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The Paul de Man Notebooks

Edited by Martin McQuillan

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Series Editor's Preface

Since its inception Theory has been concerned with its own limits, ends and after-life. It would be an illusion to imagine that the academy is no longer resistant to Theory but a significant consensus has been established and it can be said that Theory has now entered the mainstream of the humanities. Reaction against Theory is now a minority view and new generations of scholars have grown up with Theory. This leaves so-called Theory in an interesting position which its own procedures of auto-critique need to consider: what is the nature of this mainstream Theory and what is the relation of Theory to philosophy and the other disciplines which inform it? What is the history of its construction and what processes of amnesia and the repression of difference have taken place to establish this thing called Theory? Is Theory still the site of a more-than-critical affirmation of a negotiation with thought, which thinks thought's own limits?

'Theory' is a name that traps by an aberrant nominal effect the transformative critique which seeks to reinscribe the conditions of thought in an inaugural founding gesture that is without ground or precedent: as a 'name', a word and a concept, Theory arrests or misprisons such thinking. To imagine the frontiers of Theory is not to dismiss or to abandon Theory (on the contrary one must always insist on the it-is-necessary of Theory even if one has given up belief in theories of all kinds). Rather, this series is concerned with the presentation of work which challenges complacency and continues the transformative work of critical thinking. It seeks to offer the very best of contemporary theoretical practice in the humanities, work which continues to push ever further the frontiers of what is accepted, including the name of Theory. In particular, it is interested in that work which involves the necessary endeavour of crossing disciplinary frontiers without dissolving the specificity of disciplines. Published by Edinburgh University Press, in the city of Enlightenment, this series promotes a certain closeness to that spirit: the continued exercise of critical thought

as an attitude of inquiry which counters modes of closed or conservative opinion. In this respect the series aims to make thinking think at the frontiers of theory.

Martin McQuillan

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The seminar notes from 1982 on ‘Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Hegel’ (Chapter 26) were compiled by Roger Blood, Cathy Caruth and Suzanne Roos and are reproduced with their permission.

All other texts included in this volume are copyright Patsy de Man. I am grateful to her for permission to reproduce them. The texts are reproduced courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries. Paul de Man papers, MS-C004.

A number of them first appeared in journal form: ‘On Reading Rousseau’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 2 (1977), pp. 1–18; ‘Introduction’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 18(4) (winter 1979) pp. 495–9; ‘Hommage à Georges Poulet’, *MLN*, 97(5) (December 1982) pp. vii–viii; ‘A Letter from Paul de Man’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8(3) (spring 1982), pp. 509–13; ‘Reply to Raymond Geuss’, *Critical Inquiry*, 10(2) (December 1983), pp. 383–90; ‘Interview with Robert Moynihan’, *Yale Review*, 75(4) (summer 1984), pp. 576–602; and Martin Heidegger, ‘Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry’, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, 10(1–2) (1959), pp. 79–94. ‘Introduction to *Madame Bovary*’ first appeared in the Norton Critical Edition of Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (New York: Norton, 1965). I am grateful to the editors and the presses for permission to reprint.

I would like to thank Patsy de Man for her continued support and friendship. I would also like to thank the staff of the Department of Special Collections and Archives at the University of California, Irvine Libraries, past and present, for all their kindness and unwavering assistance: Michelle Light, Jackie Dooley, Stephen MacLeod, Andrew Jones, Joanna Lamb and Alix Norton. For their direct and indirect help in assembling this volume I would like to thank: J. Hillis Miller, Andrzej Warminski, Ellen Burt,

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My thanks also to the editorial staff of Edinburgh University Press for their unfaltering professionalism and their on-going commitment to the frontiers of theory, especially Jackie Jones, Carol Macdonald, Rebecca MacKenzie, James Dale, Ralph Footring and Jenny Daly.

This book is dedicated to Oscar and Felix, my lovely boys.

Introduction

'The Unimaginable Touch of Time': The Public and Private in the Notebooks of Paul de Man

Martin McQuillan

I. Archive Labour

Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

(William Wordsworth, 'Mutability')

The Paul de Man papers are held in the Critical Theory Archive, on the fifth floor of the Langdon Library, in the Department of Special Collections and Archives at the University of California Irvine (UCI). The papers cover a wide range of material, including texts from de Man's time as a graduate student at Harvard in the late 1950s, manuscripts of his published writing, manuscripts of essays that have since his death formed the content for published books edited by others, correspondence, and files related to his many years as a professor and teacher of comparative literature. Included in these files is a run of notebooks from 1963 to 1983 related to de Man's doctoral seminar in each of those years, from a seminar on Yeats given in Zurich in the June and July of 1963 to de Man's last course, given in 1983, entitled 'Theory of Rhetoric in the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries'. There are notebooks on Romanticism, Rousseau, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Rilke, Stefan George, the eighteenth-century novel, Keats, Kleist, André Gide, Marcel Proust and Henry James, Derrida, Nietzsche, Hegel, Descartes, Pascal, Kant and Schiller. They are an index of his teaching career from his time as Professor (Ordinarius) at Zurich and Associate Professor at Cornell to his years as Sterling Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Yale. The notebooks move between

three languages and are often little more than elliptical hieroglyphs, jottings that made sense to de Man as notes in preparation for teaching, with no obligation to provide a record of an academic career for future readers. Some are more fully developed, as in the case of the notebook on Walter Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator', a section of which is reproduced in the volume *Theory and the Disappearing Future: On de Man, on Benjamin* co-authored by Claire Colebrook, Tom Cohen and J. Hillis Miller.¹ This notebook, although metonymically representative of the collection, is in fact not contained within the archive itself, de Man having given the book to Miller shortly before his death and Miller having retained it ever since. The exemplary work of that volume is a demonstration of the ongoing relevance of de Man's writing for the contemporary theoretical scene, which has a deep and abiding debt to de Man, just as it almost systematically mischaracterises de Man's writing. The volume also demonstrates a scrupulous scholarship with respect to the reproduction, transcription and reading of its object, the notebook on Benjamin. It also points to the issue of what Derrida has taught us to call 'archive fever'.²

The purpose of the Colebrook, Cohen and Miller collection is not to catalogue the remains of a famous literary theorist. Rather, it is an exercise in synchronic reading in which its authors ask, why should one read de Man today? It does not attempt to do this by reconstructing the history that ties de Man and his writing to our present moment and its theoretical idols, but by recovering from de Man's writing the most pertinent, economic concentration of ideas that presents itself as an inevitability to the here and now. They find in the notebook on Benjamin an argument concerning the inhuman that informs a wider consideration of global climate change and the Anthropocene. In this sense, the authors of *Theory and the Disappearing Future* offer a certain reading of a certain de Man as an alternative offer of another deconstruction that is not straight forwardly concerned with the archiving and translating of the legacy of Derrida. This is a deconstruction that draws on the resources of the tradition of deconstructive thought (in its broadest possible sense, the book is as much 'on Benjamin' as it is 'on de Man') in order to address the horizon of a new materiality, for which this tradition will as yet have no adequate vocabulary. The volume does not undertake the painstaking labour of transcribing a section of de Man's notebook for the purposes of hagiography. Rather, it is in the mobilisation of the critical resources of close reading, translation and archival practice, all of which

1. Claire Colebrook, Tom Cohen and J. Hillis Miller, *Theory and the Disappearing Future: On de Man, on Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 2012).

2. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).

come from a training in the intellectual formation that we associate with the deconstructive tradition, that a future for thought emerges as a response to the wholly other that presents itself today in the form of climate change.

The authors of *Theory and the Disappearing Future* are generous enough to acknowledge that this approach to de Man in part coalesced around the work under taken by Erin Obodiac and myself in our response to the transcription and reproduction of de Man's unpublished monograph on Rousseau, *Textual Allegories*.³ Here we attempted to read de Man's 1973 manuscript in such a way as to make an intervention in current debates around materiality and political theology.⁴ In each case, the manuscript on Rousseau and the notebook on Benjamin, deconstructive scholarship uses the resources of a comparativist and philosophical training, comfortable with translation and the archive, to make an opening for critical reading today in a landscape that, as Derrida predicted, is quickly exercising a form of mass amnesia over deconstruction, disavowing that which makes possible the entire field. A certain materialism, hegemonic today but in some ways narcissistically minimal in its differences from an alternative tradition arising from the same corridors in the rue d'Ulm, would dismiss deconstructive thought and training as a mere textualism, while developing an expanded and unrecognised textualism of its own. However, what for some is a form of textual myopia is in fact the resources for a singular scholarly adventure which is justly wary of too quickly assuming an unmediated or unproblematic relation between intellectual labour and material consequence. Even if it were desirable to be 'beyond all that', the 'that' of the text of de Man and Derrida (the deconstruction of logocentrism) is both a lesson that cannot be gone around easily and in fact is a condition that it is in principle not possible to escape. In this sense, the too-easy gesture of 'beyond all that' fails to recognise the enormous problem of the 'beyond' and is doomed to play out all of the previous work of the 'that' without recognising *that* is what it is doing. The task of readers of de Man today, or at least those who would seek to recover de Man's archive (not just the unpublished material held in the Langdon Library at UCI but the entire switchboard of references, readings, switchbacks and thinking that runs through de Man's writing), is to orient

3. The full transcription and original manuscript of de Man's 1973 work (which he later recast as the second half of *Allegories of Reading*) is available online through the University of California. See <http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/1091>.

4. See Martin McQuillan (ed.), *The Political Archive of Paul de Man: Property, Sovereignty, and the Theotropic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). See also my edition of de Man's *The Post-Romantic Predicament* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), which seeks to position de Man's reading of Mallarmé from his doctoral work at Harvard alongside contemporary readings of the poet by Badiou, Rancière and Meillassoux.

this salvage work towards the concerns of a present readership who will provide the reading of de Man with a future. This work should be thought of as a contribution to the present theoretical scene rather than an alternative to it, but equally a reminder that the resources of a deconstructive training are required more than ever if the collective academic 'we' of the critical humanities is to mount a serious response to the epoch of new materialities and new economies that confront us.

Such reading, creative and constructive reading if you will, cannot be archival for its own sake. Fascinating and complex as the questions of the archive are, deconstruction cannot solely be in the business of boxing and numbering its relics. This is not, for one second, to dismiss necessary scholarship or much-needed translation projects, without which the field would have no resource for a future. Rather, it is to insist on the primary lesson of deconstruction, which is that deconstruction itself is more than a form of disciplinary scholarship. Deconstruction is not Derrida Studies, nor de Man Studies for that matter, and the archival interests of deconstruction are not the same as the archival interests of, say, English Literature or Philosophy. The recovery of a theoretical or philosophical text from the boxes of an archive, if it is to be meaningful for a future anterior to its own heroic and excessive scholarly immolation, ought to be directed towards some purpose beyond a contribution to disciplinary knowledge. This purposefulness may not be known in advance of the archival recovery but will emerge in the process of reading that constitutes the work of reclamation. This purpose can be neither a form of utility nor a post hoc justification of labour; rather, it is an orientation of the recovered text towards a future as part of *the act of recovery as critical reading*.

Here we might note that archival work is always about the future, never the past. The public presentation of scholarly work from an archive changes the future, not the past, given equally that how we position ourselves with respect to the future depends entirely upon our attitude to the archival past. However, simply to offer a recovered text as an historical example of 'how we used to live' would be of limited, museological value to the theorist. The recovered text, if it is to have a future, must become a text of the present, as if it had always been intended as a contribution to the here and now, through a subterranean teleopoesis. The archivist in this sense is not so much the midwife of the text as its co-author, the one who reinscribes it into the contemporary. This is what happens in the case of the presentation of the de Man notebook on Benjamin: this is Colebrook, Cohen and Miller's book about climate change as much as it is de Man's 'book' on Benjamin or Benjamin's text on translation. This is also what happened to great effect in the recovery by adventurous scholars such as Peter Hallward of a certain French materialism that had long (and for good reason) sat on the bookshelves of

Parisian studies.⁵ That recovered and increasingly mycological tradition is every bit as 'old' as the central texts of deconstruction, yet it successfully presents itself as a vital resource for thinking today. Deconstruction, if there is such a thing, is not so self-sustaining that it cannot learn a lesson from the fate of academic Marxism.

There is a possible project and projection of transcription and translation that would recover for a public audience the run of de Man's teaching notebooks from 1963 to 1983. The enduring power of the Yale School legacy is closely tied to its pedagogical practice, which differentiated it from other intellectual offerings in the United States at the time and afforded it considerable institutional leverage in the otherwise conservative heart of American academia.⁶ For the historian of ideas or the scholar of historical pedagogy, this might well be an essential project. However, it is not the project presented here. The notebooks in the UCI archive are available for everyone with an interest in their contents to consult. They may one day be available to read in their original form online. Despite what Benjamin says about the aura of the work of art, it may not always be necessary to travel to the source in order to appreciate and benefit from the contents of an archive. Exciting and pleasurable as it might be, one does not have to visit the Bodleian in Oxford to consult the manuscript Ashmole 304 in order to understand what Derrida has to say about the image of Socrates and Plato in *La Carte Postale*.⁷ The temptation for the archival scholar of literary theory is to imagine that one must do precisely this and correspondingly to think that everything held in the archive is of equal value and should all be made immediately accessible to a wider audience. This is not necessarily the case, although it can be.⁸

Archives take their ipseity precisely from their open-closed nature. It is by pursuing an open-ended thread through the contingent connections of material in preserved boxes that archival work happens: archive-based scholars must discover the archive for themselves, every reading of the entirety of the archive being unique to each individual scholar who experiences it. One might say, in this sense, that archival work is excessively

5. For example see Peter Hallward (ed.), *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2004).

6. See for example Marc Redfield (ed.), *Legacies of Paul de Man*, a volume in the online Romantic Circles Praxis Series (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/deman/index.html>).

7. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). Images from Ashmole 304, 'The Prognostics of King Socrates', can be found at <http://bodley30.bodleyn.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/all/what/MS.%20Ashmole%20304?os=0&pgs=50>.

8. For example, consider the urgency and comprehensiveness that informed the publication of de Man's recovered wartime journalism: Paul de Man, *Wartime Journalism, 1939-1943*, eds Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz and Thomas Keenan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

autobiographical. It is not clear that a fully digitised, online archive would any longer merit the proper name of what we have up till now called an 'archive', the relation between the inside and the outside of the archival having been so thoroughly overturned in such circumstances. Paths would still have to be made through the online material but the search and reproduction principles would be quite different: massively accelerated in a form of 'super reading'. The complete open-access archive would allow something that no material archive can ever facilitate, the possibility of access to every single item within the archive at the same time (this would normally be restricted under physical library conditions to one item at a time). However, open access leads to the counter-problem, that when one is looking at everything one is looking at nothing, because it is impossible to find anything, that is, to produce the contiguity of contingency upon which archival work depends. In fact, unrestricted open access to massive data-sets necessarily invokes a secondary principle of its own, supplementary 'data mining', in which material is edited or summarised for secondary consumption. In other words, it removes the archiving principle to another place, reinscribing it elsewhere as a form of online curatorship, which replaces one partial version of the archive for the complete records, which, despite their new openness, would importantly remain in their library boxes according to an open-closed predicate. Digital technology may make a new archival practice possible but this, ironically, may not be as open as the traditional form taken by historical archives even as it repeats and displaces the gestures of those archives. This is not to wallow in nostalgia for print archives; rather, it is to highlight the now complex relationship between, on the one hand, 'public' or 'sanctioned' published monographs and essays and, on the other, the drafts and folios of a private archive made publicly available through scholarly permission or digital openness. The de Man papers at UCI are a singular case study in understanding this problem, having been 'mined' by consecutive scholars to extend the de Man oeuvre into successive monographs and digital platforms over the course of thirty years, extending the very archive they present.

To this end, while one can make a judgement about the possible beneficial outcomes of transcribing a section of a late notebook on Benjamin, it is less certain what the value of a mass transcription of the entire run of teaching notebooks from 1963 to 1983 would be. Better to know that the notebooks are there in the Langdon library and available to consult as required, as the need emerges, say, to understand comparativist pedagogy at Yale or de Man's notes on Pascal. I include in the Appendix to this book a list of the teaching notebooks held at UCI.

This present volume, then, takes the seminar notebooks as metonymic of wider archival schema. On the one hand, it seeks to present previously unpublished and uncollected material by de Man and so to be another contribution

to the de Manian corpus. On the other hand, it offers a view of the complex textuality of de Man, going beyond the presentation of unknown essays and fragments to provide an insight into the complexity of de Man's intellectual practices as a translator and as a teacher. The institutional legacy and stakes of de Man are closely tied to his role as a pedagogue and as a trainer of graduate students within the North American university system. The book also includes material on what today we might call 'de Man the researcher', which offers evidence of a long-formulated intellectual project that runs from his doctoral work to the essays now published as *Aesthetic Ideology*. De Man, like many scholars, was given to creating multiple blueprints for how his writing should be compiled and presented in monograph form. His archival notes suggest that the corpus we recognise today as an official version of de Man might well have been otherwise. However, throughout the different patterns of assemblage it is possible to discern a consistent intellectual project, which is an interrogation of language and ideology in Romantic and Modernist thought. The present book, then, is a representative selection from the Paul de Man papers as a whole, recognising that all the major manuscripts, we know of, have now been made available elsewhere.

What, then, would be the *purpose* of this archival labour, the monstrous future horizon towards which the writing of Paul de Man might be directed? Is there an *end* to it other than insulating deconstruction and de Manian thought in particular against what Wordsworth called the mutability of 'the unimaginable touch of Time'? (This was a title de Man proposed for an unrealised collection of his essays on Romanticism.) The Paul de Man papers and their editing into published volumes present us with a problem of the public and private, which is a decisive index in de Man's most canonical and fully elaborated writing and one which, as we shall see, ties de Man's writing in the most compelling way to our present political scene and to the problems of continuing scholarship in the humanities today.

II. On Public Happiness

It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money and it's time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB – general wellbeing. (David Cameron⁹)

The question of the public and private becomes an unavoidable issue for de Man as it emerges from his discussion of the 'Profession de Foi' in *Allegories of Reading*.¹⁰ It begins with the identification of a conceptual

9. Speech given at the Google Zeitgeist Europe conference, reported in the *Observer*, Sunday 14 November 2010.

10. I have touched on the question of the public and private before, in the promise of a fuller reading, in my 'Broken Promises: Paul de Man and Watergate', in *The Political*

order associated with a belief in natural religion: ‘inwardness, innateness [*innéité*], voice, natural language, conscience, consciousness, selfhood’ (AR 222). The transcendental valorisation of such concepts, says de Man, founds an affirmation of belief in the religious. Lindsay Waters identifies ‘inwardness’ as an important term for the pre-Harvard de Man.¹¹ For this earlier de Man, interiority is a positive value that safeguards specific writers from a simplistic faith in an immediate relation between their epistemological labour and ‘action’. For the de Man of the 1970s, it is a term to be treated with suspicion, as a rhetorical figure of onto-theology. De Man finds in the ‘Profession’ and across the wider text of Rousseau a systematic ordering of the tropes of interiority and exteriority around a division between public and private wellbeing and between political and theological orders. This, significantly for de Man, coalesces around the ‘question of the relationship between the general will and the particular violation, between public and private morality’ (AR 225). This ordering, which can also be tracked back in *Allegories* to the Clarens section of the *Julie*, plays itself out across the remaining three chapters of de Man’s book, ending in the singular case of Rousseau’s public confession of his private vice.

In the account of the ‘Profession’, the division between the private and the public is disrupted by the introduction of the question of judgement, whereby ‘inner assent’ is seen to be ‘dependent on a prior act of judgment which it does not control’ (AR 228). Judgement in de Man’s Rousseau is ‘the deconstruction of sensation, a model that divides the world into a binary system of oppositions organized along an inside/outside axis and then proceeds to exchange the properties on both sides of this axis on the basis of analogies and potential identities’ (AR 230). Judgement complicates and overturns the division created by the presentation of sensation between what I feel, inside me, and its cause or object, which is outside me, rendering this *hors-de-moi* neither a coherent nor an organising principle for itself or for me. Judgement is, then, a linguistic predicament and so is, in de Man’s words, ‘a structure of relationships capable of error’ (AR 234). As such, judgement here consists of the same figural structures that ‘can only be put in question by means of the language that produced them’ (AR 234). It is thus an exemplary instance of the rhetorical deconstruction that de Man develops

Archive of Paul de Man. Throughout this present account, we should be mindful of the earlier version of de Man’s reading of the ‘Profession’. However, citation here is to the version that appears in Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). Hereafter this volume is referred to in the text as AR.

11. See Waters’ reading of Paul de Man, ‘The Inward Generation’ [1955], in *Critical Writings 1953–1978*, ed. Lindsay Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989). De Man’s use is surely a reference to Hölderlin’s ‘Innigkeit’.

in *Allegories* and one that extends the idea of language, and everything that depends upon it in the de Manian schema, beyond verbal utterances into the realm of perception as a mode of inaugural critical reading.

Having established the 'epistemological ambivalence of judgment' (AR 236) de Man folds this back onto Rousseau's timid God of the 'Profession', which rejects unmediated revelation, to identify the idea of God with the attributes of human judgement, the former (the idea) being derived from the latter (the judgement) and the latter the reciprocal metaphor of the former, producing 'bewildering patterns of valorisation' (AR 240) and ambivalence around the imposition, reversal, dissolution and retotalisation of an inside/outside axis. For example, 'theistic orthodoxy always associated the structures of inwardness and exteriority with the values of good and evil by linking inside with good and outside with evil' (AR 241). The positive valorisation of inwardness comes from the tradition of pietism, in which de Man places the vicar of Savoyard's discourse. However, inwardness as the metaphor of virtue and vice versa cannot hold up when put into play in the 'Profession', with inwardness being equally associated with vile passions and self-centred senses, while the study of eternal truths and love of justice are recognised as principles of Jacobin public virtue. This is not simply a chiasmatic reversal, says de Man: 'the system is not symmetrical, since it postulated, from the start, the non-identity of inside and outside, the "supplementarity" of one with regard to the other' (AR 242). The ambiguous valorisation of the inner world of consciousness shifts from being the site of a delineation between good and evil to engendering a space of 'ethical indecisiveness' (AR 243) in which it is not possible to identify rigorously acts of conscience as judgements imposed from outside or feelings arising from inside oneself.

However, in the face of the inability to ground immanent judgement and value, says de Man, the possibility of recourse to a transcendental authority to stabilise the ambivalence has already been foreclosed by the identification of God with the mind of man as part of the same metaphorical exchange. Thus unable to found itself adequately as its own truth claim, de Man comments that 'nothing therefore prevents the deconstructive labour that brought us to this point from starting all over again', as the unreadability of the inner/outer, private/public, good/evil axis initiates a further metaphorical chain around the pleasure/pain polarity that runs alongside these other oppositions like stabilisers on a child's push-bike, giving the appearance of keeping the whole schema on track while effectively deployed to prevent the entire enterprise from falling over: this despite the inability of this new opposition to support itself on its own terms without the help of that which it supplements. De Man concludes that rather than declarative pronouncements on private good and public evil, we are left with only figures of 'exhortative performatives that require the passage from sheer enunciation to action' (AR 245), asking us to

choose while annulling the foundations of any choice. This allows us neither the comfort of an assurance of God nor an exit from belief itself, ‘which must include all possible forms of idolatry and ideology’ (AR 245). Not only is all ideology religious in structure, as Marx posits, but it is also rhetorical and, on a strong reading of de Man, is dependent upon the binary axis sustained by the conceptual division between public and private.

Now, having set up this model of rhetorical disarticulation and having proposed a division between the theological and the political as an unsustainable polarisation of the private and public in the ‘Profession’, de Man extends his reading of Rousseau into ‘The Social Contract’, explicitly in similar terms. He proposes that ‘nature’ in Rousseau is endlessly deconstructed by other natures in a chain of ambiguous valorisations in a process of disarticulation redoubled by persistent and fallacious retotalisation. Thus, ‘in the opposition between private and public, or [the] particular and general [will], the first term is the “natural” counterpart of the second, provided one reads “natural” as has just been suggested’ (AR 249). Thus we might assume that, according to the rhetorical principles set out by de Man, the private will be constantly opened and redoubled by the public and vice versa without possibility of stabilisation or termination. He first of all sees this played out in the short text ‘Du Bonheur public’, which ‘considers the possibility of a readable semiology of private happiness that would be based on analogies between inside feelings and their outside manifestations only in order to rule it out of hand’ (AR 250). There can be no easy metaphorical totalisation, says de Man reading Rousseau, from personal wellbeing to public good, based on an analogical resemblance between the two. It is not possible to deduce the wellbeing of the state from the happiness of particular citizens, when that happiness is taken as the natural counterpart of state wellbeing by the way of the analogy that, say, the family or the household is equivalent to the state. The alert reader will quickly begin to discern the significance of de Man’s figural strategy for an understanding of present European governments’ rhetorical justification of austerity policies on the grounds of an analogy between the state, or union of states, and family budgets and the substitution of an index of national wellbeing for measures of economic growth. Of course, a more general argument also holds for a certain neoliberalism that takes for granted that private happiness defined through the personal accumulation of wealth is the natural counterpart to the health of the nation state.

This argument quickly falls out in de Man’s reading of ‘Du Bonheur public’, with the model that reconciles the flourishing state with happy families squaring ‘moral virtue with economic wealth and makes property innocent by making it collective’ (AR 251). Private property quickly doubles as analogous to the proprietorial rights of the state; ‘the language shifts from

the qualitative and unfathomable “will to happiness” to an outspoken will to power quantified in terms of economic and military interests’ (AR 254). This logical flow, for de Man, works by the pursuit of a ‘false problem’, in which the state is thought of as equivalent to the family when in fact the wellbeing of the state can be considered only in relation to other states. Masking this necessary equivalence allows the proprietorial state to remain estranged from other states, defining their relation to all other states as contingent and in fact defining its statehood precisely on this independence from other similar entities. The state founds itself as political not on the basis of a similarity to other comparable entities but through a metaphorical shift in which this collective similarity is disavowed in a non-constitutive relationship based on autonomy from all others. The state that has to rely on other states is not really a state at all; the state that cannot provide for the happiness of its citizens over the interests of other states is no state at all; and so on. Thus, says de Man, ‘the fiction of a natural “state” results from the deconstruction of metaphorical patterns based on binary models of private and public, inside and outside, religion and politics, which will run and run as long as the natural state is equated with the state of nature. Of course, the metaphorical reversal works both ways, in which the assumed health of the state does not translate into the wellbeing of all citizens. This form of state-ism would be an equally aberrant totality.’¹²

Like the ‘Profession’, ‘Du Bonheur public’ will in turn reaffirm the metaphorical model of public and private whose rhetorical disarticulation was the reason for its own elaboration. ‘The Social Contract’ seems to solve this unresolvable problem by attaching stabilisers of its own to the wobbly push-bike of public happiness by introducing another naturalisation in order to prop up the unsteady figurality of the public/private binary. Here the state is considered from a geopolitical point of view, not primarily as ‘a set of individuals, but [as] a specific piece of land’ (AR 261). The modern monarch is the King of France or England, not King of the French or King of the Britons. With the introduction of the most natural of natural terms, the equation of the state with an actual landmass, we shift into a description of a contractual convention between citizen and state that allows us to speak of property rather than the mere possession of land. The contract thus does similar work to the type we saw earlier, in which it supports an untenable and unravelling binary by setting up a false equivalence that allows non-constitutive relations to be defined by the disavowal of similarities. The contract, however, goes one better, by doing away with the need for legitimation through a natural term. Rather, it is the very point of the contract that it be conventional rather

12. See also my ‘Sovereign Debt Crisis: Paul de Man and the Privatisation of Thought’ in *The Political Archive of Paul de Man*.

than natural. It is a self-reflexive arrangement in which it reaches agreement with itself: 'the land defines the owner and the owner defines the land ... the private owner contracts with himself or ... the private property contracts with itself; the identity of the owner is defined by the identity of the land' (AR 262). Thus, in a self-regulating metaphorical slide between the reciprocal opening of the private by the public, 'the rhetoric of property confers the illusion of legitimacy' (AR 262) on property itself and ideology pulls itself up by its own boot straps. The contract mitigates its own conceptual risk by only referring to and answering to itself. De Man says of this level of rhetorical sophistication that 'the fascination of the model is not so much that it feeds fantasies of material possession (though it does this too, of course) but that it satisfies semiological fantasies about the adequation of sign to meaning seductive enough to tolerate extreme forms of economic oppression' (AR 262). The contiguous land of private owners becomes the public territory of the state and the rights of sovereignty over those autonomous pieces of land become personal. No family who do not own their own land is a family at all; the landowners who cannot protect their land from the general are not landowners worthy of the name; and so on.

The rights to/of property are now held in common and this is the legal basis for the regulation of public and private interests. Considered privately, property is a relation between similar units; considered publicly, it is a relation based on non-constitutive autonomy or estrangement and thus its defence is the grounds for possible conflict. By analogy, the proprietorial interests of the state in relation to other states is structured in a similar way. De Man, quoting Rousseau, comments that 'the power of property is vested "in the distinction between the rights that the sovereign and the owner have over the same fund"'. Behind the stability and the decorum of private law lurk the "brigands" and "the pirates" whose acts shape the realities of politics between nations' (AR 264). The privateers double dip as both members of the sovereign authority with respect to individuals and as individual citizens of the state, regulated by the sovereign authority, both self-reflective or speculative and autonomous or estranged, according to a conceptual order based on the 'coexistence of two distinct rhetorical models' (AR 265) that constantly open and simultaneously supplement one another. Thus the figurative complicity between the public and private also produces the effect of the general and particular and with it the individual's relationship to the law on the one hand and political action on the other. At this point 'The Social Contract' introduces the supplementary regulator of the lawgiver and so falls back onto a transcendental appeal that was previously foreclosed in the 'Profession', while one would expect from the argument that precedes this move that the ambiguous valorisation and redoubling of the private and public conceptual order would give no grounds or criterion for reliable political judgement and that such acts of

judgement would be the very deconstruction of that order, initiating an ongoing situation of disarticulation without resolution. Thus God re-enters by the back door and 'The Social Contract', as a text, once again reaffirms the authority of a figure it first set out to deconstruct.

One can see in this that the private and the public are not just any binary opposition for de Man; rather, they are the means by which he develops a general understanding of rhetorical reading and the place where we will find his most decisive commentaries on the meaning of the political and ideology. His deconstruction of the public/private opposition offers us no comfort in the affirmation of the merits of the individual, inwardness, the family, private enterprise or the piracy of profits, and equally it allows for no easy appeal to the collective, the public realm, the state, common ownership or cooperativism. Rather, says de Man, history itself is the deconstruction of this rhetorical model that moves between the generality of the law and civic constitution, on the one hand, and the particularity of political actions and citizens, on the other. A non-teleological judgement would be the structure capable of error that put that deconstruction into play as the effacement of the model to which it is immanent. The public is constantly opened, redoubled and aberrantly retotalised by the private and vice versa, creating a space of ethical indecision. The private installs a double relation to the public, both constitutive and estranged, as in the case of the taxpayer who is both a contributor to the revenue raised to fund public services but incentivised towards tax efficiency to maximise private income, and a user of those public services incentivised to derive maximum benefit from them for personal gain. The history of taxation would be the inability of such a model to close itself to the linguistic predicament of political judgement as a structure of relationships capable of error that cannot dominate an arena of ethical indecision. If we might be allowed to paraphrase the closing line of de Man's reading of the 'Profession de foi', it is for this reason that the impossibility of taxation should not be taken too lightly. We might also conclude now, with just cause, that such a deconstruction is not without political consequences.

III. Access All Areas

It follows that, more than any other mode of inquiry, including economics, the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence. (Paul de Man, 'The Resistance to Theory'¹³)

13. Paul de Man, 'The Resistance to Theory', in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 11.

What then might such an understanding of the public and private derived from the text of de Man tell us about that self-same text? How will this help us understand the private papers of a public figure held in the public University of California but related to time spent at a private institution, Yale? What will it give us to think about the relation between the public canon of monographs and papers produced in private without any necessary consideration as to their public presentation? From the posthumous *Rhetoric of Romanticism* shaped by de Man himself and the *Critical Writings* agreed with Lindsay Waters to *Aesthetic Ideology* edited by Andrzej Warminski based on a note by de Man and my own editions of *The Portable Rousseau* and *The Post-Romantic Predicament*, the collection of texts that now make up the de Man oeuvre after *Allegories of Reading* are in different ways public performances that draw on the resource of private papers.¹⁴ The majority of what now constitutes the de Man catalogue is precisely a demonstration of the constitution of the public by the private and the estrangement of the private from the public in which each new book derived from the papers becomes an autonomous addition to the archive itself, another affirmation of a duality that their production set out to undermine. The editing of these books as acts of judgement is capable of error; one can argue over the just or unjust inclusion of a particular text and the partial construction of a posthumous, public profile for de Man. However, they are also the means by which the relation of the inside of an archive to its outside is practically deconstructed. The selection of texts for publication, and recently, in the case of the manuscripts of *Textual Allegories* and *The Portable Rousseau*, the making of those texts freely available in an online open-access format, performs the disarticulation of the archive as a model of public/private certainty.

On the one hand, the archive presupposes its own integrity as a collection, deriving its legitimacy from the private individual whose work provides the organising principle of the archive. In this sense, the basic assumption of the archive is that, through a mix of correspondence and manuscripts, it will assist the scholar to better understand publicly available work through a relation to private, unavailable material. That is why scholars board airplanes and go to archives. On the other hand, the idea of the archive also simultaneously supposes that the work of scholarship that moves from the reading of the public canon to the understanding of private papers will result in the production of new editions and greater public understandings. Certain archives will have legal restrictions on reproduction (Derrida) or even on posthumous publication (Foucault) but in principle the archive itself would

14. Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York; Columbia University Press, 1984); *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); *The Portable Rousseau*, at <http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/1093>.

only recognise such injunctions as temporary and contingent. The integrity of the archive demands that, in the fullness of time, such publication must be possible. In this way the privacy of the archive is ruined by a principle of its necessary future publicity. This future publicity is not teleological but predicated on the necessarily fallacious editorial judgement of scholars whose repeated returns to the archive will result in ever more precise revisions of the public record by attention to private remains. The Critical Theory Archive at UCI derives its legitimation from the institutional history of theory at the university. De Man was not a faculty member at UCI, although he did teach there for a quarter in 1981, several years before his Yale colleagues Hillis Miller and Jacques Derrida migrated to the west coast. However, it is a public archive available to anyone, literally *anyone*. The future acts of scholarship within the Critical Theory Archive need not necessarily depend upon institutional accreditation or professorial legitimation. I am quite certain that this new public work is being undertaken *now* by private individuals consulting those parts of the de Man papers made available online. This situation in California is quite different from the circumstance of, say, the papers held at Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) at the l'Abbaye D'Ardenne in Caen, where French law requires the scholar who wishes to consult letters, for example, first to obtain the permission of the estate or rights holder of both sides of the correspondence. As one might imagine, this renders something of a disservice to scholarship, retarding the advancement of knowledge by frustrating readers. There is a profound irony in the European scholar travelling thousands of miles across continents to consult freely available records that would otherwise be restricted on their doorstep.

However, the question of 'openness' today is not straightforward. It is not a matter of good versus evil: taxpayer-funded academic material being made freely available to all via open-access venues versus the locking away of scholarly outputs in restricted, profit-making, private venues. The open-access agenda – first initiated by the Budapest Open Access Initiative of 2002 and now in the process of implementation in the United Kingdom, the United States and as part of the European Union Horizon 2020 programme – will revolutionise the way scholarship is undertaken in the university.¹⁵ However, it should not be mistaken by the wide-eyed as the opening of the academy to the vistas of the un-tolled, super-speed Internet highway. Rather, it will be a complex negotiation between the public and the private in an unresolvable

15. For a comprehensive account of the unhappy history of the UK government's attempt to introduce a 'gold' open-access policy, see Paul Jump, 'Fool's Gold?', *Times Higher Education*, 14 February 2013. See also the directive from the US Office of Science and Technology Policy, 'Expanding Public Access to the Results of Federally Funded Research', 22 February 2013, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/02/22/expanding-public-access-results-federally-funded-research>.

disarticulation overdetermined by the constant doubling and retotalisation of fallacious academic and policy judgements, which displace and reaffirm the principles of an authority they first set out to question. Open-access publishing is another recasting of the false proposition that sets public against private while masking the private benefits derived from the double relation of constitution and estrangement that positions us all in an ideological and an economic relation to the commonwealth.

Governmental responses have so far distorted the question into a choice between ‘gold’ (pay-to-publish) open access and ‘green’ open-access repositories, such as the one where *The Portable Rousseau* and *Textual Allegories* are held.¹⁶ However, a key point that seems to have been forgotten in the present debate is that the members of the United Kingdom’s Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings (known as ‘Finch’, after their metonymic chair Dame Janet Finch), who wrote the review of open access, *Accessibility, Sustainability, Excellence: How to Expand Access to Research Publications*,¹⁷ did not take as their jump-off point the principle that all taxpayer-funded research should be made available through open access. For them, openness in scholarship is not a matter of public versus private funding. This idea is something of a red herring, a metaphorical displacement, derived from Finch recommendations but over-emphasised as a result of the so-called ‘Impact’ agenda currently driving the distribution of public funding by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Research Councils UK (RCUK). Given that RCUK funds only 80 per cent of the full economic costs of research grants, and that quality-related research funding distributed by the higher education funding councils is supplemented with funding universities generate through enterprise, donations and teaching income (much of which is now private money), it is not possible to determine rigorously how any given research output has been funded out of a university budget in any case. And it would also be somewhat simplistic to suggest that taxpayers are clamouring to read specialist research literature, such as this book, they have previously been unconscionably denied. After all, they are free to enter any public library to obtain the material if desired. Rather, the Finch report began with the presupposition that openness is fundamental to the advancement of scientific discovery and that the rent gathering of site licences and subscriptions by publishers in a pay-to-view model militates against this. Finch addresses the issue of journal publication, primarily in the sciences; it has nothing to say about monographs in the humanities, although it would be impossible to hold any sort of rigorous line

16. <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6p30071t/>.

17. See the full report <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Finch-Group-report-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>.

between open access to publicly funded journal articles and their collection as an academic monograph.

Finch's authors see a mixed economy of open access as the solution to 'the increasingly complex relationships between the books, articles and other publications on the one hand, and the data that underlies the findings that those publications present on the other; and how to ensure that they are presented and made accessible in an integrated way' through the speed of communication made possible by the Internet. But the RCUK-government response to Finch has essentially reduced all of this complexity to a pay-to-publish model that primarily benefits private publishers and commercial users of data-sets such as industrial companies like Astra Zeneca, which will no longer need to subscribe to journals. The cost of academic publishing will be thrown back on to universities (autonomous and estranged bodies now with a complex relationship to a mix of public and private funding), which will in turn inevitably be forced to make economic and strategic decisions about which academic papers they should fund. Furthermore, expensive and elaborate peer-review mechanisms will have to be established to manage the process within universities. And the costs of all this will not be recouped from UK university library budgets: on the contrary, libraries will still have to pay for journals from the rest of the world unless other countries implement a 'gold' mandate, and this looks unlikely at present. As a result, university budgets will be further squeezed and the publishing research base squeezed too. The likely outcome of a unilateral 'gold' open-access policy will be a contraction of research in the UK, all done in the name of public freedom on the wide-open spaces of the Internet.

Putting up such ham-fisted barriers to the advancement of scientific and cultural knowledge at a time when growth is stubbornly refusing to return to the British economy, as the private sector fails to expand into the spaces vacated by a shrinking public sector, makes no sense whatsoever. With British universities facing article-processing charges alongside a real-terms reduction in the science budget, the next parliament may well see another attempt to raise the cap on tuition fees, in order to pay for all of this. And so the circle of university life in the age of neoliberalism carries on.

Open reporting of scientific discovery is a public good that benefits both the nation state and the human commonwealth. The proposed creative commons licence, CC-BY,¹⁸ no more mitigates the privatisation of public knowledge than the present monopoly of (commercial) publishers (which typically require academics to sign over all rights and which others must pay to read the paper; this present book is of that order, based as it is on

18. The full text of the creative commons licence can be found at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/uk/legalcode>.

material from a public archive and work conducted by a publicly funded scholar). However, as with £9,000 tuition fees and access to the student loan book for private providers – ‘gold’ open access is once again an example of the continuing transfer of public assets to the private sector, this time through the CC-BY, which will allow anyone, including companies, to reuse academic research. At least with present publishing arrangements, authors are privately remunerated for their work and have a say in its public dissemination. This is a significant area of ethical indecisiveness that cannot be wished away too easily.

We are living in the age of what Tamson Pietsch, lecturer in imperial and colonial politics and history at Brunel University, has termed ‘epistemological enclosure’, in which the value of the public good is systematically being transferred to the benefit of private individuals.¹⁹ There is little advance to be made if British universities embrace open access but Yale, Harvard and Monsanto do not do so at the same time. Skewed in favour of multinational publishers, such as Elsevier, and private research laboratories, unilateral ‘gold’ open access is the knowledge economy equivalent of saying: ‘We will build a high-speed rail network across the country but use only the existing horse and cart owners to provide services’; it simply reproduces the model of commercial print journals in another medium. A true investment in openness as a defining principle of the advancement of knowledge requires us to think in a completely different way about a new Enlightenment, illuminated by the possibilities of digital technology, rather than re-inscribing the rights of vested private interests as if this constituted the public good. It will require our best minds to give it their deepest consideration even if, ultimately, they are unable to move us beyond idols, ideologies and appeals to transcendental lawgivers. There are ways to submit to these inevitable traps that are more or less productive. However, this thinking will not be effective if it cannot move beyond a debilitating debate about private and public funding, since universities are themselves unique, open bodies that have always worked on the basis of complex and hybrid interactions between public interests and private benefits, without being fully dominated by either. At the centre of this future information age must sit the right to publish work of the highest quality, freely and without managerial or institutional oversight, independent of commercial pressures. This is what connects the new openness to the age of Enlightenment, progress and the advancement of knowledge – and this is what is put at risk by a failure to recognise that the debate is being set up from the beginning on a false premise and as such will be doomed to repeat the very errors that Rousseau and de Man have already alerted us to.

19. A shorter version of this argument was first presented in ‘Hell, via horse and cart’, *Times Higher Education*, 7 March 2013.

I will close this discussion for now. Its specifics may well become redundant as open access develops and this present collection is fingered by the mutability of the unimaginable touch of time. However, these general questions of the archive, of the public and private, of political economy, of the university, of reading and of the purposefulness of thought are unlikely to be resolved any time soon. In them we will find decisive issues for epistemology, human advancement and for the modern nation state. This is what editing the Paul de Man archive gives us to think today. The stakes could not be higher.

Part I: Texts

Introduction

Martin McQuillan

These texts are a sample of previously uncollected writings by de Man. Some were published during his lifetime in prominent journals; others are little more than drafts or fragments towards future work and should be considered as such. These later texts are presented as indicative of the material contained within the UCI archive and do not stand for de Man's public output. However, in each case the texts add something new to our understanding of the de Man corpus. The two essays on art, **The Drawings of Paul Valéry** from 1948 (the archive translation by Richard Howard of de Man's essay, originally published in French with accompanying drawings) and **Jacques Villon** from 1952 (the archive translation from Swedish by Jarkko Toikkanen and Kati Toikkanen), provide us with evidence of de Man's interest in visual culture from the period after the war, when he attempted unsuccessfully to establish a press, Editions Hermès, specialising in art monographs. In these texts we see that de Man's art history is grounded in the world of ideas and that he has an interest in the theoretical avant garde: Jacques Villon was the elder brother of Marcel Duchamp. The **Graduate Essay on Keats** is one of several unpublished graduate papers held in the archive, from de Man's time at Harvard. The essay is perhaps the most rigorous of the set, which includes work on Baudelaire, Bachelard, Hölderlin, Wordsworth, Yeats and the critic Kenneth Burke. It is contrasted here with the **Post-doctoral Essay on Symbolism**, written towards the end of his study at Harvard, when his thesis, 'The Post-Romantic Predicament', had been completed. Both of these essays should be read in the context of the work presented in *The Post-Romantic Predicament*, a companion volume to this collection (also edited by Martin McQuillan, Edinburgh University Press, 2012). The **Introduction to Madame Bovary** comes from a period of intense literary scholarship for de Man, when he produced in 1965 editions of Rilke, Keats and Flaubert's novel. De Man is reputed to have said that his edition of *Madame Bovary* was the only book of his that ever made any money. It is a revision by Paul and Patricia de Man of the Eleanor Marx Aveling (daughter of Karl Marx) 1888 translation. The **Introduction to**

The Portable Rousseau included here is one of two possible introductions to that volume. The edition was commissioned by Viking but was never completed during de Man's lifetime. The extant translations and editorial corrigenda have now been assembled into a version of the book available online through the University of California digital repository (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6p30071t>). Patricia de Man held back these pages from the original deposit of de Man's papers at UCI. She had hoped to use them as the introduction to a posthumous version of the Viking volume. They are associated with the manuscript of *Textual Allegories* (1973) and were recovered through the scholarship of Cynthia Chase, who had undertaken initial editing of *The Portable Rousseau* material. The 1977 essay **On Reading Rousseau** is a substantial revision and reconsideration of de Man's reading of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, to be found in 'The Rhetoric of Blindness' from 1970. De Man first published it in the journal *Dialectical Anthropology*. In contrast, the 1978 essay **Rousseau and English Romanticism** is a transcription and translation by Patience Moll of a handwritten manuscript in French held in the UCI archive. It is a shorter variant of the essay 'Shelly Disfigured', written for a lecture in June 1978, in a series on Rousseau and Voltaire at the University of Geneva. In the **Translator's Introduction** to her translation, Moll outlines the stakes and complexities involved in translating from French an early variant of a text familiar to us in its English canonical form. The 1979 **Introduction to Studies in Romanticism** is a preface to an edition of that journal (vol. 18, no. 4) guest edited by de Man that drew together work produced as result of his year-long National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) seminar at Yale entitled 'The Rhetoric of Romanticism', although it also showcased work from his regular students at Yale (Cynthia Chase, Barbara Johnson, Timothy Bahti and Ellen Burt). The 1982 **Homage à Georges Poulet** is de Man's contribution to a memorial section of the journal *Modern Language Notes* dedicated to his compatriot. It was published alongside texts by J. Hillis Miller, Jean Starobinski, George Armstrong Kelly and Richard Macksey. The 1982 **A Letter from Paul de Man** and the 1983 **Reply to Raymond Geuss** both first appeared in the journal *Critical Inquiry*. The former is an invitation to respond to Stanley Corngold's essay on de Man in a previous edition, the latter a response to Geuss's commentary on de Man's 'Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*' and 'Hegel on the Sublime'. The location and timing of these interventions by de Man are indicative of his writing at its most institutionally influential. Part I concludes with an **Interview with Robert Moynihan**, then a graduate student at Yale, undertaken in 1980 but not published until 1984 (the year after de Man's death). It was originally published with an accompanying introduction by J. Hillis Miller.

The Drawings of Paul Valéry (1948)

Translated from the French by Richard Howard

In the game he plays against the World and against himself, Valéry has always had but one adversary: Chance. From Chance he must win what he sees, what he thinks, what he is in the moment.

To open one's eyes, to focus them on some object, is "to throw the dice." Each throw offers another side of things, each glance determines a possible aspect of Appearance. What is seen is only a special case. How could a mind entirely oriented toward the exercise of itself, a mind which aspires to the universal – how could such a mind submit to such a restriction of its combinations and of its powers? It escapes only by detachment. It seals itself against what comes to it from the visible world and falls back on its own chaos. Its contradictions, its incoherences, its accidents are its resources. Upon them it imposes its order; indeed its object is to exhaust its possibilities, to apprehend itself in its perpetual variation.

Such an attitude implies unremitting application, discipline, and constraint. Immured within himself, the solitary concentrates – he draws the substance of his speculation. Three or four ideas create the sphere in which he moves – his interior space. To realize what he can do, he needs only rigor and nakedness. The most impersonal site, an empty room, a slanting sunbeam, a few papers on a table – are enough. The walls vanish. The shadows cast there follow each other without his noticing them. Only the abstract figures he draws with a pure white piece of chalk have a reality in his eyes. At the heart of this world of symbols and relations, he gives himself up to his operations and his tactics; he multiplies his ventures, his deductions, his conjectures; he approaches certainty – and loses it; he doubts – and waits. Hypotheses swarm. On all sides, prospects open; limitless consequences, sets of reasonings, radiate around him to the vanishing point; while on the brink of the intelligible, in that imaginary space, glow other systems, loom other truths.

He gropes within the profusion of possibilities, hesitates.... The moment comes when he turns away from the world of signs. The fragment of universe

framed by his window – what was merely the remote and indifferent décor of his meditation – will prevail over the usual confusion of consciousness. He sees it grow organized, categorized, affirmed before his eyes. He watches, and lets himself be seduced. This world of mists and rays, of blurred outlines which gradually take shape, these clumps of foliage, these stones the daylight warms and tinges, this chaos of patches and reflections, these dense and powerful shadows make him forget abstract delights and the lure of his familiar enigmas.

“An amateur of intellectual experiments conducted in a vacuum,” Valéry nonetheless reveals a certain penchant for these “visual pleasures” and even, on occasion, surrenders to them. He does not resist what he sees but steps himself in it and, to gain satisfaction, clings to the form of bodies – exact, conclusive, molded by light. But no appearance has the power to fetter him. The artist in him, ever at war with the thinker, never quite prevails. The cloudy transparency of a fruit wakes his desire to paint it less than his guesses about its hidden structure stimulates his reflexion. The flesh gaping over its dense cluster of seeds reminds him of the coming laceration, the explosion of the separating membranes and the horde of scattered possibilities, all sacrificed to the unique ripeness which one favorable accident will bring to *fruition*.

Certain minds, committed to exteriority – like others to the inner life of thought which, alone with itself, indifferent to whatever is not an event of its most secret life, prefers to observe itself and to test all its capacities – find in submission to Appearance, in obedience to things, the way of Knowledge and a kind of reassuring certitude. For Valéry, the pleasure of seeing is merely a temptation of the mind. Reality is worth pausing over only insofar as it “supports, feeds, preserves, excites, secretes the perceptible and the intelligible, and therefore – the non-real.” No sooner does he experience the arbitrariness of things than he is tempted to contrast his own to theirs. His “instinct to manipulate” whatever comes to hand constantly seeks an occasion for its exercise.

“If some object,” he says, “attracts my attention, my eyes penetrate and pervade it. In a way, I seem to do more than see it when I look at it” – a look which ignites perception and exceeds it and fulfills itself as thought. What for others is an impenetrable substance, tinged with shadows and reflections, a matrix of illusions, is to his eyes merely the stuff of accidents. His “perverse mania for substitutions” seizes upon it. Pen, pencil, or burin will serve to test various solutions, to transform, on paper or copper, the elements of what

he sees, to modify them like the combinations of a game in order to make out of them what he desires. No sooner does an object encounter his gaze than Valéry reduces it from the definite and the sufficient to the possible. His thought necessarily circles round several themes and these repetitions, his conscious *reprises*, deepen and renew them. The *visual* themes to which his imagination returns, as if in spite of itself, are no less determined. Everything which changes and remains the same, everything he can cause to change and can manipulate to this taste, attracts him. He never tires of following the figures his hand continually engenders, the undulations of the serpent which swells, shrinks, and melts into itself, the shifting forms of water.

Goethe – in whom Valéry discovers, in the inexhaustible variety of his gifts, “the great apologist of Appearance” – relates in his *Italian Journey* that one day, on the Lido, he was attracted by the color of certain shells at his feet and picked them up in order to examine their sea markings more closely. Valéry too, if he found a shell on the beach, would pick it up. One imagines him walking beside the sea, holding between his fingers this object that solicits his attention, pensively caressing it. The regular alternation of its bright-colored stripes, the grace of its curves, the mathematical precision of the spiral which is its very soul, disconcert him. He collides with a wondrous finitude, about which he will never know anything more than what can be transcribed in formulas and pure curves – the mechanics of the shell. In despair of solving it, he tosses this enigma back into the waves. But he has not finished with it – the fascination of its form persists. He will draw its variants – strangely coiled conchs, exuberant stony formations bristling with volutes, crests, spines, bumps, iridescent and baroque porcelains.

And when he one day or another resumes his meditation, returning to the whole apparatus of his reasonings and hypotheses, he cannot help mingling with the words themselves certain simplified figures of these *frutti di mare*, as if to attempt to apprehend all over again, in their fundamental *motif*, their inexplicable and inhuman perfection.

Here and there, in his *Cahiers*, these fragile, nacreous spirals reappear, often heightened with a few touches of color. They are to be found side by side with hasty sketches: blurred coastlines, rocks, waves. All “sea things,” immutable, changing, eternal – sand, sky, water [the pure horizon acting upon Valéry in the manner of an enchantment].

The activity of harbors always attracted him. The spectacle’s unpredictability, its apparent chaos, the gestures and operations of machines, the bustle of traffic, the movements and maneuvers of the ships – everything

distracted him, amused him, gave him pause. Here he felt himself “surrounded by mathematical occasions.” Leaning on a stone parapet, he would watch the waves intersect, widen on the surface, touch the sea-wall and rebound in short, choppy waves. Here he must have met the descendant of those Phoenicians so expert in the art of building and navigating vessels who inspired his Tridon. Like him, Valéry was concerned with specific problems of form, of the resistances to be utilized or overcome. Like Tridon he was responsive to the elegance of the hull, to the curving line of the keel rising gently to the prow, sloping at a calculated angle. The architecture of ships attracted him no less than that of earthly structures. He could not uncap his pen without beginning to draw the outline of some vessel – a tartan “heavy and winged over the sea,” a clipper, a freighter at anchor. In order to evoke with scrupulous accuracy the taught triangles of the sails and the intricacy of the rigging, he would merely recall hours spent musing along a harbor-basin cluttered with masts, cables, nets.

Valéry esteemed the compositions of Vernet, but in those of Claude Lorrain he found a vision of great harbors even closer to his own, “Genoa, Marseilles and Naples transfigured.” For to him, “the architecture of the setting, the contours, the land, the perspective of the waters are arranged like a stage upon which appears – to sing, to dance, sometimes to die – but a single character, *Light*.”

It is light, too, which he rediscovers on other stages. Of all the subjects Valéry enjoyed representing, Garnier’s Opéra was one of those which most often inspired him. He painted it as he has described it, “the color of a butcher-stall, a giant jaw with velvet gums and teeth which are human faces.” He evoked the dimmed luster of the lights, the radiance of the invisible audience, the alternation of light and dark areas clustered round the narrow stage and converging towards that most sensitive point of the huge, mute vessel. Columns, living masts beneath the bulge of the high pediments, figures “whose perfect belly a fluid forearm swathes,” prone on the sand or in the chaos of a bed – it is always light that Valéry invokes in order to delineate their contours.

A contrast to these forms, and frequently associated with them, the Serpent appears on more than one page of his manuscripts, nestled in the text itself or gliding between clumps of script and looping around them. Here it has the dark luster and the gleam of ink, here it is glazed with the warmest colors, sometimes it is only an incomplete coil or two.... Valéry returned to this theme insistently. Someday, perhaps, these images will be deciphered; in them can be seen specimens of those productions which the soul releases almost unwittingly – as unexpected as the recrudescence, after two thousand years of obscure metamorphoses, of some forgotten symbol. Learned exegetes will not fail to discover in them a reflection of the ancient

power the gnostics revered as the Principle of all things, Liberator of the Intelligence, visible Form of the Spirit. When, rather absently, Valéry coiled and uncoiled like a “black serpent” which lurks in some corner of his page and bites its own tail, did he suspect what “absurd analysis” might make of it? Did he himself see anything here but a living line which breathes, expands its loop of flesh, winds, unwinds, stretches, embraces a column, enlaces a torso, rears back and darts out its tongue? We might suppose that this obsessive image was simply, without his being quite aware of it, a means of testing the truth of Leonard’s phrase: “drawing is in the main a serpentine form.”

Analyzing this form “to the point where structure, clearly understood, permits the exact and conscious action of the hand” – it is this double operation that constitutes, for Valéry, the art of drawing, an abstract art, though its essential problem is that of “an action which creates,” and such *Creation* in the last analysis, is the almost exclusive work of the hand.

Valéry liked to consider this “prodigious machine.” He could not regard without a “philosophic stupor” an instrument so inspired yet so docile. A kind of autonomous life is in it, and by the suddenness of its reflexes it sometimes outstrips the fluctuations of thought. Just when thought is being elaborated, when it catches up with itself, changes, and seeks a further form, the hand’s spontaneous audacities seem to suggest to him the features of a definitive expression. Valéry was surprised no one had attempted to write a *Manual ... of the Hand*. Numerous reflexions, scattered throughout his work, attest to the persistence of his curiosity. Hands haunted him. How many he drew: nervous and muscular, with knotty joints, with prominent veins, outstretched hands, clenched hands, hands lying flat, palm open, relaxed; hands with fingers pressed together, between which threads a wisp of smoke:

My face is alien to me
 And the contemplation of my hands
 Their system of forces, their obedience,
 The arbitrary number of their fingers,
 Which are mine and not mine
 Remain unanswered.

As eloquent as a face with its wrinkles, these hands, by their position, by their extension, by all the folds of their familiar gestures, are the counterpart of the portraits Valéry painted of himself: haggard, tense, breathless, like a man escaped from his own depths who, suddenly confronted with his image, recognizes, denies, and comes to Him.

Valéry was neither a painter nor an artist in the sense in which these words are usually understood. But drawing obsessed him, and throughout his life he continued to be concerned with the problem of painting.

He frequented painters and knew the greatest among them toward the end of the last century. Nothing concerning their art left him indifferent. He was as curious about its methods and its procedures as he was about its relations with speculative thought. By gradations, transitions, intervals of light, color, stripped of its privileges, reduced to a few dim tints, affects the most inaccessible part of the soul, the part also promptest to be moved, and less likely to reason than to feel. Certain paintings are singular examples of this indirect action which doubles the resonance of the painted work and, by means of indefinable equivalences and analogies, transposes its powers of enchantment into spiritual power. That from a monochromatic paste, tinted with ash and shadow, the painter should draw so many resonances and deliberately obtain so many effects – this Valéry regarded as an example and a model of that duality of action which every profoundly meditated work can achieve. It confirmed him in the notions he dreamed of applying to the art of writing. Here he discovered a means of developing and extending, beyond the frontiers where their ordinary power expires, the properties and the very function of words. Similarly, all painting, for him, was not concrete, nor all philosophy reducible to verbal combinations. He went so far as to conceive that, in certain extreme cases, painting could take the place of philosophy.

Valéry himself painted. He did so, as he did everything, as an amateur. He was responsive to the glow and to the reflection of hulls on the water, to the theater's crimsons as to its golds, its velvety blacks. The disorder of colors on a palate, the range "of lacquers, earths, oxides, and aluminas," aroused in him that desire to paint to which he frequently succumbed. Ink drawing then turned into a brilliant illumination, saturated with vermilion, a motley of high and clashing shades. Most often, Valéry was content to underline his drawing with accents of pastel and crayon, heightening it with a few touches of water-color. Never, in his work, does color invade form; it merely fills its contours. The tints are sometimes so fragile that they seem to constitute a fragment of fresco faded by exposure to light and "painted on darkness." Like a long, milky drop, slowly detached from the brush, a form struggles out of the shadows. Vague iridescences, ambiguous whites – like those of winter roses – compose the "orient" of its fluid flesh. Blood scarcely tinges it. Shadow bears it, half-dissolved, vague and drifting, "angel and algae."

To color, Valéry seems to have preferred black and white, closer to "the spirit and the actions of writing." If you are skilled in the use of ink, a Han painter once said, the five colors will show themselves to you of their own accord. But it was something else that Valéry sought. For him as for Odilon

Redon, black was *the agent of the mind*. Drawing, with its abstract means, seemed to him the mode of expression most likely to obtain the fusion of “a form, a substance, and a thought.” Its ability to render – with incomparable spontaneity, audacity, decision, and exactitude – idea or sensation, made it in his eyes the instrument *par excellence* of all the intellect’s possibilities.

Drawn with one and the same ink, one and the same pen, one and the same impulse, word and image complete each other. The idea shifts from the sign which expresses it to the figure which makes it visible. The calligraphic stroke is organized into a sign-system which restores the object’s structure, which keeps thought or sensation within “a limit-expression without smudging.” It reduces ideas and things to their essence, to the abstract representation of word and line, of notion and contour. Line borrows from concrete reality only “enough to produce forms”; it characterizes, it does not imitate. Expression of the relations between forms and the forces which animate them, it proliferates, ramifies, then recalls its arborescences into itself, adjusts and reaffirms its network of links, enmeshes form – its prey. The artist decks out in flesh this dry cast-off he has wielded and vanquished. A few cross-hatchings, a blot, a fold of shadow will suffice to give it life.

On a random sheet, Valéry jots his fantasies, his *Caprices*. Once begun, the page breaks off; it is covered with bizarre constructions which follow the moods of his reverie – branches, geometric figures, hinted forms. Openings appear in the body of the text. Under the words can be made out vague silhouettes. A precise detail, between two thoughts, is painted. His pen unwinds the threads from their skein; it twists them together, knots and unknots them; it links their arabesques and breaks them off short. The ink spreads in deliberate patterns, shadow, shading, color. Casually, the poet abandons these little sheets like so many avowals of involuntary returns to his secret possessions, of that gap he creates between the world and himself and thanks to which, both present and absent, unknown to all, he escapes.

If only he does nothing – if he listens, if he dreams, or if he is bored – the writer creates, half-consciously, imaginary figures. Mérimée’s whimsical caricatures, Musset’s naïve silhouettes, the profiles or the sketches of horses Pushkin scribbled next to his verses, Baudelaire’s drawings and caricatures were no more than “inconsequential diversions” – jokes as much as images. Whatever he said about them, making drawings answered, for Valéry, to a

more essential need, one whose satisfaction was as necessary to him as the “daily flow of his ideas.” Sometimes he “let his head take the lead,” sometimes his hand. If he took up a pencil or the burin, it was, as in writing, “to try out, to focus” the nascent image, to appropriate the figure of things, “not to repeat what has been.” Everything, for him, comes down to “conquered forms.” In order to apprehend them, he requires only “contours” and “contracts,” and “pure materials.” An artist like Hugo is his antipodes.

Obsessed by visions, Victor Hugo seeks release from them in his drawings – if we can even call them drawings – he craves deliverance. But a vision perishes by precision. Like treasure dredged up from great depths, it decomposes in the light. Hugo is careful not to strip his apparitions of their sheath of shadows; he borrows his colors from the murkiest, the dimmest, and most opaque substances. These eruptions of the shapeless, lit by one livid ray and scorched by infernal glows, are fantasmagorias of apocalypse. Through the clouds he musters, the prophet makes his voice heard. Here the mists of the abyss take form. The seer displays them and is silent.

These “commonplace pen-scratchings” to which Hugo affected to attach no special value, constitute very precise illustrations of his works. They offer a sort of concrete version of them which almost always duplicates the other one and frequently precedes it.

The plates Valéry engraved for certain of his books, even if they are attached to his favorite themes, only rarely show any intention of being figurative commentaries on his written work. They exist to relieve, by glimpses of the visible world, the austerity of verbal construction. As in his notebooks, the reflexions follow, in no particular order, the summer sketches consisting of a few strokes of the pen – they are intercalated into a text with which, in most cases, they have no link. They testify to the ease with which their author, who practiced them simultaneously, could shift back and forth between these two modes of expression. Language, as for Leonardo, was not everything to him.

“Lucky the man whom writing relieves! – What drawing, what scrupulous sketch would exhaust my gaze upon these lobes and levels, would deliver me from this mountain!

“Man racks his brain for answers, exonerates himself by every means, draws, paints, strains his dictionary...”

Solicited by what he sees, Valéry multiplies his responses. A telescoped sentence, an elision replaces, for the writer, those hints to himself – sketches, notations of value – which the painters inscribe on their canvases. In a few swift words, he notes volumes and shades; sometimes he schematizes a whole landscape in geometric terms and reduces it to a few solids.

Copper, stone, lead or paint – all means enable him to express himself and to shift from the most spontaneous impulses of sensibility to the transports

of a will eager to relish the possession of these forms which waken his need to grasp and mold them to its taste.

Such a need must be obeyed and satisfied on the spot, reduced – fulfilled or disappointed – to the state where nothing solicits it further. Inspiration, at the moment it appears, is ignorant of the means which will serve it – rhythms, signs, or images. Mingled in expectation, still undifferentiated, its potentialities sleep deep within the self. Let an external event, any stimulus whatever come to provoke them, and one of them, immediately, yielding to some secret affinity, to a special disposition, an accident, is wakened. This first and almost imperceptible tremor wakens other responses. Gradually the mind's powers are won over: they hesitate, uncertain which will prevail, until the most qualified or the most intensely affected finally declares itself – stirs, acts, and creates.

Valéry is unwilling to forgo any of these rival modes of expression, each suggesting by its own means a different response. He will not relinquish any part of the activity of a mind tempted by everything. Marginal to his work, the adventitious swarm of his drawings and engravings join his most accomplished productions. Labored, corrected, alternately treated, tested and rehabilitated, the plate scratched by the needle and attacked by the acid, the drawing constructed by successive approximations and retouches, are the exact equivalents of the page “blurred by cancellations and revisions.”

This unconstrained activity was, for the poet, alongside the premeditated actions of a rigorous mind, a necessary diversion and spontaneity's revenge. Though he hated the facile, though he considered improvisation no more than a happy accident to be subsequently explored and exploited, here we see Valéry abandoning himself to his whims with a delightful vivacity. He once compared himself to those travelers who, far from home, indulge in all sorts of excesses, permit themselves “everything conceivable in the way of dissipation and debauch.”

Moreover, Valéry never flattered himself that he had attained to virtuosity. He merely sought certain occasions to test himself by means which were foreign to him, to “run every risk.”

The engraver's labor, his many states, his calculated deliberations seemed a good match for the “perverse taste for infinite revision,” for the expectations, the long-weighed decisions, the “never wholehearted choices” which characterize Valéry. But once a craving for improvisation occurred to him, the extreme vivacity of his nervous nature won out, as it so often did in the ordinary conduct of his life, no matter how he struggled against it. The

scribbles, the density of the cross-hatchings betray a certain haste. Valéry engraved with light rapid strokes, always clear and distinct, even when repeated. The frequently dry and linear touch, in certain plates whose bushy appearance suggests Corot's autographs, becomes broad and supple. Elsewhere it is broken, condensed; the short parallel scratching reminds us of Manet. If he happens to make them intersect, Valéry does so in a cursive and irregular fashion. Like those "congested" engravers Bracquemond speaks of, Valéry has taken all sorts of liberties with etching: he mixes techniques; to the pure etching, or one lightened by aquatint, he adds highlights with the burin, slashes with the point. He imagines new methods, unheard-of finishes, faster-acting and deeper-biting acids.

Here again, it is the problem to be solved which attracts him. On the inclination, on the width and interval of the cut, on the depth and extent of the bite, on the tone of the inking, on the *frappe* of the press, depend the work's final fate. The artist supervises and controls the action of the acid, but one surprise can ruin everything. These "mysteries, these quite poetic lights" which etching owes to its very indeterminacy allured Valéry and at the same time alienated him. On all occasions, he sought to remain master of his methods, master of his contingencies – to owe success to himself alone.

Hence he vaunted the burin's power, its sobriety without bombast. A slender groove hollowed directly in the metal produces the thread of ink, the abstract arabesque which outlines for form. Such an art would delight him by the simplicity of its means. Its rigor excludes ambiguity and leaves nothing to chance. Here everything is choice and resolve, calculation. Valéry compared it to the severest prose which is drawing with words – everything in definite propositions, in distinct formulas, having in itself a reality independent of the thought which it supports and which it extends beyond itself.

"What is more mysterious than clarity?" Valéry's Phaedrus asks his Socrates. For such highly intellectual clarity, there exist only forms and relations among forms. It stands in opposition to obscurity, yet it makes use of obscurity as a necessary obstacle against which it collides in order to explode into affirmation and certainty. Clarity results from a will determined to defend itself against the seductions of appearance, to reinstate everything as a kind of "desperate distinctness," as the nakedest form. This need to elucidate, to illuminate, ceaselessly to shift from the vague to the distinct, to take the notion being proposed to its extreme limit, is inseparable, in Valéry, from every operation of the mind. Whatever in his eyes is uncertain, ill-defined, every abstraction, every "idol," he thrusts into the hearth of his attention, he submits

to the scrutiny of that “central gaze” charged with all the mind’s power. The diagonal beam of light which crosses several of his plates illuminates what it encounters. In a way it is the materialization of that *Lux formalis* which defines the object it strikes and consumes all factitious appearance.

The demon of lucidity has protected Valéry against blurred vision. The ambiguous world of gleams, of reflections, of equivocal forms looming out of the shadows and threatened by them is not his.

Never does his burin, in order to extract some vague treasure from them, search the *lumber-rooms of the night*. In none of his plates appears, through ink’s transparencies or opacities, amid a sombre aureole, that secret face of things which others suppose they can discover there. Light alone allures him. Not the impure, smothered light which is no more than a gradual range of shadow, but that light which by its radiance penetrates and prevails. Such light never creeps in, like a suspect apparition, through a flaw in the darkness; it slices through that darkness with a broad and distinct beam. Even at its edges, the darkness is not lightened. No luster, no reflection ventures into it. The eruption of daylight wards off darkness and rejects it; its very resistance is no obstacle to light, but a means of affirming itself.

In the realm of the intellect, it is against “the omnipotence of the incomprehensible” that the power of reason is roused, is fortified. To acknowledge, to delimit, to confront what is not understood and the excitement it engenders, seem to Valéry essential to the control and to the integral possession of his means. His own obscurity – to which he assented – was only the effect of his exigency and of his will-to-knowledge. To train oneself not only to conquer resistances but to find them, to create them, was for him a duty of the intellect, a kind of rule of life. Thought opposing thought reduces everything to an “exercise for its own sake.” Such thought is eager to let nothing escape which can serve its designs. It will neglect no tendencies, even adverse ones, no irregularities or expected gaps which compose and form the Self. Intelligence, in its deliberate function, cannot do without the unforeseen. “Except for what the non-self has asked or insisted that the self produce, one knows nothing of the self.” Valéry, moreover, claimed to want nothing but what necessity or the occasion required of him. He admitted having almost never chosen the subjects he treated; circumstances provided them, various obligations, some commission or other, rarely his own preference – almost invariably chance. The source of the Occasion mattered little to him – gods or men: what mattered was that the Occasion not be lost.

This apparent dispersion among so many diverse activities and parallel tasks which he had obliged himself to accept did not distract Valéry from his goal. It led him to it, on the contrary, all the more certainly. Instead of weakening him, these incursions reinforced his inner coherence. Nothing solicited him that he failed to refer to the problems which obsessed him and

to the most crucial of them all: possession of himself. To this end, he believed there was no surer method than “to exploit the greatest number of means of expression in order to grasp that self and not to weaken its native powers for lack of organs to serve it.”

More than what he achieved by them, it is the actual choice of these means of expression which we must consider. How well Valéry drew matters little; the engraver need not be judged. What counts is the fact that he drew and engraved. These diversions of an amateur which his very inexperience endows with a certain grace are, above all, a testimony to the writer’s need to escape the rigor and the constraints of an obstinate reflexion. They were something more for him than a graphic exercise, and it is as such that they are of interest. Assailed by the temptations to create which a mind curious to stretch its faculties to their very limits can know, Valéry had recourse to every means he could discover and, in multiplying by their simultaneous use the resources of each one, he increased the sum of his powers. To specify these powers, to render conscious, hence usable, his intellectual instincts, would lead him to lay bare the “mental figure” of the person he potentially was.

The work – like the man – is never, in Valéry’s conception, anything but a “phase of a series of internal transformations ... beyond which one might go.” No canon prescribes its limits, nothing can settle its conclusions. Here everything is only spontaneous or provoked dispositions, selections of accidents, choices. A thousand hazards, a thousand reflexions have created the work. A thousand hazards, a thousand reflexions risking reducing it to the state of thought’s cast-offs and dross. The work excludes the definitive and develops only by destroying itself. All its possibilities enrich it. But at the same time, it contains them and imposes upon them its form, which is the necessary unity of their accidental, singular, ever-imperfect combinations.

Thus in his work continuously pursued from state to changing state, fulfilled and unfulfilled, the author approaches his goal, approaches himself. At the heart of the chaos of its potentialities, this Self, this Same, is revealed as the firm and lucid power which reconciles its antagonisms and its contradictions, submits to the unexpected, makes use of it and, by corrections, by incessant combinations, forms itself.

Shut up in his various lairs, his retreats, Valéry elaborates his slow creation there. No closure, however deliberate, however rigorous, is so perfect that reality cannot violate it. The disorder of the visible world surrounds him and, though he turns away from it, penetrates and secretly affects him. That intermittent ray, reflected in a mind obsessed by its problems, passes through his

speculation and illuminates it. He compels it to affirm his ideas. All that the intellect is unaware that it contains, declares itself and reacts upon contact with the unexpected; it condenses itself into propositions which give thought its form and its finish, in images which summarize the system of relations and references orienting the spiritual enterprise of which it is the seed.

On the page where the words, the cancelled lines are superimposed, alternating and squeezed together, on the copper plate etched by a network of cross-hatchings and grooves, the author appears; he discerns himself, mingled with all the figures, with all the visible forms of thought, with the contours of appearance, with the contrasts and alliances of bright and dark, and considers – composing itself, defined and distinct from everything – that *shadow* of countenance which is himself, which varies and does not change.

Jacques Villon (1952)

*Translated from the Swedish by Jarkko Toikkanen
and Kati Toikkanen*

One brilliant sunny afternoon last spring I stepped through the gate which leads deep into the small garden where Jacques Villon's studio is housed. It is one of these suburbs which despite their nearness to Paris appear with their bird's nests, enclosures, and vegetable patches as if they were in the countryside, and the worn-out plastered houses give one the impression of a rustic village. Cut ivy filled the alleyway. There must have been a debate between the head gardener and the artist over how best to bind down the crazy grapevine that stretched itself over the wall's edge.

Inside the studio an unfinished canvas displayed the same harsh freshness, the same asperity that one could sense outside, with the spring tallying its first signs of green with the dirty grey and brown of the still wintry ground. "Painting is my second existence" says Villon with an introvert smile that creases his face. "My first one was graphics. As a matter of fact, one should have four existences." – "So what will be the third one?" I inquire. "I believe it should be graphics again – don't know about the fourth." He made a wavering motion as if he found it very difficult to make that choice with all the thirst for knowledge that still remained for him to satisfy. While speaking, [he was looking for] his recently finished samples of a few illustrations based on Paul Valery's translations of Virgil's Eclogues. He had just received the drafts and wanted to show them to me. He spread out the pictures in their different stages, copies, series of sketches whose pastoral landscapes swarmed with flocks of sheep, gods, shepherds, and carnations. First there was Rostrum rising from amidst the Roman public like the stem of a trireme galley at anchor, and at last I caught glimpses of Galatea, who, with her tied-up tunic, fled among the trees.

This was Villon's opportunity to revisit the "Des Travaux et des jours" cycle, for which he had prepared a couple of his most beautiful compositions: *Le Grain ne meurt* and *Du Blé à paille*. It was, like he used to say before, the chance to get some "solid ground under one's feet." Here the cubist borrows

a few strokes from the comic illustrator of the journals *Chat Noir*, *Gil Blas* and *L'Assiette au beurre*, harking back to the time when he drew posters in the style of Toulouse-Lautrec. And so, as befits the graphic's convention, he sets up with angular and schematic lines typical of him for structure in the color scale.

Villon went over to cubism on exiting the vicious circle of impressionism around 1910, but, as it turned out, it was to a less cerebral form of cubism than usual. What tempted him in the movement was as much its propensity towards severity and abstraction as much as its frugal use of color; and these were all qualities well fitted with the strict discipline and austerity demanded of him as a professional graphic. In 1912, together with Gleizes, Metzinger, Juan Gris, and Roger de la Fresnave, Villon took part in the formation of Section d'Or in Paris.

Analytical cubism took nature as its starting point. It dragged the geometrical image out of the realistic forms by transforming their light effects on a level. This gave rise to firm, compact, and in a way transparent works constructed by sharp, mutually intersecting planes which, with their multifaceted effect, made the whole emerge to the fore. The smallest reflex, the minutest modulation of colors becomes decisive for the forms. In these hard, compounded, and enclosed forms the reality we know through our visual experience becomes substituted with another reality that conflicts with the common one and remains in a way unrealistic. A painting is nothing more than a concrete fact that exists by itself like a machine does, a machine that will reproduce reality with all its traces, even the less revealing, a machine that traps forms in their imagined rotation in the artist's eye and then one by one projects on the canvas the different sides of the drawn object, both visible and invisible. The painting has merged all of them to an image which is at the same time successive and blink-of-the-eye, as well as their abstract synthesis – to an essential, yet essentially varied and relative image. It is an “unassuming, angular, dull, abstract” work of art. These are matt colors. The grey, beige, and the earthen, brown, and ochre yellow become mixed with white and jet black. They are cleared up in a cold light that makes one think of the blurred scenes that compositions of the Davidian stock are permeated with. Performative severity and chromatic purity have in this instance been driven to something inhuman. “Painters are,” said Apollinaire, “above all people who strive to become inhuman.”

If it was an angel of rigid angles and somewhat sleight-of-hand tricks that inspired the larger part of cubists, so it must have been an angel of light and pure vision – who in wide strokes with a sword in hand cut up the ostensible image – that opened up for Villon the rich domains of color, uncovered the “deep abyss.” A geometrical angel, naïve and shrewd, but an angel with prismatic eyes that saw the universe as a collection of separate

wholes broken apart and put together after their own special contours. It all resembles a multicolored assembly that rends with cleanly fractured spaces that are framed by fixed lines, in a way that is similar to the painted, radiant shards of stained glass windows.

Villon reduces landscape to these lines of force. He limits the perspective to roof-ridge-angled lines that separate two planes of different luminosities from one another – and to the lines flowing off towards them. The dynamic of picture composition is stabilized throughout the various parts by the lines fusing at certain support points, as well as by the diverse figures that constitute the framework of a reality split up in motley sections. For this perception, in turn, the chromatic concord grants unity.

“Light,” Villon has noted, “is a weight on the scale of emotions, and the load of the weight increases as the red, blue, and yellow are put in place, that is, in the place which the demand for balance has assigned to them in the spectrum of colors.” However, the nearly mathematical rigor that exists in the relation between different lines and the division between pure colors and graded color values fails to prevent Villon from working as a colorist too. He has never completely denied the impressionists. Certain pink and grey shades in his palette sometimes bring Marie Laurencin to mind, but it is a Laurencin that instead of setting down color on a pale and scoured veil-cloth with an insincerely blameless brush, rather attires the muscular, abstract, boldly outlined skeleton in fresh color tones and a shred of bitter sobriety – grass slopes, clay, shining bands of yellow and lilac with an extremely pungent power and freshness. In *L’Homme lisant un journal* (1913) the complementary colors of red and green do not grate against one another; the green dominates while the reduced violet softens the contrast. Cubist impressionism; that is what Villon calls it, with a slight degree of reservation: “Perhaps a little less Cubist, less Impressionist but still something, I don’t know what, something that I’m looking for.”

This indefinable something – which is unnamed by nature and must remain so, other than in the secret speech used by the artist alone – can be thoroughly related to the insistent form that compels him to churn out a certain quantity of drafts, and to the endless striving, at the end of which he may find what he has been looking for all his life, something he has only caught glimpses of, suspecting the unclear and the urgent. This is the idea which, through effort and painstaking effort, has gathered form, driven to a point where analysis lies utterly exposed and it becomes possible to set out everything anew from pure constituents selected with an aim-inspired will and sense of self-control. For Villon, this particular will comes to expression as a special understanding of pictorial space.

Villon’s concept of space has been inspired by Uccello and the visual pyramid which Leonardo first codified. “For me,” writes Villon, “space

appears as a pyramid whose base points are located in the object and the top point in the beholder's eye. Then there's another pyramid with its foundation in the eye and apex in the object. It is a kind of exchange-play between the two pyramids invoked by space." The illusion is supported by features distinctive to the pyramids so that when the two are viewed from above, they supply one another with conflicting impressions. As it were, this going back and forth creates a double stream which moves closer and disappears, from the background towards the surface, and sets the painting into endless motion at depth, as a kind of *perpetuum mobile*. *Le Grand salon de Bernay* (1945) has been constructed along one of these dream perspectives, which, by some magical slip, are altered on the spot without moving at all. Apollinaire wanted the painting to be "a silent motionless manifestation" ("silencieuse et immobile"). Villon's fortune and show of strength were to render an image of moving forms which, by their contrast, intimated rather than imitated space.

For Villon the graphic's technique is subject to the same prejudices and requirements as the painter's. In matters of patience and line precision, the meticulous calculation of color values and methods of middle space division rank among his staples. Whereas in traditional graphics figures protrude against the frame's dim foundation and emerge to function distinctly in the front part of a dark scene, Villon does his drawing between the eye and the shining curtain he wants to show. The play between shadows and light is deliberately obscured. His network of lines is sometimes tight and constantly re-threaded like fabric elements, sometimes loose and unwound, soft and mushy at the points where stitches entangle. All is tied up in knots of pen and ink, in nervous ganglions from which black webs spread themselves compressed to a system of shadows and daylight whose color value is created by either a simple fleck, pencil shade, or the thickness of a stroke.

Set in place by a coded grid of parallel lines either convergent or divergent, an image appears on the plates and allows itself to be interpreted. However, at the same time, it recedes into a distant space of crooked and vertical lines. Objects are not confined within the grid as if within a cage; they are not closed off in a limited, hermetically sealed space. In Villon's case, space is something other than a common perspective established with care to possess each motif to itself, plane after plane – together with the impassable lines delimiting them. For him, space is instead a projection, not so much of forms but of what creates forms. It is a force field where each form appears simultaneously with the same and the different. An endless space, a terminal universe with an endless amount of possibilities, contained upon the surface of a canvas or a plate. This spot becomes the place – a geometrical and abstract one – where incessant migrations and alterations occur, just as motionless and crystallized fluxes do.

Graduate Essay on Keats (1954)

It is hard to make up one's mind about John Keats: is he, or is he not, a "difficult" poet? Should one approach him in the broad and tolerant frame of mind with which one listens to a certain kind of romantic music: ignoring some local imperfections or vagueness for the sake of the overall mood? Or should we focus on the minute, interrogate every word, blame *ourselves* when we do not understand, assume that the final gracefulness is the result of a highly deliberate subtlety? Should he be read slowly, with constant repetitions, or should one be carried away by the general movement?

Reading his commentators may help to put one in the right frame of mind, although they grow more numerous all the time.¹ Not that they elucidate as it were by convergence: never was there a more bewildering array of opinions, all pulling in different directions. But all of them are so deeply convinced and convincing that one always ends up believing the last one read. Armed with this conviction, one tackles the next one, only to lose one's footing once more, then to regain a different assurance as the new article progresses. This is perhaps the key to the problem: Keats is a poet of bewilderment and metamorphosis, one of the first, perhaps, of the modern polyvalent poets allowing for many interpretations, and all the more puzzling since, unlike his later poetic kin, he is not himself aware of it. Naively complicated poets are the hardest to cope with. One reads Mallarmé prepared to deal with higher

1. Among some recent commentaries on the Odes, see:

F. R. Leavis, in *Revaluation* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936).

J. Middleton Murry, in *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits* (London: Peter Neville Ltd, 1949).

Allan Tate, "A Reading of Keats", in *The American Scholar*, XV, 1 and 2 (winter and spring 1946), 55–63, 189–197.

Kenneth Burke, in *A Grammar of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1945), pp. 447 et seq.

R. H. Fogle, "Keats's Ode to a Nightingale", in *PMLA*, LXVIII (March 1953), 211–222.

mathematics; one can train one's mind for that sort of thing. But nothing is more frustrating than to be forcing advanced calculus on a problem that may turn out to be elementary arithmetic. In Keats's case, who can tell?

Mr Wasserman, the last in date of the commentators,² is definitely on the side of advanced calculus. Nothing is left to chance; every detail is accounted for in terms of an overall metaphysical enterprise of which the poems are the visible signs. Such an approach, without any doubt, is legitimate. The fact that Keats would have been rather baffled by the formulation of his own problem in Mr Wasserman's terms is, of course, no objection. Mr Wasserman's vocabulary is a slightly hybrid cross between the terminology of modern German phenomenology and Kenneth Burke, of which the frequently recurring term of "oxymoronic ontology" is perhaps the most unfortunate offspring. But, metaphysical problems are not the monopoly of those who speak in philosophical language; they occur in poets too, and in referring to them, one is forced to translate them into one's own idiom, no matter how bizarre the resulting discrepancies may be. It is, of course, imperative that the problem formulated in abstract language be indeed the same as the one felt, perhaps obscurely, by the poet, and stated by him in poetic equivalences. Whether this happens in this case is not the issue at stake. But, in theory, it *can* happen, since present-day philosophy claims to go beyond conceptual logic and to speak about the central tensions of existence which govern the poet's driving intents as well as the philosophers'.

It is a different matter when relationships are established between these metaphysical intuitions and certain formal characteristics of the poetic texture. In that case, one must be altogether certain of what one is doing: intent (or lack of it) in relation to a specific formal turn or invention cannot merely be assumed in the poet; it has to be proven in various ways. Most philosophically minded critics succumb to the temptation of transposing the metaphysical pattern which they have extracted from the total work into formal details which, perhaps, are mere conventions or purely a result of chance. To observe where this happens is often a good way to restore the poet to his right dimension; it helps to locate the very delicate point where the consciousness he has of his own form reaches its extreme limit and from where one can see just how far he has gone. It is one of the cases where criticism of criticism brings us back to the work itself.

A very revealing example of this occurs in Mr Wasserman's study of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. He starts from an awareness which is supported by a very acute reading of Keats's work and which, in no way, distorts the poet's essential theme. From the beginning of the work, Keats has himself stated his poetic creed: he has chosen poetry (among other human endeavors which,

2. Earl R. Wasserman: *The Finer Tone* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1953).

in *Endymion*, are shown to have tempted him in various ways) in order to achieve “fellowship with essence.” If I, in turn, may run the risk of abstract paraphrase, he chose poetry in order to reach the state of order, coherence and absolute permanence which, in contrast to the chaotic freedom of our own consciousness, is revealed to us by the self-sufficient opacity of the object. All Keats’s climaxes, throughout the work, are such moments of fusion where the incessantly *open* problems of mind and soul suddenly blend into the infinitely secure pattern of objective being. The key words of his poetic system, so steadily recurrent in the poems as well as in the letters, are all concepts which express this process: *sensation*, the exact moment where consciousness meets and seizes the outside world and which, for Keats, is always this pang of self-annihilation, where the self abandons itself entirely to the powerful substance which captivates it: “...burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine”; *erotic love*, the act of fusion per excellence, in which two subjectivities annihilate each other by making each other mutually into objects of sensation; *spiritual love* (“things aetherial”) in which the fusion is transcended to the level of the Idea of oneness, with *death* as its equivalent in terms of reality; finally *art* itself, the mimesis of the world by means of self-created force. Whether or not Keats established a hierarchy of these different experiences is not too important; neither should one try, as like Mr Wasserman does, to recognize them as necessarily present in all the main works (something which, in *The Eve of St Agnes* for instance, leads to rather dubious mental acrobatics). What matters is that, groping for unity, Keats intuitively resorts to the experiences which are predominant in his own nature: that of a sensuous, sexually obsessed, poetically highly gifted young man who must have known that he was going to die soon, and thus became naturally inclined to spiritual meditation. Keats has plenty of reasons to be unhappy; ... unhappy about himself, whom he watches “grown pale, and specter-thin, and die,” about his friends, who all somehow disappoint his fine-grained intelligence, about Fanny Brawne, with good reason; and about his times, of which he has a strongly critical awareness. This unhappiness means that he is deeply aware of the lack of unity within himself. By means of what he calls negative capability, he objectifies this reality and transcends his torment by raising it to a higher level of experience. Through the various media of sensation, he can hope to reach a higher, more peaceful level of being.

The *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is concerned more specifically with art, as one of those means ... no doubt, the most vital to Keats. Useless human agitation is transfigured, made beautiful in the grace of a gesture that becomes eternal. The weight of the senses vanishes, replaced by the serenity of the mind, equally in contact with being, but not subjected to the same instability (“pipe to the spirit...”); the frustration of love itself, becoming eternally repeated in ritualistic immobility, has lost its sting by total objectivation [*sic*]: (“never

canst thou kiss ... yet, do not grieve"). Ecstasy is achieved in this permanent formal stability.

But it does not last. The ecstasy "leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd/A burning forehead, and a parching tongue." It is revelatory of Keats's real greatness to have somehow realized that, ultimately, the subjective must have its revenge. Just why this is so, Keats does not know ... but he feels it with urgent intensity. He knows it from his own awakenings after his semi-ecstatic trances. Most of all, he knows it from his deep moral concern. The first awareness, the sort of hangover after the intoxication of discovered unity, has often been his subject: in *Endymion* at the end of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, in the last strophe of *Ode to a Nightingale*; this is not Keats's most profound theme. But at his highest moments ... in the *Fall of Hyperion*, for instance, his moral feeling awakes and leads him to this deepest poetic insight. The most impressive example occurs, perhaps, in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Keats senses this curious coldness which, for him, is associated with art. He realizes, vaguely and obscurely, that aesthetic action is, to some degree, unhuman. It freezes human chaos into the stability of the object; something gets lost in the process. He thinks of that which is lost as warmth, the very wastefulness of human passion which is, by necessity, transitory, gratuitous, self-destructive, but, precisely for that reason, is supported by the continued power of spontaneous and renewed motivation. The borderline between the selfless and the self-destructive is hard to trace, and in crossing the first, Keats realized that he may have crossed the second. Humanity itself has been sacrificed in reaching for the stable perfection of authentic beauty. But, on the other hand, this beauty is the only possible way out of a suffering which, without it, would be totally unbearable.

This awareness is a difficult one, which haunts the poetic and moral integrity of Keats. He was able to formulate it for the first time in the Odes; it is only very dimly present in *Endymion* or in the first *Hyperion*, but there is a strangely perceptive foreboding in the otherwise unimportant *Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds*.

... It is a flaw
 In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,
 It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
 It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.
 But I saw too distinct into the core
 Of an eternal fierce destruction, ...

Having to explain so complex, paradoxical and desperate awareness in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, he can only give the qualification:

All breathing human passion *far above*,

... implying, one gathers, that the transcended passion raised to the level of form exists in too rarefied a sphere to allow for human presence. It seems to be the same idea which will recur as often in later poets; as one example among many in Mallarmé's *Prose pour des Esseintes*:

Oh! sache l'Esprit de litige...
 Que de lis multiples la tige
 Grandissait trop pour nos raisons

... expressing the same idea that the poetic (= *lis*) grows too high out of reach to remain with it. And Keats follows up with the amazing strophe, the moment, perhaps, where his exploration reaches its most extreme point and finds its perfect form of expression: the enigmatic ritual of sacrifice in the midst of a deserted city ... an image of the poetic act which has never been surpassed even by later poets, whose awareness of the same problem was certainly more mature and more tragic.

But the line leading into this strophe ("All breathing...") is probably among the weakest in the ode. It is obscure, confusing; it does not explain the sudden defeat that follows. At this critical moment on which his entire enterprise hinges, Keats has no words yet to deal with an intuition which he cannot understand. In this ode at least, he can see what lies beyond it; he vaguely seizes the mood of what is happening, but the actual link is missing. The weak "far above" is made to bear a weight which, obviously, it cannot carry.

Precisely this very moment of failure has been *the* theme of so much later poetry. The point can only have been stated here, but the works of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Yeats, Rimbaud, George and Rilke bear this out. This moment (the collapse of the aesthetic enterprise at the very instant when the poet becomes entirely conscious of its intent) has generally been accompanied by the simultaneous disruption of the syntax or, more precisely, by the appearance of the syntactical tension which is the most legitimate source of modern poetic obscurity. To trace this down would be a long study, which would reveal a highly significant correspondence between metaphysical and syntactical complication. Merely to indicate the problem, one can see it happen most apparently in Mallarmé. A simple example would be a line such as the following, from *Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe*:

Du sol et de le nue hostile, ô grief!
 Si notre idée avec ne sculpte un bas-relief...

The syntax of the second line is ambiguous and, at first sight, incomprehensible. A prose version of the lines, with the syntax adjusted and the symbols translated, would read: L'hostilité du sol et de la nue (du réel et de l'idéal) est un grief, si notre idée (notre imagination poétique) ne se sert de cette opposition pour créer un poème (sculpter un bas-relief). The idea is a frequent

one in Mallarmé; the impossibility of the poetic act (*réconcilier la sol et la nue*) is the only possible poetic subject. Half of this idea – the statement of impossibility – is in Keats. But there is no doubt that Mallarmé deliberately complicates the syntax, to make the reader's mind go exactly through the moves which lead to the paradoxical insight; paradoxical thought must be stated in paradoxical syntax. To see what degree of deliberate complexity this kind of poetics can reach, one should look, for instance, at some of the sentences in *Igitur*.

I do not know if Mr Wasserman has read Mallarmé, but he undeniably reads the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* as if Keats were Mallarmé. This is how he interprets the line "All breathing human passion far above":

Fundamentally, it is a problem of syntax, for it appears that instead of continuing to coalesce opposites by absorbing them one into another, Keats has stumbled into expressing the oxymoronic condition by opposing contraries: "All breathing human passions far above." The tendency of the reader's mind is to smooth out the syntax: the passion of the lovers, it half feels, is far above human passion and distinct from it. And yet, Keats' intention is to say precisely that the love is "All breathing human passion far above", for this is the syntactical analogue of the mystic oxymoron.... The fine coalescence of the antithetical conditions one feels is too strenuous for the merely conceptual mind to sustain, and it threatens to disintegrate upon the least incaution, even an incaution in choice of syntax. At first glance, like the poet himself, we do not see that he has stumbled, for the line seems inevitable enough, and the words "human passion" appear in an inconspicuous place. But the line produces not only the meaningful ambiguity nicely calculated to express the fusion of the human and the superhuman, but also a certain degree of bewilderment, which the poet seems to share.... (op. cit. p. 40)

A "meaningful ambiguity nicely calculated"? Perhaps the "bewilderment" cancels this out, but Mr Wasserman's entire exegesis, not only of this ode, but also of other poems, implies that Keats calculated everything. There is nothing in the work or in the letters to substantiate such a conclusion. This kind of fallacy might well be called the symbolist fallacy: the reading of all poetry, particularly romantic poetry, as if it were written with the same self-consciousness as the later symbolist works. The difference between romanticism and symbolism starts precisely here: for the romantics, the failure of the aesthetic was at most a diffuse and vague awareness, which pervades their work as an overhanging mood, but remains much too remote from their consciousness to find concrete formal expression. In the symbolists, however, it becomes the actual theme, constantly explored and reflected upon, sometimes transcended by incorporating it within the structure of the language itself. What, in Mallarmé, would be a line that warrants infinite meditation can, in Keats, be discarded as an unimportant weakness. Keats's poetry has its difficulties, but they are difficulties of feeling and not of language.

Postdoctoral Essay on Symbolism (c.1960)

All has been said, it seems, about symbolism. No period of literature has been explored more thoroughly; none to which the techniques of contemporary historical and critical research have been more conscientiously applied. The conditions for this exploration were highly favorable. We have all the texts at our disposal, not only in their final version, but in preliminary stages and with variations as well. The biographies of the main figures – Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé – are known in all details; there is hardly a letter ever written by them that has not been recorded. The complete editions stand as examples of scrupulous editorship. Mondor's day by day biography of Mallarmé remains a miracle of precision, in which the least eventful of all lives reveals its hidden depths and complexities, like a drop of water under a microscope. Even Rimbaud's mysterious Abyssinian adventure is accessible to the reader of his correspondence. As for the surroundings among which this poetry originated, they are close enough to us to be directly perceived. The Paris of today still contains the Paris of Baudelaire; Rimbaud's Charleville is an all too familiar picture for those who know the north of France and the secluded warmth of the apartment of the Rue de Rome could be a remembrance of our grandparents' homes. Ideological and historical trends of the period can be imagined, not like the abstract and fantastic picture which the medieval world will always have to remain for us, but in their actual, concrete presence. And the simultaneous development of prose, painting and music provides us with abundant opportunities for relevant parallels and contrasts, all of which should make the evaluation and definition of the movement easier than in any other case.

Why is it, then, despite this wealth of available materials, that symbolism remains an obscure and controversial subject? Obscure, not only to the extent to which all lyrical poetry should normally be difficult, but obscure in its most fundamental intentions. The controversies it arouses go well beyond the usual discrepancies of taste involved in the appreciation of a group

of writers. Something much more essential seems to be at stake: a certain conception of the poetic that challenges a well anchored notion of general human behavior. Symbolism has been attacked and admired with much more passion than those literary movements that confine themselves to mere *participation* in their era. It has exercised considerable influence, not only as a style or a poetic method, but as an *idea*. The debate about its validity often crosses the border of purely literary considerations. Very few poets have expressed themselves so little on anything except poetry, but none have been more imitated or rejected for entirely non-poetic reasons. The efforts, for instance, of French Catholic critics to show that Rimbaud remained true to the Christian faith, their affirmation that Baudelaire's problem was that of being all too Christian, their insinuations about the private life of Mallarmé (in the absence of any other personal standpoint from which to attack his outspoken atheism; but why attack his atheism so much more fiercely than any other poets?): this effort is characteristic of the systematic barrage that the Catholic intelligentsia can always organize when it feels challenged by a rival idea. And Rimbaud is still readily made into a Marxist hero, his momentary concern with socialist theories overemphasized into an important factor in his development.

Closer to us, the debate that has been in the foreground of all French critical writing since the war, the debate on "literature engagée," remains essentially a debate on the validity of the symbolist enterprise. The relationship of the poetic to other types of human activity (social, moral, etc.) is the specific issue where opposing attitudes collide. But a certain conception of the poetic as an autonomous behavior (with numerous qualifications which, at this point, we have no need to express) is for the first time clearly apparent in the symbolist trend. It has perpetuated itself from there on and has been at the origin of a development that is still the most active in French letters today; how directly Surrealism and related movements derive from symbolism has been too often and too convincingly shown to make a repetition of this demonstration useful. And it is equally well known that the group of more recent writers who acknowledge their filiation with Surrealism – Bataille, Blanchot, Queneau, Ponge, Gracq, Michaux, etc. – are by far the most inventive in our literature. More revealing still, the growth of what Julien Benda scornfully refers to as the "Byzantine" tradition took place against strongly entrenched characteristics which were supposed to be the basic qualities of the French literary mind since times immemorial. A thorough re-evaluation of the entire history of literature, the discovery of a dark side of French letters in contrast to the traditional virtues of clarity, precision and reason, became necessary to give the contemporary trend the sense of historical continuity which any movement feels compelled to create for itself. The tendency of critics nowadays to put emphasis on periods other than

the always praised seventeenth century, the interest in the sixteenth-century group of court poets at Lyon and in all the more mysterious figures of literature from Petrus Borel to Sade, the rather scornful treatment of French romanticism as compared to the corresponding German movement, the renewal of interest in the short lyrical poem and the subsequent admiration for the frequent English examples of this genre, these are all clear instances of the need to rewrite, legitimately, the entire history of literature so as to make it fit to receive the symbolist group. This reveals, however, how strongly rooted were the prejudices and traditions that opposed this group; only a movement armed with a power that goes beyond mere stylistic experimentation could have upset completely such a solid set of values, perpetuated by an impressive array of academic and public institutions.

Outside of France, the same controversy takes place, even if it does not center outspokenly around the same poets. Here in America, it can be felt in the intensity with which both established and younger writers approach the problem of their relationship to French poetry. Once they have become aware of its existence, either directly or through the influence of Pound or Eliot, their acceptance or rejection is rarely detached. It has the strong emotional overtones that accompany decisions involving the total personality. France, in this case, is made into the symbol of something very close to the symbolist values and the discussion of French literature is generally confined, knowingly or not, to a discussion of symbolism. (The same simplification takes place the other way round: in France, the promoters of “engaged” literature present the whole of American letters as a picture of the social responsibility dear to their heart. Sartre, who really should know better, describes the American writer as a man whose vocation “between two novels, seems to be on the ranch, in the shop, in the city streets ... who rarely goes to New York” and he adds “American literature is still in the stage of regionalism”). However inaccurate this identification of France with symbolism, and it is, after all, probably less inaccurate than the identification of Henry James with a cowboy – it remains that the history of modern American poetry could well be written as a dialectical development of which symbolism is the other pole. There is no other relevant way of dealing with Eliot, Pound or Stevens. As for Cummings [e.e. cummings] and Marianne Moore....

The same duality could be shown in the general geography of contemporary criticism on both sides of the Atlantic. The dividing line is always best traced back to the symbolist assumptions. This is where, for the first time, the attitude which will later be admired as the supreme example or hated as the final decadence is most explicitly stated and lived.

This attitude, however, has not been too clearly described yet, even when its importance has been recognized. It seems that our current critical languages are either themselves too strongly bred from symbolism or too

opposed to it to allow for the proper distance and sympathy. Obviously, a purely biographical or psychological approach yields very few results here except if used, as in Sartre's essay on literature, as a means to discredit the movement altogether. What enlightenment can Mallarmé's life bring on *Hérodiade*? The anecdotal content of Baudelaire's existence, the story of his debts and disease, leave the entire inventive mystery of his work untouched. And the excess of talk around Rimbaud, the somewhat sensational interest in the scandalous episodes of his strange life, have made the interpretation of his work less rather than more accurate; it has replaced the close reading which this poet demands by his glorification into a dubious personal myth. As for the numerous psychological explanations of the symbolist writers, they can only claim, at best, to be interesting personality studies, using the texts as clinical evidence. For a critical examination, they are practically worthless. So many explanations have been given of the symbolists' exclusive concern with poetic invention that one tends to forget their actual conception of this process. It has been explained as an almost pathological activity of compensation, aimed at masking the flaws of their character; if it is perhaps a little difficult to apply this to Mallarmé, Baudelaire at least is perfect case materials, especially if one treats his life and his work as one continuous entity. Or one reduces the entire problem to a matter of historical ambiguity: as a result of the development of nineteenth-century industrialism, the writer found himself "suspect to the workers and spurned by the bourgeois." Consequently, he had to turn to art as a last alternative or, rather, his art had to become self-reflective out of sheer desperation, because he did not have the courage to face the dilemma of his social condition.

Psychological compensation or historical negativism, what does it matter? At certain moments, in certain men, under certain circumstances, those forces were undoubtedly operative, together with many others. The purely literary interactions of style, the need, as Valéry suggested in relation to Baudelaire, to do something "different" after the romantics and the Parnassiens, are one of them. So is the spontaneous tendency of any art form to become self-reflective as it refines its techniques and becomes more and more aware of its possibilities – a feeling that romanticism, with its sudden opening up of boundless experimentation, had begun to explore. One has to add to this the ever-present necessity of the supremely talented artist to eliminate whatever is contingent to his undertaking and to find himself closer and closer, more and more exclusively confronted with the essential problem that has animated his entire development – which is, in the last analysis, always a specific problem of form. And it may be within the dynamics of the aesthetic act as such to be self-reflective, even when it seems to be dealing with matters that transcend it. Many forces are at work in the determination of this, as of any, poetic movement. Which of these can we isolate and give the sole dignity

of Cause? And how can we decide that the cause and effect scheme that we thus define is not reversible? Did the social situation determine symbolism or was it symbolism, as a more or less spontaneous event, that modified the social problem by its mere presence? There is undoubtedly a sociological point of view from which we can consider a movement like this. But a study that takes this approach would have to revise most of the principles on which the historical analysis of literature is based. It should avoid conferring any *a priori* causal power upon the historical situation and to expect any final explanation to emerge from it. Symbolism does not develop within the continuity of the prevailing historical system of its time; it is created outside and sometimes against it. Its relation to this system is therefore at closest one of dialectical opposition; most of the time, there is no relationship whatsoever. Never and nowhere can the two be said to act upon each other as cause and effect; symbolism never grows out of nineteenth-century society the way an apple grows on an apple tree. A group of entirely autonomous characteristics have to be isolated before their relationship to the situation can be clearly understood. This type of consideration belongs at the end of a study, as an additional development, but certainly not at the start, as a definition. Besides, historical criticism is not well equipped for it. It is tied to a conception of history as a determining causal power and could hardly accept that a system arises apparently out of nowhere, interrupting the flux of continuous events or denying the law of the dialectical development. Theoretically speaking, the new phenomenon becomes part of history, whether actually caused by it or not. But a historical vocabulary is established in function of the values existing at the moment of its creation. It is capable of describing events that take place within the more or less continuous evolution of those values, but it is at a loss to cope with those outside of it. To treat symbolism as an antithesis to a certain type of society growing in France in the nineteenth century – the beginning of industrial capitalism would be a mistaken oversimplification. We need a description in terms independent of those, favorable or unfavorable, referring to this society, a description that transcends the historical. A correct critical vocabulary has to be philosophical before it can become historical.

The same is true, though perhaps less apparent, in the opposite direction. A criticism that would be entirely *within* the symbolist system, that is, entirely formal, would fail to disclose the essential, and, paradoxically, would fail to perceive most of the forms themselves. It can very well be applied to a school like the Parnassiens, for whom the notion of poetic form is taken for granted and is therefore a continuous, almost a static one. Like historical criticism taking the causal power of history for granted, formal criticism thinks of form as unquestionable “given” structure, as a thing. It is perfectly capable of describing this object as long as it maintains a stable mode of

existence. The symbolist conception of form, however, is not a static one. Symbolism is a *quest* for form, often an intense and desperate one, but always conscious of form on a background of not-form (or chaos, or nothingness). Its own construction, which it is the critic's aim to perceive, bears the mark of this specific tension. The great symbolist poems deal with the oscillation between form and its destruction, between chaos and its rebirth into shape. A vocabulary which reflects the structure of established organizations only must fail to disclose the total scope of this enterprise.

One brief example may help to clarify our meaning, without deepening it. Certain lines of symbolist poetry allow perfectly for mere formal analysis; whenever the poet is *within* the form, whenever it has achieved some sort of (ephemeral) stability, a static description is perfectly possible. A line such as:

Ce toit tranquille, où marchent des colombes
Entre les pins palpaté, entre les tombes...

at the beginning of the "Cimetière Marin," would be a good example. We are, at this moment, in a state of complete serenity and tranquility:

O récompense après une pensée
Qu'un long regard sur le calme des dieux! ...
Et quelle paix semble se concevoir...

The descriptive two lines are a formalization of this intuition of stability. The construction, in terms of sound and meter, is worked out with an acute sense of harmony and balance. The decasyllable which in the French metric acts generally as an element of unrest and tension because of the natural tendency of the meter to fall into alexandrines, is here closed and peaceful. This is achieved by a simple use of symmetry. The opening section:

Ce toit tranquille

balances symmetrically with the closing section:

entre les tombes

giving the two decasyllabic lines a construction 2-3, 3-2, which is perfectly phrased. On this basic structure, several other ones are superposed. The alliteration in the second line ("pins palpaté") is both descriptively and euphonicly effective; to show the sea as palpitating between the trees, suggesting the pulsating, rocking movement, stratified by endless repetition, is most descriptive. Besides, it establishes a quasi-repetition with the alliteration of the dentals in the first line. The function of the repeated consonant within the general sound pattern makes the two central inventions, "toit

tranquille” and “pins palpate,” stand out as two strongly integrated constructions. Surrounded by more amorphous sound stretches, they appear more brilliant, the way a dark background sets off a cut stone.

Several more remarks of this type could be made in reference to those two lines and throughout the poem. French poetry has a solid tradition of such subtly deliberate and highly conscious use of the poetic resources of language. Many poems, before and after the symbolists, reveal their complete wealth when a careful eye and ear has perceived the complex scaffolding of sound and rhythm that supports them.

But here, this profound knowledge of proportions, this magic power to create calm and tranquility is used to state the destruction of order:

Non, non! ... Debout! Dans l'ère successive!
Brisez, mon corps, cette forme pensive!

...

Rompez, vagues! Rompez d'eaux réjouies
Ce toit tranquille où picoraient des focs!

The entire movement is toward a destruction of the peace that existed at the beginning. How different the significance of this original calm when seen in relation to the unrest and disorder that follow! What first appeared as a closed, appeasing theme, serene as a temple, becomes now the supreme point of tension, the moment of silence that precedes an outburst of chaotic violence. If we had confined ourselves to the description of the static elements (including the “closed” movements confined within a static unit) the entire significance of the poem would have escaped. The sudden accumulation of verbs and verbal nouns without regard for plastic values – brisez, buvez, naissance, exhalée, rend, courons, rejaillir, se lève, tenter, vivre, ouvre, referme, jaillir, envoler, rompez, rompez, réjouies, picoraient – would appear as a loosening up of the tight, descriptive richness of the opening lines, while, on the contrary, the perception of this gradual “activation” of the plastic is the core of the poem.

But this activation, it must be repeated, is not a descriptive one. The landscape is the same at the beginning and at the end; it is the mental intention beholding it that has changed. The destruction (or, in a poem like *Hérodiade*, the making of forms) is not a natural process, but a metaphysical one. It is the essence of the concept “form” itself that is attacked, like an armature rusted by the substance that can corrode. Again and again, in Rimbaud, in Mallarmé, as in Valéry, we will find this movement repeated, so consistently that it will stand out as the central theme of their poetry. And this theme can only be perceived if we place ourselves both inside and outside the form, if we can feel both the persistent need for its construction and its inevitable undoing, if we can see it as potential and not as static. We

need a vocabulary that reflects this ambiguity. It is from the very nature of the aesthetic act that we can derive our critical language and not from the mere observation of forms.

From the wanderings of Ulysses, covering the totality of the work of man and of the Gods, to Dante's voyage through the world of ethical acts and judgments, the symbolist voyage has narrowed down to the restless enterprise of artistic creation. Baudelaire's cyclical movement, the basic pattern of the *Fleurs du Mal* and of the final poem "le Voyage," where he summarizes his entire undertaking, is for him the very movement of creation. Never do his works claim to be "about" anything else than the specific needs of the poet. They do not represent the fate of man among other men, meditate on his relationship to the divine or dramatize his universal destiny. The world that appears – the women, the vision of Paris, the perception of any spectacle or any feeling – can never be taken in a directly anecdotal sense. It is always an artificial, manmade, aesthetic world and none of the entities that exist in it have objective reality. They function only as symbolic representations of the need for their invention; they are formal equivalences of the desire for their being. A description of reality as:

... un temple, où de vivants piliers
Laisseraient parfois sortir de confuses paroles...

is entirely meaningless outside of the realm of aesthetic perception. Only to the poet does his world appear in that light, when he reflects upon it in terms of reality.

By now, most critics seem to agree that the distinguishing characteristic that isolates the symbolists from their predecessors and unites them in a definite group (though what we refer to as symbolism, in a larger sense, was never a concerted, organized group as the Surrealists were) is the use of the poetic creative process as a poetic theme. This had undoubtedly been done before, but never in such a consistent and conscious fashion. The cyclical exploration of the *Fleurs du mal*, the violent and liberating escapade of the "Bateau Ivre," the metaphysical adventure of *Igitur* symbolize only the poetic act. In Baudelaire's "La Nature est un temple..." in Rimbaud's "Je devins un opera fabuleux," in Mallarmé's "... cette inquiétante et belle symétrie de la construction de mon rêve" we see the first phase of the aesthetic impulse: the transformation of the subjective consciousness of existence into the objective solidity of being; the suspension of freedom and its replacement by a strict organization in which time and space appear as determined; the growth of

consciousness, which is free and chaotic, into the ordained spectacle of form. “Nature” as becoming a “temple”; “I” an “opera,” “dream” a “construction,” in those fluctuations, this *becoming* movement from one pole of being to another, the basic articulation of the poetic is summarized. Those poems acquire their universal significance only if confined to this particular intention. Any description of a particular act gains universal meaning if the act is purely and perfectly isolated; we have, indeed, no other concept of the universal than the isomorphism we can establish between “pure” particulars. Therefore, it is not surprising that symbolist poetry, though confined to a highly particular act, renders as universal a sound, as does the *Odyssey* or the *Divine Comedy*. As it is such a well isolated meditation – such a correct phenomenological reduction – it extends to other sectors of behavior by resonance. Like a vibration spreading through conductive channels, whatever larger groups of behavior have universally in common comes alive at its contact. The reverse, however, is equally true: the very act of isolating a behavior implies some awareness of the universality of its presence. The exclusive concern with the aesthetic act implies the awareness of aesthetic motivations in all types of human conduct. In that sense, it can be said that symbolism postulates a certain aesthetification of man. But no statement has led to more mistaken interpretations and should be made with more caution. To an analytically trained mind, accustomed to thinking in static dualities, the identification of subject matter with a formal function appears as absurd. “Form” and “content” have traditionally been treated as separable, often antagonistic concepts. What then about symbolism, where form becomes content and content form? Shall we call it all content and blame it for being only a substitute for theoretical aesthetics, a philosophy which refuses to call itself one and usurps the dignity of the poet instead of satisfying itself with the more ascetic discipline of the philosopher? Or shall we call it all form and blame it for indulging in trivial and superficial virtuosity, of no more avail than the momentary satisfaction of a game? Whatever judgment one arrives at, it should be the highly qualified conclusion of a meditation that has to be followed in the same direction as the symbolists undertook it: from a completely pure and personal reflection to its eventual generalization, which is only very carefully, if at all, stated and often postponed to an indefinite future. Only at the very end of the most rigorous description will Mallarmé risk the passage to the general:

Toute pensée émet un coup de dés

This generalization, it goes without saying, does not appear in a theoretical form. Only much later, certain developments in modern philosophy have come to conclusions that bear a striking resemblance to the preconceived assumptions made by the symbolists. This is in itself a remarkable

coincidence, but it may confuse the contemporary reader, familiar with those philosophers before encountering the poets. They are not the disciples of a school of thought engaged in giving a poetical illustration of its theories (if such a thing is conceivable) but the spontaneous actors of a human drama that philosophers, starting only very exceptionally from the example they set, mostly from altogether different considerations or impulses, have tried to “generalize” into ontological theory. Heidegger described Novalis and not vice versa. Thibaudet is right in pointing out how absurd it is to explain Mallarmé by the influence of Hegel, whom he never read. If philosophical considerations seem indispensable in formulating the critical language with which to approach them and perhaps other writers as well, it is because they keep constantly at the point where their activity is being challenged in its essence. To ignore the problem of the poetic in general when dealing with them is like writing a defense of Socrates that does not touch upon the problem of knowledge.

In the light of these introductory considerations, the controversial position of symbolism may become clearer. Its particular situation is such that it appears as a disturbing element. It upsets critics because of its unwillingness to fall within the patterns that dominate contemporary criticism; it does not lend itself to positivistic, socio-historical analysis and not to impressionistic subjectivism either; the psycho-analytical jargon has no hold upon it and it rebels against any ideological approach. As such, it remains a thorn in the flesh of the majority of present-day writers on literature.

And still, what richer source of critical investigation could be imagined than the one offered by poets who were distracted by no values other than those of their own endeavor? In so many writers we have to discard, painstakingly and often with the assistance of massive erudite information, the successive layers of “false pretexts,” of minor, contingent themes that hide their real invention. We have to perform the difficult effort of not letting ourselves be carried away by their ideological prejudices which, in a poetic perspective, are only pretext and not intention. With good reason, critics of literature may envy writers on music and plastic arts. Theoretically speaking, despite the special problem of language, the separation between the aesthetic function and the subjective consciousness on which it operates is not more complex in the case of literature, and there is no real reason why literary values should be so hazy. In practice, however, the difference is very great indeed. No commentator would equate a philosophical estimation of Christian theology with an evaluation of Chartres. A very reasonable understanding prevails of the relationship between Bach’s religious convictions and the art of the fugue, but nothing seems more confused than the connection between Baudelaire’s personal prejudices and his work. In the fields of music and the plastic arts, modern criticism has succeeded in establishing a

coherent language, in reaching and defining the actual problems, and, generally, in acquiring the basic assurance with which it is possible to carry out criticism. But books such as Focillon's *Vie des formes*, Boris de Schloezer's *Bach*, even Malraux's *Psychologie de l'art* are hardly conceivable, in scope and consistency, in the field of literature. Such varied tasks of definition have to be performed there, so many preconceptions eliminated, a critical method has to state itself against such antagonistic pressures, that he who attempts it is bound to run out of energy before he has even begun to speak – let alone find an audience. Recent French literary criticism, for instance, remains, in general, well behind the level of contemporary creative writing.¹

Clearly enough, the confusion that hampers the development of criticism is due to a lack of precision in the delimitation of the field of literature. Over and over again, sets of values borrowed from other human activities are arbitrarily applied to a domain where they do not belong, as if values could be detached from the sectors of activity in function of which they were invented [*sic*]. No problem of hierarchy is involved here, only one of autonomy. If we can decide that there is such an activity as literature, determined by its specific intention and by a series of means aimed at carrying it out, then we can establish a system of values that will operate within the limits of this enterprise – just as we can set up the proper requirements for a good football player without being accused of preaching football for football's sake. But if we refuse to literature all independence, if we state, in other terms, that whenever one indulges in literary activities he is in reality doing something else, then any attempt at formulating poetic values becomes superfluous. The value set of the *real* activity hidden under the literary pretext will then be the only one worth considering. Indeed, the very function of criticism will be to discover this other behavior underneath the poetic coating, a process of systematic and shrewd de-poetization that will substitute a bare and strange monster for the handsome object that existed at the start. No one has ever quite dared do this to a painting, but it happens daily to every writer.

1. The best book on Mallarmé is still, by far, Thibaudet's study, which contains admirably perceptive analyses of separate passages but does not carry its awareness of Mallarmé's central enterprise beyond the vague general term of Platonism. Marcel Raymond's *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme* is more an intelligent survey than a critical study. Thierry Maulnier's introduction to his anthology of French poetry claims to be nothing else than an excellent article. Béguin's study of German romanticism, though hampered by a somewhat conventional approach to the "Germanic," comes perhaps closer to original insights. A rather confused study by Jules Monnerot on Surrealism, "La Poésie modern et le sacré," was an interesting attempt that the author, absorbed by his interest in sociology, has not continued. The scattered essays by Blanchot and the half philosophical, half literary studies of G. Bachelard on material imagination are probably the most outstanding recent achievements.

By taking symbolism as a starting point, this problem could be considerably clarified. Here we have a group of writers who have willfully put the act of poetic creation between brackets, isolating it from all alien interferences. If we can devise a method to deal with them it should be, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable in its general principles to other writers as well. As the symbolists keep only the universally poetic in common with other poets, there can be no better source for critical theory than their work. In itself, there is nothing admirable or, for that matter, nothing despicable in the exclusiveness of their concern, but it most certainly should have attracted critics rather than kept them at a distance. The fact that they were repelled makes one suspect that their attitude was perhaps not a matter of terminological confusion, but of a much deeper intellectual inhibition which makes any artistic behavior appear as taboo. It is as of one shunned away from it, especially where, as in symbolism, it appears in its most genuine form, for fear of what it might reveal in a more general human context. By taking advantage of the ambiguous nature of language, which is both tool, when used as communication, and object, when used as literature, the real issue has always been dodged. Critics partake of the general intellectual trends of their time; their oblique way of dealing with the whole of modern literature (which has followed a general development perfectly parallel to the one apparent, in a more condensed form, in symbolism) is indicative of the strong reluctance to erect to the level of ideas, autonomous and dangerous, what can be ignored or tolerated as long as it remains covered up under the benign denomination of literature – a term which has been refused any meaning except for surrounding it with a vague aura of harmless gentility.

Considered in a broader perspective, the problem of symbolism and of the symbolist heritage appears indeed more complex than if it were merely a matter of critical technicalities. There seems to be a profound incompatibility between the aesthetic and the definition of man on which our present civilization is erected. Up till the early part of the nineteenth century, literature has fitted quite easily within the general evolution of thought. It could develop parallel to the most dynamic undertakings of that period; it was normally and naturally part of its growth and conflicts. Swift and Diderot, as well as Byron and Chateaubriand, are for the most part within the continuity of their times: their language is the language of the inventive minds around them and their acts, as writers and individuals, befit the image held up to that generation as its ideal. And then suddenly, with Baudelaire, the poet disappears literally from the scene of the world. Not that he has become a revolutionary rebel; this would make him into a very active participant indeed. Instead, he simply ceases to exist. Even in a country like France, where the public tradition of literature is so strongly established, second-rate authors have to take over literary institutions to give them at least

an appearance of permanence. A complete divorce occurs between literature and the forces that are at work in the visible part of history. Together with other intellectual disciplines, poets go underground, not as a resistant, oppressed group, but as so many forgotten men. And when the decay of the prevailing system brings them back to the surface, we find ourselves without a language to apply to their enterprise. We try in vain to translate their concern into the vocabularies we know, a frustrating effort which not only fails to describe them (and leaves us with the somewhat uneasy conscience of betraying their intentions) but which also fails to renew words that have become unbearably empty and meaningless.

This indicates that the century that has preceded us, and whose values are still largely ours, advocated a concept of the human being that bypasses the ontological tensions of which aesthetic behavior, among others, is an expression. Such distortions of the human being are the basic movement of history. They may reach extremely far, but they never succeed in eliminating the parts of man which they have ignored. As long as they are growing, they are supported by the dynamic aspiration that shaped them. Projected in the future as something to be reached for or, better still, in the process of emerging out of an amorphous mass of desires, they have all the luster of the Idea at the moment of its crystallization. But as the Idea becomes institution, concerned only with its own self-perpetuation, the elements that it had kept suppressed revive in a new and brilliant light. On the one hand, those who have kept them alive appear suddenly in the heroic attitude of pioneers, an attitude which, in many cases, they would think of as quite ludicrous. On the other hand, the aggressive conservatism that accompanies the last decades of a disappearing system focuses most intensely on the movements most alien to its own nature. Such movements become sensitive points, areas of friction, where the mind hesitates between the temptation of destroying them for the sake of peace or of pursuing them with the exhilaration of new invention.

Such precisely is the situation of symbolism and the reason for its ambiguous position as both tantalizing and obscure. As a pure expression of the part of us that had been treated with scorn and indifference, it is bound to be idolized as a sacred revolt. As a symptom of the fundamental distortion imposed by the prevailing ideologies, it is normal that it should be considered scandalous and perverse. As a development independent from those ideologies, we should find our critical languages inadequate in dealing with its aims and achievements. All this makes symbolism into a very tempting subject indeed.

For it is in those sensitive points, where contradictions seem to clash, that we can find the new mental patterns and shapes for which we have been longing. By attempting to describe such stubborn phenomena, unwilling to submit to our present systems of logic, we can refresh a stilted vocabulary,

frozen by the persistent domination of an ideology which has imposed itself as an absolute. The problem, of course, goes well beyond the literary significance of symbolism. Similar deductions could be made in other fields of the arts, sciences and, of course, philosophy itself. One would discover corresponding areas, where a visible, recognized trend suddenly interferes with movements that seem to stem from obscure undercurrents. But, in the particular case of our present intellectual crisis, the domain of the aesthetic is a particularly sensitive one. The development of symbolism, with the sudden disappearance of the poetic from the public eye, and its subsequent penetration into other areas of literature and, beyond them, of general thought, to the point where the movement appears as a brilliant *beginning* much more than as a lone survival, this entire history is a perfect dramatized illustration of the general theory to which we would wish to relate this event. A dynamics of the development of literary – and other – histories, seen as a dialectic of *forms*, can be constructed from this starting point. And if we can consider the immediate influence of the symbolists as sufficiently behind us to dispel the need for a partisan attitude, then it will be legitimate and useful to resort to their work for the foundations of a general critical method.

Introduction to *Madame Bovary* (1965)

Ever since its publication in 1857, *Madame Bovary* has been one of the most discussed books in the history of world literature. Despite the distinction and importance of his other novels, Flaubert had to reconcile himself to the fact that he became known, once and forever, as the author of *Madame Bovary*. The popularity of the novel has increased rather than diminished with time. Numberless translations exist in various languages; the word “bovarysme” has become part of the French language; the myth surrounding the figure of Emma Bovary is so powerful that, as in the case of Don Quixote, or Don Juan, or Faust, one has to remind oneself that she is a fiction and not an actual historical person; the literary influence on subsequent novelists in France and elsewhere is of determining importance and the critical response to the book is of such high quality that it can be said, without exaggeration, that contemporary criticism of fiction owes more to this novel than to any other nineteenth-century work.

Why this extraordinary response to a work which, for its author, was to be primarily an exercise preparatory to later novels? The first notoriety of *Madame Bovary* was due to a *succès de scandale*, the curiosity awakened by a publication judged scandalous enough to excite the ire of the censors. The 20,000 or 30,000 readers who bought the earliest edition published by Michel Lévy may have been somewhat disappointed to discover a book that was severe rather than salacious. But the universality of the theme, the quality of the style, the truthfulness of the realistic and satirical detail have kept their appeal long after extra-literary motives for attracting attention to *Madame Bovary* had died down. Something in the destiny of the heroine and of the main supporting characters, as well as in the destiny of the book itself, surrounds it with the aura of immortality that belongs only to truly major creations. Though some critics have expressed their preference for *The Sentimental Education* over *Madame Bovary*, something exemplary about the latter novel makes it into a main articulation of literary history,

perhaps because, like its model *Don Quixote*, it captures the full intricacy of the relationship between reality and fiction out of which the entire genre of the novel originates.

The genesis of *Madame Bovary* is well known and abundantly documented in Flaubert's letters, as well as in numerous eyewitness accounts from his friends and contemporaries. Flaubert was thirty years old and far from a beginner at his craft when he started out on *Madame Bovary*: he had completed the first versions of the *Sentimental Education* and of *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, and written several shorter tales, many of them rich enough to be considered first outlines for complete novels. But he had never published, although his literary vocation had asserted itself since his adolescence in the form of an irrevocable decision to be a writer.

His correspondence allows us to follow the progress of the novel with unusual precision. During the more than four years that he worked at *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert was in daily contact with his close friend and collaborator Louis Bouilhet. The letters to Bouilhet reveal the painstaking care with which he documented every single detail of the story, as well as the torture to which he submitted himself to achieve the stylistic perfection for which he strove. On a more personal and intimate level, the letters to Louise Colet are like the private diary of his creative effort, a chronicle of the labors, sacrifices, and satisfactions involved in the elaboration of a masterpiece. This correspondence shows Flaubert's complete immersion in his project at the exclusion of any other activity, over a long period of agonizingly slow progress. Unlike such writers as Balzac, Dickens, or Dostoevsky who had to write at great speed, Flaubert's obsessive concern with stylistic perfection never allowed him to produce more than a few paragraphs a day, and he would submit these to endless revision. Certain passages of the novel exist in as many as eleven different versions.

When the work was finally completed in 1856, its publication nearly ended in disaster. It appeared in serial form in the *Revue de Paris*, a journal directed by Flaubert's close friend Maxime Du Camp in collaboration with Laurent-Pichat. For a book that painted such a merciless picture of reality, the time and the place were hardly safe; the government of Napoleon III was anything but permissive toward the press, and the republican tendencies of the *Revue de Paris* made it into an easy target for censorship. Even from a purely literary point of view, realistic writers such as Duranty or Champfleury, or the painter Courbet, were under steady attack from conservative critics. The editors of the review thus had some reason to view the particularly audacious aspects of the novel with alarm. Their tactics in trying to protect themselves, however, were inept. Hoping that the suppression of certain passages might tone down the shock effect of the whole, they made a series of clumsy and useless emendations that damaged the unity of the

book but failed to appease the authorities. Flaubert protested against the arbitrary suppressions: “You lose your time attacking details. The element of brutality is not at the surface but at the heart of the book ... one cannot change the *blood* of a work. All you can do is make it poorer.”¹ He was right. The scandal broke in spite of last-minute changes. Using *Madame Bovary* in part as a pretext to attack a politically hostile periodical, the administration suspended the review and started a legal action against Flaubert and his publishers. An enlightened judge, an eloquent defense attorney (Senard), and an inept prosecutor turned the tide. Flaubert and the *Revue de Paris* were acquitted on February 7, 1856 and the novel was allowed to appear in book form without suppressions. No publisher could have dreamt of better publicity to promote the book and when it appeared in April of the same year it was immensely successful. But it would take many years before the textual errors of the first edition would be corrected and an accurate edition of *Madame Bovary* made available.

The critical reception of the book was mixed, though on the whole not unfavorable. The violence of tone and action upset many critics, but their strictures were almost always accompanied by expressions of admiration for the style. Curillier-Flauray, the rival of Saint-Beuve at the *Journal des Débats*, was one of the few critics to attack Flaubert’s style as marred by romantic flamboyance that does not blend with the harshness of the realism. Most of the other hostile critics preferred to attack the political subversiveness associated with realism rather than *Madame Bovary* itself: “*Madame Bovary*,” writes A. de Pontmartin in the *Correspondant*, “is the pathological glorification of the senses and of the imagination in a disappointed democracy ... it proves once and for all that realism means literary democracy.”² Saint-Beuve’s own article reflects many of the hesitations with which a late romantic temperament reacts to the new sound of the novel: he did, however, recognize the historical importance of the occasion. Flaubert’s fellow Norman, the novelist and critic Barbey d’Aureville (who was to react very negatively to Flaubert’s later work), wrote a penetrating article in which he rather overemphasizes the impersonal objectivity of the style in terms that are reminiscent of some of Flaubert’s own statements in his correspondence. The deepest understanding was to come from Baudelaire, whose article was the only one to satisfy Flaubert completely. “You have penetrated the inner mystery of the work as if you and I shared the same mine,” he wrote to Baudelaire. “You have felt and understood me entirely.”³

1. *Correspondence* III, 87.

2. Quoted by René Desharmes and René Dumesnil in *Autour de Flaubert: Etudes historiques et documentaires* (Paris: Mercure, 1922).

3. *Correspondence* III, 148.

Flaubert remained aloof from the public debates stirred up by *Madame Bovary*. He was to go on to even harsher, more ironic and uncompromising works: *The Sentimental Education* and *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, none of which found an even remotely comparable response among the public.

Ever since the articles by Saint-Beuve, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire, the amount of critical and scholarly publications on *Madame Bovary* has reached staggering proportions. Scholarship and literary erudition have put the criticism of *Madame Bovary* on a sound basis: the critical edition established by René Dumesnil (1945–48) gives an authoritative text; the publication of the *Correspondence* has considerably extended our insight into the mind of Flaubert and into the genesis of his novel. The Conard edition already contained samples of Flaubert's voluminous notes for *Madame Bovary*, and several specialists of Flaubert studies; among them, most prominently, D. L. Demorest, in his 1931 thesis on *Figurative and Symbolic Expression in the Work of Flaubert*, has drawn attention to the wealth of material contained in these early drafts. Some of Flaubert's most original writing was to be found in discarded notes that the author, with fierce integrity, had ruthlessly eliminated from the pared down and rigidly economical final version. A highly technical edition of the early drafts was published in 1936 by Mlle. Gabrielle Leleu, librarian at Rouen, entitled *Madame Bovary: Sketches and Unpublished Fragments*. Later, with the assistance of the eminent Flaubert scholar Jean Pommier, the same author compiled a so-called "new version" of *Madame Bovary*, a composite text that prints the fragments in continuous succession. This highly readable version never actually existed in this form, but it has nevertheless provided recent critics of *Madame Bovary* with invaluable source material. In the present edition, we are able to include a selection of letters relevant to *Madame Bovary*, based on the selection made by Frances Steegmuller in his edition of Flaubert's letters in English, and a selection of some of the most characteristic samples of the early versions, together with an evaluation of these versions by the critic Albert Béguin.

The historical and factual sources of the novel have been subjected to an equally thorough-going investigation. It had been known from the start that Flaubert had used life models in writing *Madame Bovary*. With a characteristic mixture of historical precision combined with a vivid interest in other people's love life, French scholars have spent a great deal of ingenuity tracking down the "real" sources of *Madame Bovary*. As is often the case in such investigations, the more the research progressed, the more complicated and inconclusive the results became: it seems clearly established that Flaubert used as a model a certain Deslauriers, a doctor whose wife, Delphine Couturier, committed suicide by poison and who lived in a Norman town called Ry that has much in common with Yonville l'Abbaye. But many other

sources have been proposed, and the entire question is far from being clearly settled. Moreover, the whole problem of the exegetic value of such investigations has been raised. Rather than involving the student in the minutiae of source investigation (quite fascinating when conducted by specialists such as Pommier or Dumesnil), we have preferred to include the essays by Jean-Paul Sartre and René Dumesnil in which the importance of source material for an understanding of *Madame Bovary* is discussed in more general terms.

The Sartre essay may seem difficult to follow for readers who are not familiar with Sartre's recent thought and vocabulary. Yet it indicates how sociological or psychological methods of interpretation can be combined with intrinsic or stylistic analysis to reach a full understanding of Flaubert's project when he undertook to write *Madame Bovary*. Sartre blueprints a method that moves backwards and forwards between the work and the life with a high degree of awareness of the complex relationship between both. We are far removed from oversimplified deterministic schemes that consider the work as a result of outside forces. Still, Sartre's inquiry is, in the last analysis, oriented toward the man Flaubert rather than toward the work *Madame Bovary*. One may think that relationships such as those indicated by René Dumesnil, when he points out the similarity between the early story *Passion et Vertu* and the later *Madame Bovary*, are even more revealing than the relationship between Flaubert's milieu, his childhood, and his novels that Sartre hopes to discover by means of his regressive–progressive method.

The selection of the Essays in Criticism, has been, for the present Critical Edition, a nearly hopeless task. Between 1857 and the present, all leading French writers and critics have something noteworthy to say about *Madame Bovary*: Brunière, Faguet, Jules de Gaultier (who coined the expression “bovarysme” in a book by that name), but also the Goncourts, Maupassant, Zola, Paul Bourget, and later Gide, Mauriac, and Proust. None of this material could be included, sometimes because the statements apply to Flaubert as a whole rather than to *Madame Bovary*, sometimes because they are too general or, on the contrary, (as in the case of Proust) too technical and particular to be translated into English. One can consider the fragment from Thibaudet as a good example of French criticism during the period between the two world wars. But the principle of our selection has very definitely been oriented toward problems of method that are important in the contemporary criticism of fiction. *Madame Bovary* is a starting-point for many of these techniques, and it was thought interesting to let students compare for themselves the results achieved by some of these methods. The close interdependence between several of the essays (a critic will frequently take off from the remark made by one of his predecessors and carry it further) gives insight into the unified development of critical thought in the twentieth century. This opportunity for comparative criticism also permits

us to introduce to American students some examples of recent European criticism not yet available in translation.

Recent criticism of *Madame Bovary* has for its main concern the study of narrative and metaphorical structures in the novel. In his essays on Flaubert, Henry James commented on the "point of view" of the narrator in relation to his characters, a concept that was to dominate the contemporary theory of fiction. The same issue was raised, in a more technical way, by Proust in a 1920 controversy with Albert Thibaudet, in connection with Flaubert's use in dialogues of reported (rather than directly quoted) speech. This aspect to Flaubert's style (also stressed by linguists such as Bally or, more recently, by Stephen Ullmann in his *Style in the French Novel*) is too technical to be included here, except for a brief introductory statement by von Wartburg that serves as a reminder of the importance of linguistic analysis in the description of Flaubert's style. On the other hand, James's own remarks and their subsequent elaboration by the English critic Percy Lubbock still constitute a useful exposition of Flaubert's use of point of view. The existence in *Madame Bovary* of long passages without identifiable narrative function indicates that certain elements of the novel lie beyond the reach of the point-of-view technique. At least two kinds of diction seem to alternate and to interact subtly throughout the book: that of an objective narrator who can stand back and observe while maintaining an ironic distance, and that of a subjective consciousness without "point of view" that freely espouses the reveries and spontaneously uses the richly metaphorical style that seems to be Flaubert's natural idiom. French critics have been, on the whole, most interested in exploring this subjective voice, whereas English and American critics have paid most attention to the objective narrative techniques. This implies that the French concentrate on the metaphorical and figural elements of the style that abound especially in the early versions. As Harry Levin's essay demonstrates, American commentators have by no means ignored the thematic importance of recurrent metaphorical patterns, but their efforts are primarily directed toward a description of the novel's form. In his epoch-making essay on "The Interior Environment in Flaubert," the French critic Charles du Bos recaptures the creative consciousness of the writer from the inside, by an act of sympathetic understanding. Jean-Pierre Richard refines and expands du Bos's suggestions in his detailed description of Flaubert's material imagination. Combining du Bos's insight into Flaubert's subjectivity with Auerbach's awareness of the complex structures of consciousness at work in *Madame Bovary*, Georges Poulet was able to break through the narrative surface of the novel and to reveal a deeper pattern that reproduces the very pulsations of Flaubert's mind. It is clear that a fully inclusive study of *Madame Bovary* would have to combine the French study of metaphors with the American study of narrative structures

in the novel. The concluding essay by Jean Rousset, which juxtaposes a Jamesian examination of point of view with a thematic study of a central metaphor, reveals some of the possibilities contained in such a combination of European with American critical methods.

I feel particularly indebted to Prof. D. L. Demorest of Ohio State University, whose exhaustive knowledge of Flaubert and of the Flaubert bibliography has been of considerable assistance in preparing this edition. He brought to my attention several articles and essays that are not generally known, including the article by Albert Béguin on the early versions of the novel. Even highly specialized students of this important critic had failed to record this text. My only regret is that lack of space made it impossible to incorporate more of his valuable suggestions.

Introduction to *The Portable Rousseau* (1973)

The notion of textual allegory, as it derives from the *Social Contract*, provides the generalizing principle which makes it possible to consider theotropical or ethical allegories as particularized versions of this generative model and thus to break down the significance of such thematic distinctions. It also implies that the terminology of generality, particularity, and generative power has a degree of referential undecidability which should exclude any simplified metaphorical use of these terms, while anticipating the failure to achieve such vigilance, or such immunity to rhetorical seduction. If, for example, we consider the introduction of a theological dimension into the political context of the *Social Contract* as the thematization of a structure that cannot be separated from the textuality of any text (the inherent necessity, for any operative language, to postulate transcendental signification), then the “inclusion” of a deconstructed *version* of the *Profession de foi* within the context of the *Social Contract* is predictable, since both works can be considered as the same political allegory, the first on a figural, the second on a textual level. The *Profession de foi* is the text whose textuality the *Social Contract* deconstructs. This insertion of the *Profession* into the *Contract* becomes manifest in the chapter “De la Religion Civil,” which was presumably composed as an extension of the earlier chapter on the Legislator, and reads like a translation of the *Profession de foi* into the language of Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*. The question raised about the referential efficacy of the *Profession de foi* and of religious texts in general thus have to be subsumed under the more systematic, but also more troublesome, relationship between the language of statement and the language of action, between grammar and figure, as it becomes articulated in a textual allegory. Within the limits of this study, there is no need to work this out in detail.

The reading of Rousseau in terms of rhetorical theory can be concluded at this point, for it is doubtful that it could yield further insight into the constitution and the function of figural models. This does not mean that the notion

of textural allegory, despite its wide “generalizing” scope, can be considered as the horizon of all rhetorical systems, as a paradigm or a *figure limite* that closes off the rhetorical domain. From a curious note to the garden letter of *Julie* (LV, p. 483), we know that Rousseau considers any horizon as confining, whereas the illusion of seclusion allows for imaginative expansion. Whenever we seem to be closing off the rhetorical field, we, in fact, open up a new space of rhetorical juxtapositions and metafigural chains.

For the textural allegory is itself a polymorphous structure from which a new strand of rhetorical models can be derived. The reading of the *Social Contract* showed that the presumed theory turns out to be, in fact, a narrative. But the plot of the *Social Contract* is only one of the various stories that the textual allegory is empowered to tell, and the difference in the plot structure can be symptomatic of a difference in the structure of the rhetorical mode. Rousseau’s own work provides us with at least one instance of another plot structure that unfolds a figural tangle similar to that of the *Social Contract*. Whereas the *Social Contract* states the last of the text with considerable precision but fails to heed the warning that this text spells out with regard to its performative mode, one can imagine a different plot, in which the warning is being obeyed, but at the cost of the constative, theoretical clarity. The necessary loss of the one at the benefit of the other is built within the system and escapes intentional control. We saw, for example, that the *Social Contract* could not help but promise precisely because it was capable of formulating its own textural structure so accurately. In the same way, a textural allegory that refuses the promise it implies cannot help but obscure the insight into the structural law of its own textuality. In Rousseau’s work, the best example for this pattern is the novel *La nouvelle Héloïse* taken as a whole, (though without the Second Preface which, within this perspective, is alien to the model we are trying to describe).

That the complete *La nouvelle Héloïse* is a textural allegory like the *Social Contract* and no longer like the *Profession de foi*, a thematized allegory susceptible to metaphorical deconstruction, is evident from the explicit passage, at the end of part III, from a [word missing] to a contractual, political plot. Julie’s marriage, a distinctly legal action, very clearly marks this articulation, of which the equivalent would be the passage, in the pre-text of the *Social Contract*, from Diderot’s natural to Rousseau’s contractual law. *La nouvelle Héloïse* thus acquires a genuinely theoretical dimension, unlike its Preface or the *Profession de foi*, which function politically on the level of *praxis* only and are unable to account for their own efficacy. Unlike the *Social Contract*, however, *La nouvelle Héloïse* rigorously abstains from holding out promises of any kind, although it had reached a power of theoretical generalization that would enable it to do so. The deconstructive rigor of the first half, culminating in letter 18 of part III, goes beyond the mere relapse into metaphorical

diction that was pointed out earlier. The structure of this relapse becomes more complex than the description we gave of it (which remains restricted to the relationship between Julie, Saint Preux, and a divine, transcendental power), which left out of consideration the area of signification associated with Wolmar and Clarens. Clarens cannot be considered simply as another relapse into the rhetorical system that governs the relationship between Julie and Saint Preux, and the prominent place it occupies in books IV and V is bound to have some bearing on the significance of the Julie–Saint-Preux dialogue in the concluding section of the novel. As the product of a contractual and legal action, no longer inspired by individual passions, it has a general significance that could give it the exemplary function of a legal and political text. The political, legal, and economic institutions that it describes have a more than anecdotal significance and are not just a backdrop to the story of personal involvement. The renunciation of what the somewhat later fragment “Du Bonheur Public” (1762?) will call “Bonheur des individus” III (510) in favor of a more collective form of well-being must be taken seriously unless one wishes to reduce the second part of *La nouvelle Héloïse* to a lengthy banality. Rousseau’s attempt to include the transition from a private to a public affectivity within one single text, and *not* to treat them as the specular image of each other (as even Flaubert can be said to be doing in *The Sentimental Education*), can be seen as the textual counterpart of what, on the level of the plot, is treated as the story of a renunciation. What is being given up by the marriage to Wolmar is precisely the possibility of a metaphorical totalization that unites private to public well-being, the same illusion that is being deconstructed in “Du Bonheur Public.” The 1762 fragment is fully anticipated by the four- or five-year earlier *La nouvelle Héloïse*. Once this step is taken, nothing would have prevented Rousseau from making the description of Clarens as rigorous, systematic, and, hence, as promissory of political order as the *Social Contract* was to be a couple of years later (I leave it to anyone’s imagination to conjecture what the plot of such a novel would have been; it could hardly have been more awkward and far-fetched than what now makes up the dramatic “action” of the second half of *La nouvelle Héloïse*, the pre-determined plot structure.) Yet, he chose not to do so. That Clarens, despite its theoretical consistency, is not the political model of the state, be it Rome, Lacedaemonia, the Judaic diaspora, or the theoretical model outlined in the *Social Contract*, is clear, among other things from the continued presence of erotic patterns. Erotic love is the figure of a stage of metaphorical mystification that has been explicitly and definitively deconstructed at least from the end of book III on. The same letter, as we saw earlier, also prefigures Julie’s unavoidable relapse into the same pattern of error that she denounces with great clarity and eloquence, but it nevertheless allows for the transition to the political acumen of the

novel's second half. Whereas a part of Julie relapses into a "natural" pattern of erotic gratification and desire that could never be a valid model for political order, another part of her is capable of a degree of "generalization" that allows for the production of a systematic theoretical discourse. The relationship between these two parts of *Julie* remains all the more enigmatic since the two areas are not separated from each other but appear in a mixed form.

The concluding exchange of letters between Julie and Saint Preux illustrate the extent of the relapse. Whereas the education of Saint Preux has progressed to the point where the identification with his alter ego Wolmar is nearly complete, Julie's tone and diction are reminiscent of Saint Preux at the height of their erotic involvement. The temporal organization of her world is more than ever that of desire: "Tant qu'on desire on peut se passer d'être heureux; on s'attend à le devenir; si le Bonheur ne vient point, l'espoir se prolonge, et le charme de l'illusion dure autant que la passion qui le cause. Ainsi cet état se suffit à lui-même, et l'inquiétude qu'il donne est une sorte de jouissance qui supplée à la réalité.... On jouit moins de ce qu'on obtient que de ce qu'on espere, et l'on n'est heureux qu'avant d'être heureux" (II, 693). In the world of the affections, present anticipation substitutes for a future fulfillment known to be inadequate; the pattern is highly familiar from a lengthy series of "nostalgic" readings to which the works of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Proust lend themselves deceptively well. This temporal structure differs in all respects from that of the promise as we derived it from the *Social Contract*. The promise establishes a relationship of constancy between a present enunciation and the future referent of this enunciation; it is affectively undetermined, for it is entirely irrelevant whether the enunciation or the execution of the promise is to be pleasant or painful. The semiological model is that of a relationship between enunciation and meaning, whose differences are reduced to the special metaphor of a definite time *segment* and thus lose the indeterminacy of a truly temporal system, open toward the future and "evermore to be" (Wordsworth). Desire, on the other hand is purely referential; and is, as such, the phenomenal [*sic*] manifestation of the rhetorical fallacy of reference or, if one wishes to call it that way, the foundation of the (referential) conscious self. The temporality of desire is phenomenal and metaphysical, whereas the temporality of promise (which is precisely not hope) is, at least in part, the grammatical mode of a future tense that exists independently of referential considerations. Julie can therefore be expected to have little consideration for contractual promises: "La promesse qu'il faut tenir sans cesse est celle d'être honnête-homme et toujours ferme dans son devoir; changer quand il change, ce n'est pas légèreté, c'est constance. Vous faites bien, peut-être, alors de promettre ce que vous feriez mal aujourd'hui de tenir." The very point of promise is that it is independent of selfhood and of the affective integration of intent to action

(*honnêteté*), so that the only thing that the promise can never promise is the inconstancy which Julie advocates. The perfectly valid [word missing] that no promise can ever be kept can itself never be a statement of promise. Julie could disavow her own marriage contract in the name of this statement, but this would go against the narrative logic of the plot structure. By putting this confusion within the context of a tension between the grammatical logic of the plot and illocutionary mode of structure just quoted is delusive. In a passage like this, the figure of Julie becomes estranged from her own text in a manner that has never been allowed to occur earlier in the book. Not only is she allowed to relapse into former patterns of error (which would be entirely consistent with the structure of the novel as an allegory of non-signification or unreadability), but she is allowed to flaunt the laws of her own text which is based on a promise (for instance, on the fact that the marriage contract between Julie and Wolmar can never be revoked). (This confusion on the textual level is characteristic of this version of textual allegory.)

The same confusion appears in the religious language of the same three letters (6, 7, and 8), thus voiding the claim, made by many interpreters of the novel, including Starobinski, that a genuine religious transcendence takes over after the political plot has run aground. The politics of Clarens and the religion of Julie go awry for exactly the same reasons. For Julie's theology is much less consistent than that of the *Vicaire Savoyard*. The *Profession de foi* is genuinely ambivalent, in a manner determined by the conceptual and rhetorical apparatus that governs it, whereas Julie's final letters are a suspended state of systematic confusion. Engaged in serious theological argument by Saint Preux on the validity of prayer (the transcendental reverse of the political promise of the *Contract*), she resorts to the same pragmatic and affective justification for religious actions that also governs her notions of civil virtue, extreme proselytism, conversion, etc. The shift from the religious fervor that still comprises the prayer and the devotional language of the marriage scene to the prudent piety of the concluding letter is not the result of a demystification but of an inability to distinguish between private and public happiness. Religion is to substitute for the unhappiness brought on by a sensibility of desire: "Ne trouvant donc rien ici-bas qui lui suffice, mon ame aride cherche ailleurs de quoi la remplir; en s'élevant à la source du sentiment et de l'être, elle y perd sa sécheresse et sa languer; elle y renaît, elle s'y ranime, elle y trouve un nouveau ressort, elle y puise une nouvelle vie..." (694). We are exactly at the stage of mystification that inspires the letters to Sophie. Neither does the end of *Julie*, the Socratic death scene with its mixture of sentiment, parody, "folie," and genuine wisdom, in any way convey the promise of a *Vita Nova* that re-elevates Julie's language to the level of divine identification reached in the marriage scene. The highly public death scene, the discussions with Saint Preux with regard to pietism,

Madame Guyon [missing word] and all go back to a more secular, public, and social-minded religiosity, without, however, beginning to approach the radical secularization and politicization of religion in the *Contrat Social*. What exists in the violent mode of tension and aporia in the *Profession de foi*, in the *Social Contract*, in “Du Bonheur Public,” in letter 18 or part III of Julie, and even in the oddity of tone of the letters to Sophie, becomes systematic confusion in Julie’s last letters. It would be debilitating misreading to interpret this confusion as a weakness of the novel or as a “criticism” of the character Julie by its author. This would imply that *La nouvelle Héloïse* is a programmatic, ideological work advocating a specific conviction, and, subsequently, a straightforward diegetic statement rather than an allegory. Allegories do not “represent” or evaluate “characters.”

The confusion instead indicates the deliberate refusal to promise a clarity that the epistemological and ethical deconstructions would have made possible. Such a renunciation could be stated in a variety of existential modes but, within the perspective of its textuality, it provides an alternative version of the plot narrated in the *Social Contract*. It would therefore be false to follow the suggestion of chronology and to consider *Julie* as a text that is still confused but that already contains the elements that will be sorted out and clearly organized in later works (such as the *Social Contract*). The relationship between *La nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Social Contract* is less simple: the confusion of the one affects the clarity of the other, and it is easier to move from the *Social Contract* to *La nouvelle Héloïse* than visa versa.

The allegorical consistency of *La nouvelle Héloïse* is confirmed by the fact that Julie remains until the end the undisputed sovereign of Clarens, the monarch who has right of death and life over its inhabitants and of which Wolmar can say, “que nous sommes tous les sujets.” She remains the embodiment of a certain political order that will reveal the same confusions as her religious and erotic sensibility. Clarens both is and is not a state, even more obscurely so than the *Profession de foi* is and is not a theist tract. It has all the systematic, hierarchical, and legal superstructures of a state, but the foundations are ambivalent and undetermined. Like the family in “Du Bonheur Public,” it is a mere extension of a private happiness to collectivity, an attempt to achieve the reconciliation between family and state against which the first version of the *Social Contract* explicitly warns the theoreticians of politics (the readers of Barnet and Ramsay). Clarens allows for the “double perspective” of the general system as well as a structure of personal gratification. It does not ignore the tensions stemming from the incompatibility between the two perspectives, for there are none of its pseudo-idyllic scenes (the garden of Julie, the wine harvest, the “dîner d’Apollon,” the “matinée à l’Anglaise”) that contain all elements necessary for their affective reversal from pleasure into fear and embarrassment. But the tension refrains

from the explicit theorization: all the Clarens scenes are straight narratives, reported events, and not the theoretical programs of the *Social Contract*; what they narrate, however, are theoretical pictures and assumptions. At stake here is not a generic distinction between a novel and a treatise, but a distinction in plot structure between texts that, in spite of themselves, have to be narratives as well as treatises.

The same systemic confusion between public and private well-being accounts for all the characteristic [missing word] of Clarens. Whereas “Du Bonheur Public” made it clear that the “happiness” of a state or society could only be evaluated with regard to another, foreign state, the relationship of Clarens to anything exterior to itself (be it other estates, Geneva, or Paris) is never considered. Like Julie’s garden, except as a totally unknown place of banishment, whoever enters it forgets the existence of any outside world. Various political realities (the Valais, Paris) play an active part in the first part of the novel, but as soon as the plot becomes political, the outside world disappears. The absence of any stress on civil religion, in the political sense given to this term in the *Social Contract*, within the social fabric of Clarens, is equally symptomatic. Monsieur de Wolmar, the closest we have to a legislator of Clarens, is a non-believer, and Julie, his executive counterpart, must resign herself to this situation. The separation between her private religion and Wolmar’s atheism is another instance of the confusion of thematization that the *Social Contract* theorizes out of existence. Finally, as a last indication of a list that could and should be continued at length, the economy of Clarens is perhaps the most striking instance of the mutual contamination of private and public spheres. This economy is described as strictly utilitarian, as steadily striving to unite “l’utile à l’agréable.” It may therefore seem consistent that the main product of this economy would be wine, as a commodity that pleasantly combines the satisfaction of needs with the luxury of pleasure. Yet pure wine, throughout the novel, in a chain of repeated figures that extends from the early Valais scene to the glass of undiluted wine Julie drinks on her deathbed, is an emblem of temptation and excess, always associated with the overcome illusion of the unmediated communion of darkness and light. The insane spectacle of Claire in one of the last scenes of the novel, deluded into an endless game of sublimations as a deliberate and theatrical hoax that threatens to rob her of life and reason, and it is the last in a sequence of Dionysian moments [*sic*]. Like the poison of the “Innoculation de l’amour,” wine is the drug, the *pharmkos*, that destroys by healing, and, in Julie’s Socratic death scene, it functions like the hemlock that brings together disciples of Socrates. “On m’a fait boire jusqu’à la lie la coupe amere et douce de la Sensibilité” (III, 733); Julie’s last statement brings together Euripides’s Bacchae and Socrates into a juxtaposition that will also produce the “Dunkeles Light” of Holderlin’s poetry, in which Dionysos

appears as the god of the general will (*Gemeingeiss*), and inspire Nietzsche's the *Birth of Tragedy*.

Rousseau always knew all there is to know about the Dionisian temptation of metaphor and his work reaches out well beyond the confines of this knowledge. The wine-producing Clarens, an entity that lives from the poison it produces, is too simple a paradox to justify the complexity of this text. It is true, but it bears a deceptive resemblance to the world as we know it and thus contributes a powerful obstacle to the reading of *La nouvelle Héloïse* as a non-representational, allegorical novel. But it is not easier to feign confusion in order not to promise than to promise (and hence, to lie) because the light cannot be conjured away. Rousseau's work has to be seen under the "double rapport" that makes his theory of figure into a generalized theory of textuality. For as long as there can be two textual plots, there can be many more. The promise withheld in *La nouvelle Héloïse* and stated in the *Social Contract* can also be stated and withheld at the same time. It can become an ironic promise.

On Reading Rousseau (1977)

Rousseau is one of the group of writers who are always being systematically misread. I spoke above [*sic* – this refers to a longer version of the text] of the blindness of critics with regard to their own insights, of the discrepancy, hidden to them, between their stated method and their perceptions. In the history as well as in the historiography of literature, this blindness can take on the form of a recurrently aberrant pattern of interpretation with regard to a particular writer. The pattern extends from highly specialized commentators to the vague *idées reçues* by means of which this writer is identified and classified in general histories of literature. It can even include other writers who have been influenced by him. The more ambivalent the original utterance, the more uniform and universal the pattern of consistent error in the followers and commentators. Despite the apparent alacrity with which one is willing to assent in principle to the notion that all literary and some philosophical language is essentially ambivalent, the implied function of most critical commentaries and some literary influences is still to do away at all costs with these ambivalences: by reducing them to contradictions, blotting out the disturbing parts of the work or, more subtly, by manipulating the systems of valorization that are operating within the texts. When, especially as in the case of Rousseau, the ambivalence is itself a part of the philosophical statement, this is very likely to happen. The history of Rousseau interpretation is particularly rich in this respect, both in the diversity of the tactics employed to make him say something different from what he said, and in the convergence of these misreadings toward a definite configuration of meanings. It is as if the conspiracy that Rousseau's paranoia imagined during his lifetime came into being after his death, uniting friend and foe alike in a concerted effort to misrepresent his thought.

Any attempt to explain why and how this distortion took place would lead afield [*sic*] to considerations that do not belong in this context. We can confine ourselves to a single, trivial observation in Rousseau's case, the

misreading is almost always accompanied by an overtone of intellectual and moral superiority, as if the commentators, in the most favorable of cases, had to apologize or to offer a cure for something that went astray in their author. Some inherent weakness made Rousseau fall back into confusion, bad faith, or withdrawal. At the same time, one can witness a regaining of self-assurance in the one who utters the judgment, as if the knowledge of Rousseau's weakness somehow reflected favorably on his own strength. He knows exactly what ails Rousseau and can therefore observe, judge, and assist him from a position of unchallenged authority, like an ethnocentric anthropologist observing a native or doctor advising a patient. The critical attitude is diagnostic and looks on Rousseau as if he were the one asking for assistance rather than offering his counsel. The critic knows something about Rousseau that Rousseau did not wish to know. One hears this tone of voice even in so sympathetic and penetrating a critic as Jean Starobinski, who did more than anyone else to free Rousseau studies from accumulated decades of wrong *idées reçues*. "No matter how strong the duties of his sympathy may be, the critic must understand (what the writer cannot know about himself) and not share in this ignorance,"¹ he writes, and although this claim is legitimate, especially since it applies, in this passage, to Rousseau's experiences of childhood, it is perhaps stated with a little too much professional confidence. The same critic goes on to suggest that the more paradoxical statements of Rousseau should not really be taken at face value:

... it often happens that he overstates his aim and forces the meaning, in splendid sentences that can hardly stand the test of being confronted with each other. Hence the frequently repeated accusations of sophistry... Should we take those lapidary maxims, those large statements of principle at face value? Should we not rather be looking beyond Jean-Jacques' words toward certain demands made by his soul, toward the vibration of his feelings? We do him perhaps a disservice when we expect him to provide rigorous coherence and systematic thought; his true presence is to be found, not in his discourse, but in the live and still undefined movements that precede his speech....²

Benevolent as it sounds, such a statement reduces Rousseau from the status of philosopher to that of an interesting psychological case: we are invited to discard his language as "des phrases splendides" that function as a substitute for pre-verbal emotional states into which Rousseau had no insight. The critic can describe the mechanism of the emotions in great detail, drawing his evidence from these very "phrases splendides" that cover up a by no means splendid personal predicament.

1. Jean Starobinski, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le peril de la reflexion," in *L'Oeil vivant* (Gallimard: Paris, 1961), p. 98.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

At first sight, Derrida's attitude toward Rousseau³ seems hardly different. He follows Starobinski in presenting Rousseau's decision to write as an attempt at the fictional recovery of a plenitude, a unity of being that he could never achieve in his life.⁴ The writer "renounces" life, but this renunciation is hardly in good faith: it is a ruse by means of which the actual sacrifice, which would imply the literal death of the subject, is replaced by a "symbolic" death that leaves intact the possibility of enjoying life, adding to it the possibility of enjoying the ethical value of an act of renunciation that reflects favorably on the person who performs it. The claim of the literary language to truth and generality is thus suspect from the start, based on a duplicity within a self that willfully creates a confusion between literal and symbolic action in order to achieve self-transcendence as well as self-preservation. The blindness of the subject to its own duplicity has psychological roots since the unwillingness to see the mechanism of self-deception is protective. A whole mythology of original innocence in a prereflective state followed by the recovery of this innocence on a more impersonal, generalized level – the story so well described by Starobinski in the Rousseau essay of "L'Oeil vivant" – turns out to be the consequence of a psychological ruse. It collapses into nothingness, in mere "phrases splendides," when the stratagem is exposed, leaving the critic to join ranks with the numerous other "juges de Jean-Jacques."

Even on this level, Derrida's reading of Rousseau diverges fundamentally from the traditional interpretation. Rousseau's bad faith toward literary language, the manner in which he depends on it while condemning writing as if it were a sinful addiction, is for Derrida the personal version of a much larger problem that cannot be reduced to psychological causes. In his relationship to writing, Rousseau is not governed by his own needs and desires, but by a tradition that defines Western thought in its entirety: the conception of all negativity (non-being) as absence and hence the possibility of an appropriation or a reappropriation of being (in the form of truth, of authenticity, of nature, etc.) as presence. This ontological assumption both conditions and depends on a certain conception of language that favors oral language or voice over written language (*écriture*) in terms of presence and distance: the unmediated presence of the self to its own voice as opposed to the reflective distance that separates this self from the written word. Rousseau is seen as one link in a chain that closes off the historical era of Western metaphysics. As such, his attitude toward language is not a psychological idiosyncrasy but a typical and exemplary fundamental philosophical premise. Derrida takes Rousseau seriously as a thinker and dismisses none of

3. Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Editions de Minuit: Paris, 1967), Part II. Henceforth referred to as *Gr.*

4. *Gr.*, pp. 204, 205.

his statements. If Rousseau nevertheless stands, or seems to stand, indicted, it is because the entirety of Western philosophy is defined as the possibility of self-indictment in terms of an ontology of presence. This would suffice to exclude any notion of superiority on Derrida's part, at least in the interpersonal sense of the term.

Rousseau's assertion of the primary of voice over the written word, his adherence to the myth of original innocence, his valorization of unmediated presence over reflection – all these are characteristics that Derrida could legitimately have derived from a long tradition of Rousseau interpreters. He wishes, however, to set himself apart from those who reduce these myths to self-centered strategies of Rousseau's psyche and prefers to approach him by way of a disciple who is more orthodox than Rousseau himself in accepting at face value dreams of the innocence and integrity of oral language. Derrida's main theme, the recurrent repression, in Western thought, of all written forms of language, their degradation to a mere adjunct or supplement to the live presence of the spoken word, finds a classical example in the works of Lévi-Strauss. The pattern in the passages from Lévi-Strauss that Derrida singles out for comment is consistent in all its details, including the valorization of music over literature and the definition of literature as a means to recoup a presence of which it is a distant and nostalgic echo, unaware that literature is itself a cause and a symptom of the separation it bewails.

Naive in Lévi-Strauss, the same assumptions become a great deal more devious and ambivalent when they appear in Rousseau himself. Whenever Rousseau designates the moment of unity that exists at the beginning of things, when desire coincides with enjoyment, the self and the other are united in the maternal warmth of their common origin, and consciousness speaks with the voice of truth, Derrida's interpretation shows, without leaving the text, that what is thus designated as a moment of presence always has to posit another, prior moment and so implicitly loses its privileged status as a point of origin. Rousseau defines voice as the origin of written language, but his description of oral speech or of music can be shown to possess, from the start, all the elements of distance and negation that prevent written language from ever achieving a condition of unmediated presence. All attempts to trace writing back to a more original form of vocal utterance lead to the repetition of the disruptive process that alienated the written word from experience in the first place. Unlike Lévi-Strauss, Rousseau "in fact, experienced the disappearance [of full presence] in the word itself, in the illusion of immediacy,"⁵ and he "recognized and analyzed [this disappearance] with incomparable astuteness." But Rousseau never openly declares this: he never asserts the disappearance of presence outright or faces its

5. *Gr.*, p. 203.

consequences. On the contrary, the system of valorization that organizes his writings favors the opposite trend, praises nature, origin, and the spontaneity of mere outcry, over their opposites, not only in the nostalgic, elegiac manner of a poetic statement that makes no claim to truth, but as a philosophical system. In the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, and also later, in *Emile* and the *Confessions*, Rousseau expounds the philosophy of unmediated presence that Lévi-Strauss took over uncritically and that Starobinski tries to demystify in the name of a later, perhaps less enlightened, version of the same philosophy. Derrida's considerable contribution to Rousseau studies consists in showing that Rousseau's own texts provide the strongest evidence against his alleged doctrine, going well beyond the point reached by the most alert of his modern readers. Rousseau's work would then reveal a pattern of duplicity similar to what was found in the literary critics: he "knew," in a sense, that his doctrine disguised his insight into something closely resembling its opposite, but he chose to remain blind to this knowledge. The blindness can then be diagnosed as a direct consequence of an ontology of unmediated presence. It remains for the commentator to undo, with some violence, the historically established pattern or, as Derrida puts it, the "orbit" of significant misinterpretation – a pattern of which the first example is to be found in Rousseau's own writings – and thus, by a process of "deconstruction," to bring to light what had remained unperceived by the author and his followers.

Within the orbit of my own question, the attention has to be directed toward the status of this ambivalent "knowledge" that Derrida discovers in Rousseau. The text of *De la Grammatologie* necessarily fluctuates on this point. At times, it seems as if Rousseau were more or less deliberately hiding from himself what he did not want to know: "Having, in a way ... identified this power which, by opening up the possibility of speech, disrupts the subject that it creates, prevents it from being present to its own signs, saturates its speech with writing, Rousseau is nevertheless more eager to conjure it out of existence than to assume the burden of its necessity."⁶ "Conjurer" (as well as the weaker "effacer" that is used elsewhere in the same context) supposes some awareness and, consequently, a duplicity within the self, a degree of deliberate self-deception. The ethical overtone of deceit, implying some participation of the will, is apparent in several other descriptions that use a vocabulary of transgression: "The replacement of mere stressed sound by articulated speech is the origin of language. The modification of speech by writing took place as an extrinsic event at the very beginning of language. It is the origin of language, Rousseau describes this without openly saying so.

6. *Gr.*, p. 204.

In contraband.”⁷ But at other moments it appears instead as if Rousseau were in the grip of a fatality that lies well beyond the reach of his will: “Despite his avowed intent [to speak of origins] Rousseau’s discourse is governed [se laisse contraindre] by a complication that always takes on the form of an excess, a “supplement” to the state of origin. This does not eliminate the declared intent but inscribes it within a system that it no longer controls [qu’elle ne domine plus].”⁸ “Se laisser contraindre” unlike “conjurer” or “effacer” is a passive process, forced upon Rousseau by a power that lies beyond his control. As the word, “inscribe” (italicized by Derrida), and the next sentence⁹ make clear, this power is precisely that of written language whose syntax undermines the declarative assertion. Yet the act of “conjurer” also occurred by means of written language, so the model is not simply that of a pre-lingual desire that would necessarily be corrupted or overtaken by the transcendental power of language: language is being smuggled into a presumably languageless state of innocence, but it is by means of the same written language that it is then made to vanish: the magic wand that should “conjure” the written word out of existence is itself made of language. This double valorization of language is willed and controlled as the crux of Derrida’s argument: only by language can Rousseau conquer language, and this paradox is responsible for the ambivalence of his attitude toward writing.¹⁰ The exact epistemological status of this ambivalence cannot be clarified: things do not happen as if Rousseau were at least semi-conscious when engaged in the recovery of an unmediated presence and entirely passive when engaged in undermining it. A terminology of semi-consciousness is made to apply to the two contrary impulses: to eliminate awareness of non-presence (conjurer) as well as to assert it (en contrebande). Derrida’s text does not function as if the discrimination that concerns us, namely, the mode of knowledge governing the implicit as opposed to the explicit statement, could be made in terms of the orientation of the thought (or the language) away from or toward the recouping of presence. The awareness of distance, in Rousseau, is at times stated in a blind, at times in a semi-conscious language, and the same applies to the awareness of presence. Rousseau truly seems to want it both ways, the paradox being that he wants wanting and non-wanting at the same time. This would always assume some degree of awareness, though the awareness may be directed against itself.

7. *Gr.*, p. 443.

8. *Gr.*, p. 345.

9. *Gr.*, p. 345. “The desire for origin becomes a necessary and unavoidable function [of language], but it is governed by a syntax that is without origin.”

10. *Gr.*, p. 207.

The “difference between an implied meaning, a nominal presence and a thematic exposition”¹¹ and all such distinctions within the cognitive status of language are really Rousseau’s central problem but it remains questionable whether he approached the problem explicitly or implicitly in terms of the categories of presence and distance. Derrida is brought face to face with the problem, but his terminology cannot take him any further. The structurization of Rousseau’s text in terms of a presence–absence system leaves the cognitive system of deliberate knowledge versus passive knowledge unresolved and distributes it evenly on both sides.

This observation should by no means be construed as a criticism of Derrida; on the contrary. His aim is precisely to show, by a demonstration *ad absurdum*, that a crucial part of Rousseau’s statement lies beyond the reach of a categorization in terms of presence and absence. On the all-important point of the cognitive status of Rousseau’s language, these categories fail to function as effective indicators; Derrida’s purpose in discrediting their absolute value as a base for metaphysical insight is thus achieved. Terms such as “passive,” “conscious,” “deliberate,” etc., all of which postulate a notion of the self as self-presence, turn out to be equally relevant or irrelevant when used on either side of the differential scale. This discredits the terms, not the author who uses them with an intent similar to that of parody: to devalue their claim to universal discriminatory power. The key to the status of Rousseau’s language is not to be found in his consciousness, in his greater or lesser awareness or control over the cognitive value of his language. It can only be found in the knowledge that this language, as language, conveys about itself, thereby asserting the priority of the category of language over that of presence – which is precisely Derrida’s thesis. The question remains why he postulates within Rousseau a metaphysics of presence which can then be shown not to operate, or to be dependent on the implicit power of a language which disrupts it and tears it away from its foundation. Derrida’s story of Rousseau’s getting, as it were, a glimpse of the truth but then going about erasing, conjuring this vision out of existence, while also surreptitiously giving in to it and smuggling it within the precinct he was assigned to protect, is undoubtedly a good story. It reverses the familiar pattern of “le braconnier devenue garde-chasse,” since it is rather the gamekeeper himself who is here doing the poaching. We should perhaps not even ask whether it is accurate, for it may well be offered as parody or fiction, without pretending to be anything else. But, unlike epistemological statements, stories do not cancel each other out, and we should not let Derrida’s version replace Rousseau’s own story of his involvement with

11. *Gr.*, p. 304. “C’est cette difference entre l’implication, la presence nominale et l’exposition thematique qui nous interesse ice.”

language. The two stories are not quite alike and their differences are worth recording; they are instructive with regard to the cognitive status, not only of Rousseau's but also of Derrida's language and beyond that, of the language of criticism in general. We should not be detained too long by differences in emphasis that could lead to areas of disagreement within the traditional field of Rousseau interpretation. Having deliberately bracketed the question of the author's knowledge of his own ambivalence, Derrida proceeds as if Rousseau's blindness did not require further qualification. This leads to simplifications in the description of Rousseau's stated positions on matters of ethics and history. In a Nietzschean passage in which he claims to have freed the question of language from all ethical valorization,¹² Derrida implies a single-minded, unalterable basis for moral judgment in Rousseau – the notion of a reliable “voice” of moral consciousness – that fails to do justice to the moral intricacies of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, or even to Derrida's own illuminating comments on the nature of pity in the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*. Having convincingly demonstrated that an arbitrary inside–outside dichotomy is used in *Essai sur l'origine des langues* to make it appear as if the hardships of distance and alienation were wrought upon man by an external catastrophic event, he makes it appear as if Rousseau understood this catastrophe in a literal sense, as an actual event in history or as the act of a personal god. Whenever a delicate transposition from the literary statement to its empirical referent occurs, Derrida seems to bypass Rousseau's complexities. Thus on the valorization of historical change or the possibility of progress, Derrida writes: “Rousseau wants to say that progress, however ambivalent, moves either towards deterioration, or toward improvement, the one or the other... But Rousseau describes what he does not want to say: that progress moves in both directions, toward good and evil at the same time. This excludes eschatological and teleological endpoints, just as difference – or articulation at the source – eliminates the archeology of beginnings.”¹³ In fact, it would be difficult to match the rigor with which Rousseau always asserts, at the same time and at the same level of explicitness, the simultaneous movement toward progress and retrogression that Derrida here proclaims. The end of the state of nature leads to the creation of societies and their infinite possibilities of corruption – but this apparent regression is counterbalanced, at the same time, by the end of solitude and the possibility of human love. The development of reason and consciousness spells the end of tranquility, but this tranquility is also designated as a state of intellectual limitation similar to that of an imbecile. In such descriptions, the use of progressive and regressive terms is evenly balanced: “perfectionner la

12. *Gr.*, p. 442.

13. *Gr.*, p. 326.

raison humaine” balances with “deteriorer l’espece,” “rendre mechant” with “rendre sociable.”¹⁴ The evolution of society toward inequality is far from being an unmitigated evil: we owe to it “ce qu’il y a de meilleur et de pire parmi les homes.” The end of history is seen as a relapse into a state that is undistinguishable from the state of nature, thus making the starting-point, the outcome, and the trajectory that leads from one to the other all equally ambivalent. Perhaps most typical of all is the curious movement of a long footnote to the *Discours sur l’origine de l’inégalité* in which, after having denounced with eloquence all the perils of civilization (“These are the manifest causes of all the miseries that opulence brings in the end to even the most admired of nations...”), Rousseau then demands from us, without any trace of irony, the utmost in civic obedience, while nevertheless despising the necessary recourse to a political order that generates its own abuses.¹⁵ The paradoxical logic of a simultaneously positive and negative evaluation, whenever the movement of history is involved, could not be more consistent. There can be some debate as to whether the progressive and regressive movements are indeed equally balanced: in less descriptive passages, Rousseau tends to see history as a movement of decline, especially when he speaks from the point of view of the present. But whenever the double valorization occurs, the structure is simultaneous rather than alternating. Derrida’s conclusion is based on an inadequate example; nor is there much evidence to be found elsewhere in Rousseau’s works for such an alternating theory of historical change.¹⁶

None of these points is substantial. Derrida could legitimately claim that passages in Rousseau on moral ambiguity, on the fictional (and therefore “inward”) quality of the external cause for the disruption of the state of nature, on the simultaneity of historical decline and historical progress, do not in the least invalidate his reading. They are the descriptive passages in which Rousseau is compelled to write the reverse of what he wants to say.

14. J. J. Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les homes*, in *Oeuvres completes*, vol. 111 (*Ecrits politiques*), Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, eds (Bibliothèque de la Pleiade: Paris, 1964), p. 189.

15. *Ibid.*, note IX, pp. 207–8.

16. Derrida (*Gr.*, p. 236) quotes the sentence from the *Essai sur l’origine des langues*: “La langue de convention n’appartient qu’à l’homme. Voilà pourquoi l’homme fait des progrès, soit en bien, soit en mal, et pourquoi les animaux n’en font point.” Rousseau here distinguishes man from the animal in terms of historical mutability. “Soit en bien, soit en mal” indicates that the change is morally ambivalent but does not describe an alternating movement. In the *Discours sur l’économie politique* or in the second part of the *Discours sur l’origine de l’inégalité*, the dialectical movement takes place between the principles of law and freedom, on the one hand, as opposed to the necessary decline of all human political order on the other. No alternating movement of reversal from a progressive to a regressive pattern is suggested.

The same would apply to a more complex aspect of Derrida's reading: the strange economy of Rousseau's valorization of the notion of origin and the manner in which it involves him in an infinitely regressive process; he always has to substitute for the discarded origin a "deeper," more primitive state that will, in turn, have to be left behind. The same pattern appears in Derrida when he chooses to maintain a vocabulary of origin to designate the non-original quality of all so-called beginnings – as when we are told precisely the structure that prevents all genuine origination from taking place. The use of a vocabulary of presence (or origin, nature, consciousness, etc.) to explode the claims of this vocabulary, carrying it to the logical dead-end to which it is bound to lead, is a consistent and controlled strategy throughout *De la Grammatologie*. We would be falling into a trap if we wanted to show Derrida deluded in the same manner that he claims Rousseau to be deluded. Our concern is not so much with the degree of blindness in Rousseau or in Derrida as with the rhetorical mode of their respective discourses.

It is not surprising that Derrida should be more detailed and eloquent in expounding the philosophy of written language and of "difference" that Rousseau rejects than in expounding the philosophy of plenitude that Rousseau wants to defend. He has, after all, a massive tradition of Rousseau interpretation behind him to support his view of him as an avowed philosopher of unmediated presence. In this respect, his image of Rousseau is so traditional that it hardly needs to be restated. The main bulk of his analysis therefore deals with the gradual chipping away of Rousseau's theory of presence under the onus of his own language. On at least two points, however, Derrida goes out of his way to demonstrate the strict orthodoxy of Rousseau's position with regard to the traditional ontology of Western thought, and in at least one of these instances, he can do so only at the expense of a considerable and original interpretative effort that has to move well beyond and even against the face value of Rousseau's own statement.¹⁷ Significantly, the two passages have to do with Rousseau's use and understanding of rhetorical figures. On the questions of nature, of self, of origin, even of morality, Derrida starts out from the current view in Rousseau interpretation and then proceeds to show how Rousseau's own text undermines his declared philosophical allegiances. But on the two points involving rhetoric, Derrida goes the tradition one better. It is obviously important for him that Rousseau's theory and practice of rhetoric would also fall under the imperatives of what he calls a "logocentric" ontology that privileges the spoken word over the written word. This is also the point at which we have to reverse the interpretative process and start reading Derrida in terms of Rousseau rather than vice versa.

17. I am referring to the passage on metaphor (*Gr.*, pp. 381–97) here discussed on pp. 24–6. [*Sic* – reference obscure.]

The two closely related rhetorical figures discussed by Derrida, both prominently in evidence in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, are imitation (mimesis) and metaphor. In order to demonstrate the logocentric orthodoxy of Rousseau's theory of metaphor, Derrida has to show that his conception of representation is based on an imitation in which the ontological status of the imitated entity is not put into question. Representation is an ambivalent process that implies the absence of what is being made present again, and this absence cannot be assumed to be merely contingent. However, when representation is conceived as imitation, in the classical sense of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, it confirms rather than undermines the plenitude of the represented entity. It functions as a mnemotechnic sign that brings back something that happened not to be there at the moment, but whose existence in another place, at another time, or in a different mode of consciousness is not challenged. The model for this idea of representation is the painted image, restoring the object to view as if it were present and thus assuring the continuation of its presence. The power of the image reaches beyond duplication of sense data: the mimetic imagination is able to convert non-sensory, "inward" patterns of experience (feelings, emotions, passions) into objects of perception and can therefore represent as actual, concrete presences, experiences of consciousness devoid of objective existence. This possibility is often stressed as the main function of non-representational art forms such as music: they imitate by means of signs linked by natural right with the emotions which they signify. A representative eighteenth-century aesthete, the abbé Du Bos, writes:

Just as the painter imitates the lines and colors of nature, the musician imitates the tone, the stresses, the pauses, the voice-inflections, in short all the sounds by means of which nature itself expresses its feelings and emotions. All these sounds ... are powerfully effective in conveying emotions, because they are the signs of passion instituted by nature itself. They receive their strength directly from nature, whereas articulated words are merely the arbitrary signs of the passions.... Music groups the natural signs of the passions and uses them artfully to increase the power of the words it makes into song. These natural signs have an amazing power in awakening emotions in those who hear them. They receive this power from nature itself.¹⁸

Classical eighteenth-century theories of representation persistently strive to reduce music and poetry to the status of painting.¹⁹ "La musique peint

18. Jean Baptiste (abbe) Du Bos, *Reflexions critiques sur la poesie et sur la peinture* (Paris, 1740) vol. I, pp. 435–6, 438.

19. *Ibid.* "Il n'y a de la verite dans une symphonie, composee pour imiter une tempeste, que lorsque le chant de la symphonie, son harmonie et son rythme nous font entendre un bruit pareil au fracas que les vents font dans l'air et au mugissement des flots qui s'entrechoquent, ou qui se brisent contre les rochers." (Du Bos, *op. cit.* p. 440.)

les passions” and *ut pictura poesis* are the great commonplaces of an aesthetic creed that involves its proponents in an interesting maze of problems, without, however, leading them to revise their premises. The possibility of making the invisible visible, of giving presence to what can only be imagined, is repeatedly stated as the main function of art. The stress on subject matter as the basis for aesthetic judgment stems from such a creed. It involves the representation of what lies beyond the senses as a means to confer upon it the ontological stability of perceived objects. One is interested in the subject matter primarily because it confirms that the unseen can be represented: representation is the condition that confirms the possibility of imitation as universal proof of presence. The need for the reassurance of such a proof stands behind many characteristic statements of the period and confirms its orthodoxy in terms of a metaphysics of presence.

At first sight, Rousseau seems to continue the tradition, specifically in the passages from the *Essai* that deal with the characterization of music and that differ little from the classical statements of his predecessors. His stress on the inwardness of music is entirely compatible with his proclaimed theory of music as imitation: “The sounds in a melody do not only affect us as sounds, but as signs of our emotions, of our feelings. This is how they produce within us the responses they express and how we recognize the image of our emotions in them.”²⁰ From the point of view of imitation, there is no difference between the outward physical impressions and the “impressions morales.” “Passions” and “objets” can be used interchangeably without modifying the nature of imitation.

Beautiful, well-shaded colors please our sight, but this pleasure is purely of the senses. Colors come to life and move us because of the design (“le dessin”), the imitation. We are affected by the objects represented and by the passions expressed in the design of the painting. The interest and the seductiveness of the picture does not stem from the colors. We will still be moved by the outline (“les traits”) of a painting that has been reduced to a print but, if we remove the outline, the colors will lose all their power. Melody does for music exactly what design does for painting....²¹

Derrida seems altogether justified in seeing Rousseau as a traditional expounder of a theory of imitation that bridges the distinction between external and inward themes.

Rousseau remains faithful to a tradition that is unaffected by his thought: he stays convinced that the essence of art is imitation (mimesis). Imitation duplicates presence: it is added to the presence of the entity which it replaces. It

20. J. J. Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, texte reproduit d'après l'édition A. Belin de 1817 (Bibliothèque du Graphe: Paris, n.d.), p. 534. Henceforth designated as *Essai*.

21. *Essai*, pp. 530–1.

transposes what is present into an “outside” version of this presence (elle fait done passer le present dans son dehors). In the inanimate arts, the “outside” version of the entity is being duplicated: we have the “outside” reproduction of an “outside” version (la reproduction du dehors dans le dehors).... In animate art, most emphatically in song, the “outside” imitates an “inside” (le dehors imite le dedans). It is expressive. It “paints” the passions. The metaphor that transforms song into painting can force the inwardness of its power into the outwardness of space only under the aegis of the concept of imitation, shared alike by music and painting. Whatever their differences, music and painting both are duplications, representations. Both equally partake of the categories of outside and inside. The expression has already begun to move the passion outside itself into the open and has already begun to paint it.²²

The rest of Derrida’s analysis will then show how imitation, which expresses an avowed desire for presence, surreptitiously functions, in Rousseau’s text, as the undoing of a desire that it reduces to absurdity by its very existence: there never would be a need for imitation if the presence had not been a priori pre-empted (*entamée*). Turning with this reading in mind to the section of the *Essai* that deals with music, we find something different, especially if we take into account some of the passages that Derrida does not include in his commentary. In chapters XIII to XVI of the *Essai*, Rousseau is not so much bent on showing that music, painting, and art in general do not involve sensation (as seems to be the thrust of his polemical argument against sensualist aesthetics), but that the sensory element that is necessarily a part of the pictorial or musical sign plays no part in the aesthetic experience. Hence the priority of drawing (*le trait, le dessin*) over color, of melody over sound, because both are oriented toward meaning and less dependent on seductive sensory impressions. Like Du Bos, Rousseau seems eager to safeguard the importance of subject matter (or, in the case of literature, of meaning) over the sign. When he pays attention, at moments, to the sign, as in the statement: “Les couleurs et les sons peuvent beaucoup comme representation et signes, peu de chose comme simples objets de sens,”²³ this does not imply any willingness to dissociate the sign from the sensation or to state its autonomy. The sign never ceases to function as significant and remains entirely oriented toward a meaning.²⁴ Its own sensory component is contingent and distracting. The reason for this, however, is not, as Derrida suggests, because Rousseau wants the meaning of the sign (*le signifié*) to exist as plenitude and as presence. The sign is devoid of substance, not because it has to be a transparent indicator that should not mask a plenitude of meaning, but because the meaning itself is empty; the sign should not

22. *Gr.*, pp. 289–90.

23. *Essai*, p. 535.

24. As stated by Derrida, *Gr.*, p. 296.

offer its own sensory richness as a substitute for the void that it signifies. Contrary to Derrida's assertion, Rousseau's theory of representation is not directed toward meaning as presence and plenitude but toward meaning as void. This emptiness of meaning does not, of course, imply that Rousseau was a proto-structuralist. On the contrary, unlike Lévi-Strauss, who claims him as an ancestor, Rousseau has no confidence in any man–nature–society reductive systematics. For Rousseau, meaning is a discontinuous leap from and through the hollowness of language.

The movement of the sixteenth chapter of the *Essai*, entitled “Fausse analogie entre les couleurs et les sons,” bears this out. Reversing the prevailing hierarchy of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, it states the priority of music over painting (and, within music, of melody over harmony) in terms of a value system that is structural rather than substantial: music is called superior to painting despite and even because of its lack of substance. With remarkable foresight, Rousseau describes music as a pure system of relations that at no point depends on the substantive assertions of a presence, be it as a sensation or as a consciousness. Music is a mere play of relationships:

... for us, each sound is a relative entity. No sound by itself possesses absolute attributes that allow us to identify it: it is high or low, loud or soft with respect to another sound only. By itself, it has none of these properties. In a harmonic system, a given sound is nothing by natural right (*un son quelconque n'est rien non plus naturellement*). It is neither tonic, nor dominant, harmonic or fundamental. All these properties exist as relationships only and since the entire system can vary from bass to treble, each sound changes in rank and place as the system changes in degree.²⁵

“Un son n'est rien ... naturellement.” Are we entitled to italicize and isolate this passage as proof of the negation of the substantiality of meaning in Rousseau? Not on the basis of the sentence just quoted, but with greater semblance of truth if we take the neighboring passages into account, for it seems that Rousseau fully understood the implications and consequences of what he was saying. Music is not reduced to a system of relationships because it functions as a mere structure of sounds independently of meaning, or because it is able to obscure the meaning by seducing the senses. There is no vacillation in Rousseau as to the semiotic and non-sensory status of the sign. Music becomes a mere structure because it is hollow at the core, because it “means” the negation of all presence. It follows 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

25. *Essai*, p. 536.

never have any assurance of existence. It can never be identical with itself or with prospective repetitions of itself, even if these future sounds possess the same physical properties of pitch and timbre as the present one. The identities of physics have no bearing on the mode of being of a sign that is, by definition, unaffected by sensory attributes. “Colors remain but sounds faint away and we can never be certain that the sounds reborn are the same as the sounds that vanished.”²⁶

Unlike the stable, synchronic sensation of “painting,”²⁷ music can never rest for a moment in the stability of its own existence: it steadily has to repeat itself in a movement that is bound to remain endless. This movement persists regardless of any illusion of presence, regardless of the manner in which the subject interprets its intentionality: it is determined by the nature of sign as significant, by the nature of music as language. The resulting repetitive pattern is the ground of temporality: “The field of music is time, that of painting space.” The duration of the colors, in painting, is spatial and constitutes therefore a misleading analogy for the necessarily diachronic structure of music. On the one hand, music 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. Music signs are unable to coincide: their dynamics are always oriented toward the future of their repetition, never toward the consonance of their simultaneity. Even the apparent harmony of the single sound, *à l’unisson*, has to spread itself out into a pattern of successive repetition; considered as a musical sign, the single sound is in fact the melody of its potential repetition. “Nature does not analyze [sound] into its harmonic components: it hides them instead under the illusion of unison [l’apparence de l’unisson]....”

Music is the diachronic version of the pattern of non-coincidence within the moment. Rousseau attributes to nature the imaginative power to create melody when it refers to noises such as the song of the birds, but it becomes distinctively human in reference to music: “... if nature sometimes breaks down [the song into its harmonic components] in the modulated song of man or in the song of birds, it does so sequentially, putting one sound after the other: it inspires song, not chords; it dictates melody, not harmony.”²⁸ Harmony is rejected as a mistaken illusion of consonance within the necessarily dissonant structure of the moment. Melody does not partake of this

26. *Ibid.*, p. 536.

27. “Painting” here designates the general prejudice in favor of the image as presence in eighteenth-century aesthetics. It goes without saying that when painting is conceived as art, the illusion of plenitude can be undermined in the plastic arts as well as in poetry or music; the problem, as is well known, figures prominently in contemporary discussions about non-representational painting.

28. *Essai*, p. 536. See also p. 537: “les oiseaux sifflent, l’homme seul chante....”

mystification: it does not offer a resolution of the dissonance but its projection on a temporal, diachronic axis.

The successive structure of music is therefore the direct consequence of its non-mimetic character. Music does not imitate, for its referent is the negation of its very substance, the sound. Rousseau states this in a remarkable sentence that Derrida does not quote: "It is one of the main privileges of the musician to be able to paint things that are inaudible, whereas the painter cannot represent things that are invisible. An art that operates entirely by means of motion can accomplish the amazing feat of conveying the very image of repose. Sleep, the quiet of night, solitude and even silence can enter into the picture that music paints...."²⁹ The sentence starts off by reaffirming that music is capable of imitating the most inward, invisible, and inaudible of feelings; the use of the pictorial vocabulary suggests that we have re-entered the orthodoxy of eighteenth-century representational theory. But as the enumeration proceeds, the content of the sentiment which, in Du Bos, was rich in all the plenitude and interest of experience, is increasingly hollowed out, emptied of all trace of substance. The idyllic overtones of tranquility tend to disappear if one remembers to what extent music itself depends on motion; the "repos" should also be understood negatively as loss of motion and therefore as a restatement of the inherent fragility, impermanence, and self-destructiveness of music. The solitude is equally disquieting since much has been made elsewhere in the text of music as the element that sets man apart from nature and unites him with other men. And the radically paradoxical formulation that the music sign can refer to silence would have for its equivalent, in the other arts, that painting refers to the absence of all light and color, and that language refers to the absence of meaning.³⁰ The passage prefigures its later, more extreme version in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*: "tel est le néant des choses humaines qu'hors l'Être existant par lui-même, il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas."³¹

29. *Ibid.*, p. 537. Cf. the passage on silence in Du Bos, op. cit. pp. 447–8. Rousseau's allusion to "une lecture égale et monotone à laquelle on s'endort" parallels Du Bos: "Un homme qui parle longtemps sur le même ton, endort les autres....," possibly suggesting a direct echo in Rousseau, certainly a very similar point of departure. But Rousseau does not simply refer to a mechanical effect that would allow for a musical "imitation" of silence: he distinguishes at once between this automatic action and a much closer affinity between music and silence: "la musique agit plus intimement sur nous...." The rest of the paragraph complicates matters further by bringing in notions of irreversible synesthesia between music and painting, but does not pursue the paradox of a "music of silence" that has just been stated.

30. "Musicienne du silence..." is a famous line from Mallarmé ("Sainte"). It could be argued that Mallarmé went less far than Rousseau in seeing the implications of this line for a representational theory of poetry.

31. Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Pleiade edition, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. II, p. 693.

It would not be fruitful to dispute these statements on the basis of a different phenomenology of music: the avowed thesis of the *Essai* equates music with language and makes it clear that, throughout the text, Rousseau never ceased to speak about the nature of language. What is here called language, however, differs entirely from an instrumental means of communication: for that purpose, mere gesture, mere cry would suffice. Rousseau acknowledges the existence of language from the moment speech is structured according to a principle similar to that of music. Like music, language is a diachronic system of relationships, the successive sequence of a narrative. “The 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. Let us assume that we confront a familiar situation of grief. The sight of the bereaved person will hardly move us to tears, but if we give him time to tell all that he feels, our tears will soon begin to flow.”³² The structural characteristics of language are exactly the same as those attributed to music: the misleading synchronism of the visual perception which creates a false illusion of presence has to be replaced by a succession of discontinuous moments that create the fiction of repetitive temporality. That this diachrony is indeed a fiction, that it belongs to the language of writing and of art and not to a language of needs, is made clear by the choice of an example taken, not from life, but from a dramatic performance: “Scenes from a tragedy reach their effect (by sequential discourse) only. Mere pantomime without words will leave us nearly cold, but speech even without gestures will make us weep.”³³ All sequential language is dramatic, narrative language. It is also the language of passion because passion, in Rousseau, is precisely the manifestation of a will that exists independently of any specific meaning or intent and that therefore can never be traced back to a cause or origin. “A man will weep at the sight of a tragic performance even though he never felt pity for a person in need.”³⁴ But pity, the arch passion in Rousseau, is itself, as Derrida has very well perceived, inherently a fictional process that transposes an actual situation into a world of appearance, of drama and literary language: all pity is in essence theatrical. It follows that the diachronic pattern of narrative discourse, which confers upon this discourse the semblance of a beginning of a continuity, and of an ending, by no means implies a quest for origin, not even the metaphorical representation of such a quest. Neither the *Discours sur l’origine de l’inégalité* nor the *Essai sur l’origine des langues* is the history

32. *Essai*, p. 503.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 503.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 503 (Rousseau’s own footnote).

of a genetic movement, of an organic process of birth and decay: Rousseau's famous statement "Commençons donc par écarter tous les faits..." cannot be taken too radically and applies to the mode of language used throughout the two texts. They do not "represent" a successive projection of a single moment of radical contradiction – the present – upon the temporal axis of a diachronic narrative. The only point at which they touch upon an empirical reality is in their common rejection of any present as totally intolerable and devoid of meaning.³⁵ Diachronic structures such as music, melody, or allegory are favored 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. The elegiac tone that is occasionally sounded does not express a nostalgia for an original presence but is a purely dramatic device, an effect made possible and dictated by a fiction that deprives the nostalgia of all foundation. It does not suffice to say that, in these texts, origin is merely a metaphor that "stands for" a beginning, even if one makes it clear that Rousseau's theory of figural language breaks with any idea of representation. The origin here "precedes" the present for purely structural and not chronological reasons. Chronology is the structural correlative of the necessarily figural nature of literary language.

It is in that sense that the title of the third chapter of the *Essai* must be understood: "Que le premier langage dut être figure." The only literal statement that says what it means to say is the assertion that there can be no literal statements. In the narrative rhetoric of Rousseau's text, this is what is meant by the chronological fiction that the "first" language had to be poetic language. Derrida, who sees Rousseau as a representational writer, has to show instead that his theory of metaphor is founded on the priority of the literal over the metaphorical meaning, of the "sens propre" over the "sens figure." And since Rousseau explicitly says the opposite, Derrida has to interpret the chapter on metaphor as a moment of blindness in which Rousseau says the opposite of what he means to say.

The argument on this point duplicates the line of reasoning applied to representation: Rousseau no longer locates the literal meaning in the referent of the metaphor as an object, but he interiorizes the object and makes the metaphor refer to an inner state of consciousness, a feeling, or a passion. "Rousseau bestows upon the expression of emotions a literal meaning that he is willing to relinquish, from the start, in the designation of objects."³⁶ In

35. Clearly stated in the last chapter of the *Essai*, entitled "Rapport des langues aux gouvernements," the true point of departure of the text. The same applies, in a somewhat more diffuse way, to the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*.

36. *Gr.*, p. 389.

accordance with Derrida's general image of Rousseau's place in the history of Western thought – the moment when the postulate of presence is taken out of the external world and transposed within the self-reflective inwardness of a consciousness – the recovery of presence is shown to occur along the axis of an inner–outer polarity. Derrida can use Rousseau's own example of metaphor to prove his case: the primitive man who designates the first other men he encounters by the term “giants,” blindly coins a metaphorical term to state a literal meaning, the inner experience of fear. The statement, “I see a giant” is a metaphor for the literal statement, “I am frightened,” a feeling that could not be expressed by saying, “I see a man (like myself).” Rousseau uses this example to indicate that the transposed meaning can “precede” the literal one. But the example is badly chosen, possibly, as Derrida suggests,³⁷ under the influence of Condillac, to whose *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* Rousseau is alluding in the chapter on metaphor. The “babes in the woods” topos is used by Condillac to make language originate out of a feeling of fear.³⁸ In Rousseau's vocabulary, language is a product of passion and not the expression of a need; fear, the reverse side of violence and aggression, is distinctively utilitarian and belongs to the world of “besoins” rather than “passions.” Fear would hardly need language and would be best expressed by pantomime, by mere gesture. All passion is to some degree passion inutile, made gratuitous by the non-existence of an object or a cause. The possibility of passion distinguishes man from the animal: “The need for subsistence forces man apart from other men, but the passions draw them together. The first speech was not caused by hunger or thirst, but by love, hatred, pity and anger.”³⁹ Fear is on the side of hunger and thirst and could never, by itself, lead to the supplementary figuration of language; it is much too practical to be called a passion. The third chapter of the *Essai*, the section on metaphor, should have been centered on pity, or its extension: love (or hate). When the story of the “birth” of figural language is told later in the text (chapter IX, p. 525) it is directly associated with love, not with fear. The definitive statement, here again, is to be found in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*: “Love is mere illusion. It invents, so to speak, another universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist or to which only love itself has given life. Since it expresses all its feelings by means of images it speaks only in figures (comme il rend tous ses sentiments en images, son langage est toujours figure).”⁴⁰ The metaphorical language which, in the fictional diachrony of

37. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

38. Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, part II, section I (De l'origine et des progrès du langage).

39. *Gr.*, p. 505.

40. Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Pleiade edition, vol. II, p. 15.

the *Essai*, is called “premier,” has no literal referent. Its only referent is “le neant des choses humaines.”

Although – with regard to his own as well as to Derrida’s main statement on the nature language – Rousseau’s theory of rhetoric is peripheral, it is not unimportant within the narrow context of our own question, which deals with the cognitive structure of the interpretative process. To extend the argument to other areas of assent and disagreement with Derrida would be tedious and unnecessary. On the question of rhetoric, on the nature of figural language, Rousseau was not deluded and said what he meant to say. And it is equally significant that, precisely on this same point, his best modern interpreter had to go out of his way not to understand him. The *Discours sur l’origine de l’inégalité* and the *Essai sur l’origine des langues* are texts whose discursive assertions account for their rhetorical mode. What is being said about the nature of language makes it unavoidable that the texts should be written in the form of a fictionally diachronic narrative or, if one prefers to call it so, of an allegory.⁴¹ The allegorical mode is accounted for in the description of all language as figural and in the necessarily diachronic structure of the reflection that reveals this insight. The text goes beyond this, however, for, as it accounts for its own mode of writing, it states at the same time the necessity of making this statement itself in an indirect, figural way that knows it will be misunderstood by being taken literally. Accounting for the “rhetoricity” of its own mode, the text also postulates the necessity of its own misreading. It knows and asserts that it will be misunderstood. It tells the story, the allegory of its misunderstanding: the necessary degradation of melody into harmony, of language into painting, of the language of passion into the language of need, of metaphor into literal meaning. In accordance with its own language, it can only tell this story as a fiction, knowing full well that the fiction will be taken for fact and the fact for fiction; such is the necessarily ambivalent nature of literary language. Rousseau’s own language, however, is not blind to this ambivalence: proof of this lies in the entire organization of his discourse and more explicitly in what it says about representation and metaphor as the cornerstone of a theory of rhetoric. The consistency of a rhetoric that can assert itself only in a manner that leaves open the possibility of misunderstanding adds further proof. The rhetorical character of literary language opens up the possibility of the archetypal error: the recurrent confusion of sign and substance. That Rousseau was misunderstood confirms his own theory of misunderstanding.

41. For another preparatory statement on allegory in Rousseau, see Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality”, in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, Charles Singleton, ed. (Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), pp. 184–8.

Derrida's version of this misunderstanding comes closer than any previous version to Rousseau's actual statement because it singles out as the point of maximum blindness the area of greatest lucidity: the theory of rhetoric and its inevitable consequences.

How then does Derrida's text differ from Rousseau's? We are entitled to generalize in working our way toward a definition by giving Rousseau exemplary value and calling "literary," in the full sense of the term, any text that implicitly or explicitly signifies its own rhetorical mode and prefigures its own misunderstanding as the correlative of its rhetorical nature; that is, of its "rhetoricity." It can do so by declarative statement or by poetic inference. "To account for" or "to signify," in the sentence above, does not designate a subjective process: it follows from the rhetorical nature of literary language that the cognitive function resides in the language and not in the subject. The question as to whether the author himself is or is not blinded is to some extent irrelevant; it can only be asked heuristically, as a means to accede to the true question: whether his language is or is not blind to its own statement. By asking this question of *De la Grammatologie* a way back can be found to the starting-point of the inquiry: the interplay between critical and literary language in terms of blindness and insight.

It would seem to matter very little whether Derrida is right or wrong about Rousseau, since his own text resembles the *Essai* so closely, in its rhetoric as well as in its statement. It also tells a story: the repression of written language by what is here called the "logocentric" fallacy of favoring voice over writing is narrated as a consecutive, historical process. Throughout, Derrida uses Heidegger's and Nietzsche's fiction of metaphysics as a period in Western thought in order to dramatize, to give tension and suspense to the argument, exactly as Rousseau gave tension and suspense to the story of language and of society by making them pseudo-historical. Neither is Derrida taken in by the theatricality of his gesture or the fiction of his narrative: exactly as Rousseau tells us obliquely, but consistently, that we are reading a fiction and not a history. Derrida's Nietzschean theory of language as "play" warns us not to take him literally, especially when his statements seem to refer to concrete historical situations such as the present. The use of a philosophical terminology with the avowed purpose of discrediting this very terminology is an established philosophical procedure that has many antecedents besides Rousseau and is one that Derrida practices with exemplary skill. Finally, Derrida's theory of "écriture" corresponds closely to Rousseau's statement on the figural nature of the language of passion. Does it matter then whether we attribute the final statement to Rousseau or to Derrida, since both in fact are saying the same thing? Of course, if Rousseau does not belong to the logocentric "period," then the scheme of periodization used by Derrida is avowedly arbitrary. If we argue, moreover, that Rousseau escapes from the

logocentric fallacy precisely to the extent that his language is literary, then we are saying by implication that the myth of the priority of oral language over written language has always already been demystified by literature, although literature remains persistently open to being misunderstood for doing the opposite. None of this seems to be inconsistent with Derrida's insight, but it might distress some of his more literal-minded followers: his historical scheme is merely a narrative convention and the brief passage on the nature of literary language in *De la Grammatologie* seems to tend in the direction suggested. Nevertheless, although Derrida can be "right" on the nature of literary language and consistent in the application of this insight to his own text, he remains unwilling or unable to read Rousseau as literature. Why does he have to reproach Rousseau for doing exactly what he legitimately does himself? According to Derrida, Rousseau's rejection of a logocentric theory of language, which the author of the *Essai* encounters in the guise of the aesthetic sensualism of the eighteenth century, "could not be a radical rejection, for it occurs within the framework inherited from this philosophy and of the 'metaphysical' conception of art."⁴² I have tried to show instead that Rousseau's use of a traditional vocabulary is exactly similar, in its strategy and its implications, to the use Derrida consciously makes of the traditional vocabulary of Western philosophy. What happens in Rousseau is exactly what happens in Derrida: a vocabulary of substance and of presence is no longer used declaratively but rhetorically, for the very reasons that are being (metaphorically) stated. Rousseau's text has no blind spots:⁴³ it accounts at all moments for its own rhetorical mode. Derrida misconstrues as blindness what is instead a transposition from the literal to the figural level of discourse.

There are two possible explanations for Derrida's blindness with regard to Rousseau: either he actually misreads Rousseau, possibly because he substitutes Rousseau's interpreters for the author himself – maybe whenever Derrida writes, "Rousseau," we should read "Starobinski" or "Raymond" or "Poulet" – or he deliberately misreads Rousseau for the sake of his own exposition and rhetoric. In the first case, Derrida's blindness merely confirms Rousseau's foreknowledge of the misinterpretation of his work. It would be a classical case of critical blindness, somewhat different in aspect but not in essence from the pattern encountered in critics such as Lukacs, Poulet, or Blanchot. Their blindness, it will be remembered, consisted in the affirmation of a methodology that could be "deconstructed" in terms of their own

42. *Gr.*, p. 297.

43. The choice of the wrong example to illustrate metaphor (fear instead of pity) is a mistake, not a blind spot.

findings: Poulet's "self" turns out to be language, Blanchot's impersonality a metaphor for self-reading, etc.; in all these cases, the methodological dogma is being played off against the literary insight, and this interplay between methodology and literature develops in turn the highly literary rhetoric of what could be called systematic criticism. Derrida's case is somewhat different: his chapter on method, on literary interpretation as deconstruction is flawless in itself but made to apply to the wrong object. There is no need to deconstruct Rousseau; the established tradition of Rousseau, however, stands in dire need of deconstruction. Derrida found himself in the most favorable of all critical positions: he was dealing with an author as clear-sighted as language lets him be who, for that very reason, is being systematically misread; the author's own works, newly interpreted, can then be played off against the most talented of his deluded interpreters or followers. Needless to say, this new interpretation will, in its turn, be caught in its own form of blindness, but not without having produced its own bright moment of literary insight. Derrida did not choose to adopt this pattern: instead of having Rousseau deconstruct his critics, we have Derrida deconstructing a pseudo-Rousseau by means of insight that could have been gained from the "real" Rousseau. The pattern is too interesting not to be deliberate.

At any rate, the pattern accounts very well for the slight thematic difference between Derrida's story and Rousseau's story. Whereas Rousseau tells the story of an inexorable regression, Derrida rectifies a recurrent error of judgment. His text, as he puts it so well, is the unmaking of a construct. However negative it may sound, deconstruction implies the possibility of rebuilding. Derrida's dialectical energy, especially in the first half of his book, which does not deal directly with Rousseau, clearly gains its momentum from the movement of deconstruction that takes place in the second part, using Rousseau as a sparring partner. Rousseau plays for Derrida somewhat the same part that Wagner plays for Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a text *De la Grammatologie* resembles even more closely than it resembles the *Essai sur l'origine des langues*. The fact that Wagner serves a presumptively positive function in Nietzsche, whereas Rousseau is an antithetical mask or shadow for Derrida, matters very little: the type of misreading is very similar in both cases. Rousseau needed no equivalent mediating figure in the *Essai*; he takes his energy entirely from the strength of his radical rejection of the present moment. The attacks on Rameau, on Condillac, on Du Bos or the tradition Du Bos represents are contingent polemics, not an essential part of the structure: what stands under indictment is language itself and not somebody's philosophical error. Neither does Rousseau hold up any hope that one could ever escape from the regressive process of misunderstanding that he describes; he cuts himself off once and forever from all future disciples. In this respect, Derrida's text is less radical, less mature

than Rousseau's, though not less literary. Nor is it less important from a philosophical point of view than *The Birth of Tragedy*. As is well known, Nietzsche himself later criticized the use he had made of Wagner in the early book, not merely because he changed his mind about the latter's merits – he had, in fact, already lost most of his illusions about Wagner when he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* – but because his presence in that text stood in the way of the musicality, the allegory of its mode: “Sie hatte singen sollen, diese ‘deue seele’ – und nicht reden” – “it should have sung, this ‘new soul’, and not have spoken.” He went on to write *Zarathustra* and *Will to Power*, and one may wonder if he was ever able to free himself entirely from Wagner: it may be that an all too hopeful future was converted into an all too aberrant past. Rousseau went on to write a “pure” fiction, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and a treatise of constitutional law, *Le Contrat Social* – but that is another story, as is the future of Jacques Derrida's own work.

The critical reading of Derrida's critical reading of Rousseau shows blindness to be the necessary correlative of the rhetorical nature of literary language. Within the structure of the system: text–reader–critic (in which the critic can be defined as the “second” reader or reading) the moment of blindness can be located differently. If the literary text itself has areas of blindness, the system can be binary; reader and critic coincide in their attempt to make the unseen visible. It should be made clear that “blindness” implies no literary value judgment: Lukacs, Blanchot, Poulet, and Derrida can be called “literary,” in the full sense of the term, because of their blindness, not in spite of it. In the more complicated case of the non-blinded author – as I claim Rousseau to be – the system has to be triadic: the blindness is transferred from the writer to his first readers, the “traditional” disciples or commentators. These blinded first readers – they could be replaced, for the sake of exposition, by the fiction of a naive reader, though the tradition is likely to provide ample material – then need, in turn, a critical reader who reverses the tradition and momentarily takes us closer to the original insight. The existence of a particularly rich aberrant tradition in the case of the writers who can legitimately be called the most enlightened, is therefore no accident, but a constitutive part of all literature, the basis, in fact, of literary history. And since interpretation is nothing but the possibility of error, by claiming that a certain degree of blindness is part of the specificity of all literature we also reaffirm the absolute dependence of the interpretation on the text and of the text on the interpretation.

The semantics of interpretation have no epistemological consistency and can therefore not be scientific. But this is very different from claiming that what the critic says has no immanent connection with the work, that it is an arbitrary addition or subtraction, or that the gap between his statement and his meaning can be dismissed as mere error. The work can be used repeatedly

to show where and how the critic diverged from it, but in the process of showing this our understanding of the work is modified and the faulty vision shown to be productive. Critics' moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight.

In saying this, however, no argument has been presented against the validity of intrinsic criticism; on the contrary, not only is the discrepancy between the original and the critical text granted, but it is given immanent exegetic power as the main source of understanding. Since they are not scientific, critical texts have to be read with the same awareness of ambivalence that is brought to the study of non-critical literary texts, and since the rhetoric of their discourse depends on categorical statements, the discrepancy between meaning and assertion is a constitutive part of their logic. There is no room for notions of accuracy and identity in the shifting world of interpretation. The necessary immanence of the reading in relation to the text is a burden from which there can be no escape. It is bound to stand out as the irreducible philosophical problem raised by all forms of literary criticism, however pragmatic they may seem or want to be. We encounter it here in the form of a constitutive discrepancy, in critical discourse, between the blindness of the statement and the insight of the meaning.

The problem occupies, of course, a prominent place in all philosophies of language, but it has rarely been considered within the humbler, more artisan-like context of practical interpretation. "Close reading" can be highly discriminating and develop a refined ear for the nuances of self-conscious speech, but it remains curiously timid when challenged to reflect upon its own self-consciousness. On the other hand, critics like Blanchot and Poulet who make use of the categories of philosophical reflection tend to erase the moment of actual interpretative reading, as if the outcome of this reading could be taken for granted in any literate audience. In France it took the rigor and intellectual integrity of a philosopher whose main concern is not with literary texts to restore the complexities of reading to the dignity of a philosophical question.

Jacques Derrida makes the movements of his own reading an integral part of a major statement about the nature of language in general. His knowledge stems from the actual encounter with texts, with a full awareness of the complexities involved in such an encounter. The discrepancy implicitly present in the other critics here becomes the explicit center of the reflection. This means that Derrida's work is one of the places where the future possibility of literary criticism is being decided, although he is not a literary critic in the professional sense of the term and deals with hybrid texts – Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Plato's *Phaedrus* – that share with literary criticism the burden of being partly expository and partly fictional. His

commentary on Rousseau⁴⁴ can be used as an exemplary case of the interaction between critical blindness and critical insight, no longer in the guise of a semiconscious duplicity but as a necessity dictated and controlled by the very nature of all critical language.

44. *Gr.*, pp. 145–445.

Translator's Introduction to "Rousseau and English Romanticism" (1978)

Patience Moll

De Man presented *Rousseau et le romantisme anglais* at the University of Geneva on June 5, 1978, as the last in a series of eight guest lectures commemorating the bicentennial of the deaths of Rousseau and Voltaire.¹ The lecture is a shorter variant of what appeared as "Shelley Disfigured" in the 1979 collection *Deconstruction and Criticism*. For that work, Bloom and Hartman had asked de Man, Miller, and Derrida to contribute essays on Shelley's *Triumph of Life* in order, as Hartman writes in the preface, both to acknowledge "the importance of Romantic poetry" and to demonstrate the "shared set of problems" preoccupying this group.² "Shelley Disfigured" was republished in de Man's 1984 retrospective collection of essays *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, where he singles out the essay as "the only place where [he came] close to facing [the] questions about history and fragmentation" that resurged upon his looking back over twenty-five years of his work on Romantic literature.³

To publish this English translation of a French variant of "Shelley Disfigured" is to revisit the issues of fragmentation and monumentalization that frame that essay (not to mention de Man's own definition of translation as

1. The series began in January, was open to the public, and included Mortier's "Voltaire Pamphleteer," Jaus's "The Religious Origin and Aesthetic Emancipation of Autobiography," Pompeau's "Voltaire, Rousseau: Two Beginnings in Life," Cranston's "Rousseau and Aristocracy," Leigh's "*The Social Contract*: A Genevese Work?," Baud-Bovy's "Rousseau and Music," and Venturi's "Voltaire, Catherine II and the Mediterranean." The speakers came respectively from Brussels, Constance, Paris, London, Cambridge, Geneva, and Turin. The bicentennial celebrations also included two musical performances and five art exhibitions.

2. Geoffrey Hartman, Preface, in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Continuum Books, 1979), p. vi. I am indebted to J. Hillis Miller for sharing with me his recollection of the genesis of *Deconstruction and Criticism*.

3. Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (hereafter referred to as RR) (New York: Columbia Press, 1984), p. ix.

a “desacralization of the original”).⁴ Given the relative proximity between a lecture given in June 1978 and an essay published in December 1979, it is impossible to determine which preceded the other in terms of a coherent, genetic narrative. The postscript to the lecture, which reads “partial translation (*traduction partielle*)”, indicates, furthermore, that *Rousseau et le romantisme anglais* translates an earlier variant of “Shelley Disfigured,” whose title (and framing) goes unmentioned. When translating the lecture into English it seemed important to acknowledge the indeterminate temporal fluctuation between it and “Shelley Disfigured,” especially on account of the “critical examination” of genetic ideology that takes place in both.⁵ Accordingly I tried to emphasize the materiality of the French manuscript and to resist over-reliance on “Shelley Disfigured” as an authorized translation from beyond the grave.

In footnotes I indicated significant variations within the manuscript itself; in many of these cases de Man crosses out a French cognate of the English word that appears in the parallel passage in “Shelley Disfigured” and replaces it with something else. Other salient differences between the two pieces include de Man’s interpretation, in the lecture, of Shelley’s “shape all light” as Rousseau’s character Julie, an interpretation he borrows from Reiman; in “Shelley Disfigured,” by contrast, de Man distances himself from Reiman’s interpretation in a footnote (RR 300 n.4). De Man also seems to presume that Shelley’s “deer” is female, when he translates the term as *biche* (doe). In the lecture de Man remarks that the literalism of Shelley’s erotic passages does not translate well, although it remains “blurred” (*estompé*) in the English, an observation that does not appear in “Shelley Disfigured” and that contrasts with his subsequent claim, regarding the same passage in *The Triumph*, that “Shelley’s imagery (*métaphorique*) ... is in fact extraordinarily systematic whenever light is being thematized” (“RER” 20).

The most obvious differences between “Rousseau and English Romanticism” and “Shelley Disfigured” are the titles and framings of the close reading of Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*. Whereas “Shelley Disfigured” approaches *The Triumph of Life* in terms of the Romantic fragment, “our” Romantic heritage, and “the possibility of establishing a relation to ... romanticism in general,” the Geneva lecture begins by addressing “the problem of Rousseau within English Romanticism” and does not go far beyond Shelley’s relation to Rousseau (although it does begin by taking issue with “traditional comparative literature”). De Man’s account of the series of questions punctuating *The Triumph of Life* differs in each of the pieces, with the account in “Shelley

4. Paul de Man, “‘Conclusions’: Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator,’” in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 98.

5. “Rousseau and English Romanticism” (hereafter referred to as “RER”), p. 5.

Disfigured" placing more emphasis on the "orient[ation]" of "the subject"; both accounts also contain interesting omissions with respect to Shelley's poem. And whereas the first sentence of "Shelley Disfigured" emphasizes that *The Triumph of Life*, as a fragment, is typical of English Romanticism, de Man begins the lecture by explicitly distinguishing *The Triumph of Life* from all other English Romantic texts as the only one where Rousseau plays a truly significant role.

The differences between the titles and framings are of interest in part because they point to certain trajectories in the major publications de Man oversaw while he was alive, from the 1971 "The Rhetoric of Blindness" in *Blindness and Insight*, to *Allegories of Reading* (1979), to *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. The framing of "Rousseau and English Romanticism" makes it easier to see how "Shelley Disfigured" can be read as a sequel to "The Rhetoric of Blindness," and how de Man finds in *The Triumph of Life* a more radical response to Rousseau's cognitive "erasure (*effacement*)" than the one he finds in Derrida.⁶ "The Rhetoric of Blindness" also emphasizes that it is precisely Rousseau's "complexity," and in particular the complexity of literary reference and moral sentiment in *Julie, or the New Heloise* that is "bypassed" in Derrida's account of Rousseau (cf. *BI* 119–20); in this context it is worth noting that, for the most part, when de Man adopts a rhetoric of "systematicity," "complexity," or "plurality" to explain the stakes of his argument, the formulation in the Geneva lecture differs significantly from the one in "Shelley Disfigured."

The differences between the framings are echoed also in the introduction to *Allegories of Reading*, which de Man describes as a byproduct of a "serious" study of Rousseau originally undertaken as part of "a historical reflection on Romanticism," and that failed to materialize on account of "local difficulties of interpretation." What resulted instead was "a theory of reading" divided into a first part on "Rhetoric" and a second on "Rousseau."⁷ When arguing in the Geneva lecture that *The Triumph of Life* is an appropriate object for commemorating the bicentennial of Rousseau's death, de Man describes the irrelevance of Rousseau's relation to Wordsworth, Blake, and Keats, in what reads like a debunking of what could have been the chapters of the original, discarded project that turned into *Allegories of Reading*.⁸ The expulsion from *Allegories of Reading* of not only "historical reflection" but of

6. Cf. Paul de Man, *The Blindness of Insight* (hereafter referred to as *BI*) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), pp. 116–17, 119.

7. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. lx.

8. On the actual contents of this discarded project, see the editors' preface to de Man's *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism: The Gauss Lectures* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. viii n.1.

Romanticism as such, along with the discarding of the Rousseau framework from “Shelley Disfigured,” together suggest how the real “problem” presented by “Rousseau and English Romanticism” is announced in the title’s conjunction.⁹ While the word “and” implicitly promises to bring together conceptually two distinct, literary-historical terms, the lecture exposes an abyss of “influence” between the referents we might imagine to be named by those terms, and indicates how the discovery of such an abyss shaped the trajectory of de Man’s own authorship (“RER” n.4).

9. In *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* de Man reminds us again that “*Allegories of Reading* is in no way a work on Romanticism or its heritage” (vii).

Rousseau and English Romanticism (1978)

Translated from the French by Patience Moll

The problem of Rousseau's presence within English Romanticism, especially among the major poets, which is to say Coleridge, Wordsworth, Blake, Keats, and Shelley, has been treated by traditional comparative literature as a simply historical question. It has been treated, that is to say, at the level of so-called general ideas, *idées reçues*, and commonplaces to which the history of ideas sometimes risks sacrificing the complexity of readings.¹ The works that treat the question are few, especially in the English and German realms, where the reading of Rousseau continues to come up against some very deeply entrenched prejudices. The already mentioned works by Roddier and Voisine, both of which are dedicated to the excellent literary historian and friend of Jean Wahl, J. M. Carré, still provide the best inventories of the question and, along with Joseph Texte's book, a catalogue of the *idées reçues* concerning it.²

The question immediately comes up against a considerable difficulty of reading. The main Romantic text where Rousseau appears in his own name presents a daunting challenge to the reader. Rousseau's presence is not inconsiderable but remains allusive and implicit in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, where it is often the educational theme of *Emile* that comes into play and where the oft cited analogy between the interiority and retrospective temporality of the autobiographical narratives, *The Prelude* and *The Confessions*, is so general that it cannot amount to more than a simple

The footnotes in this essay are those of the translator.

1. "sometimes risks (*risqué quelquefois de*) sacrificing" replaces a crossed-out "must (*dois*) sacrifice."
2. De Man presumably refers to Henri Roddier's *J.-J. Rousseau en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Boivin, 1950), Jacques Voisine's *Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre à l'époque romantique: les écrits autobiographiques et la légende* (Paris: Didier, 1956), and Joseph Texte's *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire: Étude sur les relations littéraires de la France et de l'Angleterre* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1895).

suggestion. The explicit presence of Rousseau in Blake is merely polemical and, moreover, negative. In Keats, it exists only through Hazlitt's intervention and becomes an entirely minor question in relation to the influence of Wordsworth, Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare on the Keatsian oeuvre. But in Shelley's final poem, interrupted by his death when he drowned off Lerici and when his body was then burned on order of the medical authorities, the poem entitled *The Triumph of Life*, Rousseau's name appears as that of the main character in an allegory which has resisted many attempts at a reading. It is by reading a passage that is, to tell the truth, the most obscure and most enigmatic in this poem, that we can hope to approach seriously the question of the relation between Rousseau and English Romanticism.³ The question is not whether the movement of the text corresponds to an image of Rousseau that could be said to be established, because I don't believe such an image exists or ever will exist, not in spite but because of the excellence of the critical works that have been devoted to him. Nor is the question whether Shelley's approach, in *The Triumph*, can be said to be typical of English Romanticism in general. It is instead a matter of seeing whether, to the extent that Shelley's text uses Rousseau's proper name to stage a certain problematic of figurative language, this problematic provokes, in the spirit of Rousseau specialists as eminent as those assembled here, a response that could be called an understanding.⁴

In *The Triumph*, Rousseau appears in name as a kind of initiator or precursor for Shelley the poet, who is himself suspended in indecision in front of the spectacle of degradation and usury that a vision has revealed to him as being that of universal history. Shelley attempts to place himself into question in relation to this historical procession into which he undoubtedly will be drawn. His question is posed to an enigmatic character who refers to himself as Rousseau; the question coincides with the encounter with this figure. The scene is repeated in the long, recapitulative narrative that "Rousseau" gives of his own intellectual fate, a narrative that is likewise centered around a scene of encounter, this time between Rousseau and an even more enigmatic figure, a luminous and feminine shape to which Rousseau poses the same question that Shelley will pose to him: "Show me whence I came, where I am and why." In non-response to his question, a vision is revealed in turn to Rousseau that is exactly like the one that appeared to Shelley and that culminated in his own encounter with Rousseau. Instead of a response, it is always a new encounter and a new question that arise. This

3. *énigmatique* replaces a crossed-out *important*.

4. This sentence, which appears on page 2 of the manuscript, ends with an asterisk. On the back of page 1 there is an asterisk followed by the sentence "The bare facts concerning Rousseau's 'influence' on Shelley are well known."

abyssal, repetitive structure has been noted by many of the numerous English commentators on the text. It implies the impossibility of interpretation and is most prominent in the long passage that you have in your hands, and that describes the encounter between Rousseau and the figure described as “all light,” a “shape all light.” It is this passage that I will try to read with you.

The first fragments and drafts of this poem, itself a fragment and a draft, were inventoried and reproduced by Riesman in the critical edition he published in 1960.⁵ Regarding our question, they disclose that the hierarchical position, the value of Rousseau the character evolved between the first outline of the poem and its present state, itself fixed in the monumental rigidity of a text pronounced as definitive by the unexpected death of its author. One finds, for example, this passage where the poet, guided at this point by Rousseau, passes such negative judgment upon his immediate precursors, including the openly alluded to Wordsworth, that he actually condemns them to total oblivion.⁶ Rousseau reproaches him severely and explains that he himself, as well as Voltaire, would have entered the “fane/Where truth and its inventors sit enshrined” if they had not lacked faith in their own intellectual power and in that of their predecessors. Those encrypted statues of Truth are identified as Plato and his pupil (undoubtedly Aristotle), whose reign extended “from the center to the circumference” and who prepared the way for Bacon and modern science. Rousseau’s and Voltaire’s failure will not be in vain, however, since Rousseau, thanks to that failure, has gained insight that he can communicate in turn to the young Shelley. Riesman glosses the passage as follows:

Rousseau ... tries to impress on the Poet that it was exactly this attitude toward the past struggle of great men that led him and Voltaire to abandon their reforming zeal and succumb to life. Thus the poet’s contemptuous allusion to Wordsworth turns against him as Rousseau endeavors to show the Poet how the mistakes of those who have preceded him, especially idealists like himself, can serve as a warning to him: Rousseau and Voltaire fell because they adopted the contemptuous attitude toward history that the poet now displays; the child *is* father of the man, and Shelley’s generation, representing the full maturity of the age that dawned in the French Revolution, can learn from the mistakes of that age’s earlier generations (those of Rousseau and Voltaire and Wordsworth).⁷

5. De Man has in mind Donald H. Reiman’s *Shelley’s “The Triumph of Life”: A Critical Study*, published in 1965 (Urbana: University of Illinois). Between “1960” and the punctuation mark, de Man inserts “Julie (Riesman).”

6. De Man refers here to the apocryphal passage reproduced on pp. 240–1 of Reiman’s *Critical Study*.

7. Reiman, 241–2. In the first sentence, Reiman refers to the “struggles” of great men rather than to their “struggle.”

This reading is typical of those generally given of the *Triumph* and, moreover, of Romanticism in general. It is a characteristic example of the recuperation of a failing energy by a regaining of consciousness and lucidity, the reconversion, by an act of consciousness, of an economy of loss into an economy of profit. Rousseau lacked power, but because he was able to understand the causes of his weakness and articulate them in words, he became exemplary, and the energy he lacked is preserved and recuperated in the following generation. And this prospective miracle turns back on its own anteriority since the elders, at first condemned, can be reinstated in the name of their fragmentary but still exemplary wisdom. Wordsworth, at first rejected along with Rousseau and Voltaire, is rehabilitated since he can lucidly and happily express the law of his own inferiority as well as of his reintegration within the evolution of a genetic recuperation: the child is in effect the father of the child, as he said, both humbling and saving himself in the eyes of his followers. The power of this historical model is much more important than the valorization to which it gives rise. The question of knowing whether *The Triumph* presents a movement of growth or degradation is much less important than the authority of the genetic metaphors on which these systems of valorization depend. These metaphors have not been made the object of a rigorous critical examination within the debates surrounding this poem's interpretation.⁸

The initial situation of Rousseau – allied with Voltaire and Wordsworth in a shared failure, as opposed to Plato, Aristotle, and Bacon, and as opposed, by implication, to Shelley himself – changes in the later versions. In the last available text, the hierarchy of the historical group to which Rousseau belongs is quite different: he is now set apart sharply from the principal representatives of the Enlightenment (which include Voltaire, Kant, Frederick the Great, and Catherine of Russia), whom Shelley condemns with the same severity directed, in the first version, at Rousseau and Wordsworth. Wordsworth is no longer mentioned at this point in the text, while Rousseau is now classified with Plato and Aristotle. But whereas these philosophers were held up as untarnished images of Truth in the first version, they are now, like Rousseau, fallen and, within the allegory of the passage, chained to the chariot of Life together with the “great bards of old,” which is to say Homer and Virgil. The reasons for their fall, and the aspects of their destinies that connect them to Rousseau, are developed in passages that are not especially difficult to interpret. The resulting hierarchies have become more complex: we first have a class of entirely condemned historical personages, which includes representatives of the Enlightenment as well as the emperors and popes of Christianity; on a distinctly higher level, but nevertheless defeated

8. *rigoureux* replaces a crossed-out *sérieux* in the manuscript.

and in chains, we find Rousseau, Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. As apparently exonerated from this condemnation, the poem mentions only Bacon, a remnant from the earlier version who loses much of his function in the later versions, as well as the “sacred few” who (unlike Adonais in the poem of his name) have no earthly destiny whatsoever, either because they die too early or because, like Christ or Socrates, they are mere fictions in the writings of others. As for knowing whether Shelley’s own fate will repeat Rousseau’s, this is the question to which a reading of *The Triumph* solicits a response.

The poem will give us this response, which is in fact a response to the reiterated question “Who am I?,” only in the most oblique, evanescent, and effaced form possible. Each time the question is posed – and this scene is repeated at least three times in the text – instead of an answer we witness the effacement of the question. And this effacement is always accompanied by an improper complication of the figuration which twists the text into an inextricable knot. As in this encounter between Rousseau and the “shape” assumed to possess the key to his destiny:

“ ... as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said ...
‘Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why –
Pass not away upon the passing stream.’

“‘Arise and quench thy thirst’ was her reply.
And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning’s vital alchemy,

“I rose; and bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

“Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador,
Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed

“Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
Until the second burst – so on my sight
Burst a new Vision never seen before. – ”

(ll. 394–410)

The scene dramatizes the failure of a desire for knowledge. Rousseau receives no answer to his question. The ensuing vision is not the vision of a knowledge but that of an incessant aberration, a perpetual errancy. What happens is instead the transformation of his brain, the center of his consciousness, into something else. This transformation also implies the erasure of a mark (*marque*), which is to say of an act that can be represented only

by a passive function independent of the will of that consciousness.⁹ The production and erasure of the track (*trace*) are not an act of consciousness, but the brain, mind, or consciousness submitted to an action that it does not master but that modifies it. The sand on which the mark (*marque*) is imprinted is not, as all the commentators who have addressed this passage seem to assume, an image of drought and sterility – (this is no desert, but a seashore washed by abundant waters) – but rather an image of the transformation of a knowledge into the surface on which that knowledge ought to be preserved.¹⁰ I say “ought to be,” for instead of being clearly perceptible, it is more than half erased and covered over. The process is a chain of substitutions, beginning with the replacement of the “brain” by the “sand,” then the substitution of one kind of mark (*marque*), said to be like that of a deer, by another, said to be like that of a wolf.¹¹ The substitutions are metamorphoses, stages in a sequence of transformations that ends with Rousseau in his present state, the state in which Shelley finds him when he first meets him within the narrative of the poem:

... what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side ...

And that the grass which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes he vainly sought to hide

Were or had been eyes.

(ll. 182–8)

The erasure or effacement is indeed the loss of the face, in French *figure*, the disfiguration, the inverse of prosopopoeia. Rousseau has lost his face; he is disfigured. And this means primarily the loss of the eyes, which have turned into holes. What are we to make of this sequence and what does it have to do with Rousseau? The answer will not be easy and will require a reading of the longer passage, of which this scene is in fact the negative culmination.

The contrasting connotations of the pair deer/wolf are self-evident in their opposition of the idyllic and graceful to violence. Shelley, an assiduous reader of Rousseau at a time when he was not necessarily being read less well than we read him today, evokes an ambivalence that is indeed specifically Rousseau’s more than anyone else’s, including Wordsworth’s: the presence,

9. *marque* replaces both a crossed-out *piste* (track) and a crossed-out *trace* (trace or track) in the manuscript. In his translation of Shelley’s poem into French here, de Man uses the word *trace* for both “track” (l. 407) and “stamp” (l. 409).

10. *marque* replaces a crossed-out *trace*.

11. *marque* replaces a crossed-out *trace*, and *cerf* (deer) replaces a crossed-out *biche* (doe).

in the first place, of an introspective and auto-affective tone of Augustinian and pietistic origin, illustrated, for instance, by such literary allusions as Petrarch and the *Astrée* and, in general, by all the elements in Rousseau that prompted Schiller to discuss him under the heading of the modern idyll. To this are juxtaposed elements that are closer to Machiavelli than to Petrarch, concerned with questions of the world, politics, and *practical* – which is to say economic and legal – power. The first aspect suggests the introspection and delicacy of nuanced sentiment, while the second implies violence and cunning. This duality or plurality of thought is [both a commonplace and] a well-known crux in Rousseau criticism, [where it receives diverse and subtle responses or evasions].¹² That the tension between states of a consciousness and acts of practical power is a concern of *The Triumph* is made clear in the poem's political passages. Shelley returns there to the ideological traumatism of his generation, the degradation of the French Revolution from egalitarianism into a regime of terror and finally imperial tyranny. At the end of the in itself banal section on Bonaparte, the conflict is openly stated:

... much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day –

And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; ...

(ll. 228–31)

The opposition between will and power, the intellectual goal and the practical means, reappears when it is said, of and by Rousseau, that “my words were seeds of misery –/Even as the deeds of others” (ll. 280–1). The divergence between words and deeds seems to be suspended in Rousseau's work, albeit at the cost or even because of suffering: “I/ Am one of those who have created, even/If it be but a world of agony” (ll. 294–5). For what separates Rousseau apart from the representatives of the Enlightenment is what is here called the “heart” (“I was overcome/By my own heart alone” [ll. 240–1]). This opposition between a cold Voltaire and a sensitive Rousseau is another of the commonplaces and clichés of history, whatever the valorization that results from it might be, whether it exalts Rousseau or to the contrary, as in Nietzsche, where it is used to denigrate him in relation to Voltaire. But Shelley's intuition interprets “heart” in a sense that exceeds the merely sentimental: The meaning of “heart” and “agony” is made clearer in the contrast established between Rousseau and the “great bards of old,” Homer and perhaps also Virgil, said to have “inly quelled/The passions which they sung” (ll. 274–5), whereas Rousseau has “suffered what [he] wrote, or viler

12. The brackets are de Man's.

pain!" Unlike the epic poets, who described actions in which they did not take part, Rousseau speaks directly from his own experience of self (*expérience de soi*), not only in his *Confessions* (which Shelley did not like), but in all his works, regardless of whether they are fictions, autobiographical, or political treatises. And as confirmed by his position next to Plato and Aristotle, the self (or "heart") is for him not merely the seat of the passions and emotions but is the very site of knowledge; in this respect he carries on the tradition of Saint Augustine, Descartes, and Malebranche. Shelley is certainly not alone in thus identifying what remains a persistent and legitimate component of Rousseau interpretation, even if he is the only one of his era who had the audacity to place Rousseau at the top of a literary tradition concerned with propriety and self-effacement. But the configuration of the self, the heart, and action is radicalized in the classification of Rousseau among the Greek philosophers. Aristotle turns out to be, like the work of Rousseau, a double structure held together by the connivance of words and deeds; if he too is now enslaved to the destructive powers of life, it is because he does not exist as a single monad, as pure mind, but cannot be separated from the "woes and wars" inflicted on the world by his disciple and pupil Alexander the Great.¹³ Words cannot be isolated from the deeds they perform, just as the tutor necessarily carries out the deeds that his pupil derives from his mastery. And just as "deeds" cause Aristotle's enslavement, it is the heart that brought down Plato, who, like Rousseau, was a theoretician of statecraft and a legislator. Like Aristotle (ll. 266 ff.) and like Rousseau (who is like a deer but also like a wolf)¹⁴ Plato is at least double; life "conquered [his] heart" as Rousseau was "overcome by [his] own heart alone." The allusion to the apocryphal story of Aster (ll. 255–6), the beloved ephebe and object of Plato's erotic desire, underlines the ironic nature of the knowledge. Erotic desire was present from our first citation since, in this context of Ovidian and Dantesque metamorphoses, the image of the doe pursued by the wolf is bound to suggest Apollo's pursuit of Daphne.

This scene is one of violence and despair, a despair that reappears in the historical description of Rousseau's fate. It also characterizes the overall dramatic action of the poem, which tells a story of degradation and enslavement. But this defeat is paradoxical. In a sense, Rousseau has overcome the disjunction of action and intention that tears apart the historical and political world. He has done so because his language has acquired the power of action as much as of the will. Not only because it can represent or reflect actions but because it constitutes in and by itself those actions themselves. The power

13. *destructifs* replaces a crossed-out *erosifs*.

14. In the manuscript, *cerf* is crossed out and replaced by *biche*, which in turn is crossed out and replaced again by *cerf*.

of Rousseau's words to act exists independently of his power to know. The intellectual power of Aristotle, Plato, and Rousseau did not give them any control over the deeds of the world, also and especially the deeds that their own language accomplished independently of its knowledge. The power that arms their words immediately makes them lose their power over them. This ambivalent power erects and wrecks the language of the self in one blow; and Rousseau, whose language, like that of Aristotle, Plato, and the poets, is precisely this power, is at the same time constituted, shaped (*formé*), and "more than half" destroyed, effaced by it. He gains shape (*forme*), figure, and a face, only to lose them as soon as he has acquired them. The enigma of this power becomes the burden of whatever understanding is permitted by the poem, and in particular by the passage beginning at line 307.

The passage recalls a specific experience that is certainly not simple but that can be summarized in a single verb: to forget. The term appears literally and in various periphrases and metaphors such as "to quell," "to blot," "to erase," and in terms more violent such as "to tread out," "to trample." But it combines with another metaphorical strain throughout both this passage and the entire poem, one that is related to landscapes and scenes with mountains, rivers, and flowers, and that takes place under the aegis of the moving sunlight. The convergence of the motifs of forgetting and the sun directs the process of the understanding (*compréhension*).

The structure of forgetting, in this poem, is not clarified (*ne se laisse pas comprendre*) by the echoes of Platonism, or Platonic anamnesis, that enter without saturating the text by way of Shelley's own neo-Platonic readings and by way of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, whose allusive presence in this passage has misled the best interpreters of this poem. For what one "forgets" in this text is not a previous, transcendental state that would be radically distinguished from one's present condition. Forgetting, in *The Triumph of Life*, takes the form of a non-knowing, an impossibility of knowing if our current state can be distinguished from a previous state or not; put otherwise, forgetting in this text is not the binary antithesis of memory but rather the impossibility of distinguishing between identity and difference. We do not know if our present state, referred to as infernal and also as a state of torpor and sleep, can be distinguished in any way whatsoever from a previous state where it could have been different. We do not know if we are awake or asleep, dead or alive. We cannot tell the difference between sameness and otherness, and this inability to know takes the form of a pseudo-knowledge which is called forgetting. Not just because it indicates (*représente*) a compulsive undecidability (and not a negation) so unbearable it has to be repressed, but because the situation itself, regardless of any affective valorization, good or bad, arises (*se présente*) as a fluctuation between knowing and not-knowing, like the symptom of a disease that one

remembers and that recurs only at the very instant that one remembers its absence. Forgetting, in other words, escapes here the polarity of absence and presence that is the constitutive principle of any binary system. It is, in fact, the deformation, the asymmetrization, the disfiguration of this system.¹⁵ The solar image, the hypotyposis by which this inherently incomprehensible and unrepresentable process is itself disfigured in the poem by the illusion of a necessarily deforming representation, is that of a glimmering light:

A light from Heaven whose half extinguished beam
Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost....

(ll. 425–32)

It would be a mistake to reduce too hastily those passages in which the polarity of waking and sleeping wavers strangely between that of day and night to a simple opposition between unveiling and veiling. The pair comes into play only to be distorted within the complex sequence that it seems to generate.

The chain that leads Rousseau from his birth to his present state of decrepitude passes through a curious sequence of relays. Plato and Wordsworth provide the initial linking of birth with forgetting, but this forgetting immediately has, in Shelley's poem, the structural ambivalence which makes it impossible to consider it as an act of closure or of beginning and which makes irrelevant any dialectical comparison (or discussion of influence) regarding Wordsworth's *Ode* (whose formidable difficulties are of another order). The metaphor for this process is that of a "gentle rivulet [which] filled the grove / With sound which all who hear must needs forget / All pleasure and all pain..." (ll. 314–19). Unlike the neo-Platonic tradition, which will be taken up by Yeats in deliberate opposition to Shelley, the river does not function as "generated soul," as the descent or fall of the transcendental order into an earthly time and space. As the passage progresses, the specific property of the river that develops the trope is a literal, non-esoteric one.¹⁶ The property that Shelley singles out is that of sound. The spell is created by the sonorous rhythm of the river, which articulates a random and vague (*informe*) noise into a definite structure, a little like in Rousseau's *Fifth Reverie*. Water, which has no shape (*forme*) in itself, can be molded into shape by the sound of its contact with the earth. It generates the very possibility of structure, shape, fragment, and totality, by the intervention of sound. As in the previously cited scene where the water erases the tracks, the movements of the water lend shape to what is in fact the disappearance, the erasure of shape into

15. *déformation* replaces a crossed-out *débiscence*.

16. *littérale* replaces a crossed-out *naturelle*.

shapelessness. The repetition of these erasures articulates what is in fact a disarticulation, a figure of disfiguration. The birth of what Shelley's earlier poem *Mont Blanc* still calls "mind," with an epistemological terminology here left behind, thus occurs as a distorting transformation which allows one to make the random regular by blurring (*estompant*) differences which, since they cannot be eliminated, must be forgotten.

As soon as the water's noise can become articulated in sound, it also can enter into contact with the light. The birth of form as the interference of light and water passes, in the semi-synesthesia of the passage, through the mediation of sound; what is at stake, as in contemporary tourism, is a spectacle described in terms of sound and light (with illuminated fountains as the example). We have, however, only a *semi-synesthesia* here, for the auditory phenomenon and the optical phenomenon, though simultaneous, are treated in asymmetrical juxtaposition, in the insistent mode of an "*and still*" or "*nevertheless (pourtant)*":

A shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn
Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing

A silver music on the mossy lawn,
And still before her on the dusky grass
Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn.

(ll. 352–7, emphasis added)

The water of the original river here fulfills a double and not necessarily complementary function. On the one hand it combines with the light to form the rainbow, the traditional emblem of totalization and the integration of the phenomenal with the transcendental world. The emblem appeared in Shelley in a central passage at the end of the elegy on the death of Keats, *Adonais*. It is the "dome of many-coloured glass" whose "stain" is the earthly trace and the promise, the diffraction of the "white radiance of Eternity" in which *Adonais*' soul is said to dwell "like a star." As such, it irradiates all the textures and forms of the sensory world with the veil of the sun's "colored reflection (*farbigen Abglanz*)," just as it provides the analogical light and heat that will make it possible to refer to the poet's mind as "embers." The metaphorical chain which links the sun to water, to color, to heat, to nature, to mind, and to consciousness, is certainly at work in this poem. It can be exemplified or summarized with the image of Iris' scarf. But this symbol is said to exist here in the ambivalent mode of insistence, as something that prevails in the mode of the *nevertheless*, as "And still..." against the encroachment of something else which also emanates from the water and is associated with it from the start, all the while producing for its part a network of which it could be said,

for example and among other things, that it wrenches the final statement of *Adonais* into a misshapen shape.¹⁷ This something else, which is called here forgetting and music, exists in some degree of tension with the symbol of the rainbow.

The entire scene leading from the shape's apparition to its subsequent waning is structured as a near-miraculous suspension between these two forces that, as Shelley puts it in an archaic, transitive use of the verb, "glimmers" the figure. This hovering motion is thematized in the myth of the manifestation of shape at the expense of its possession.¹⁸ The suspended fascination of Narcissus is caught in the moment when the shape is said to glide along the river

... with palms so tender
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow, ...

(ll. 361–2)

The light (for it is the light itself that functions here as Narcissus) generates its own shape by means of the mirror, a surface that articulates it without setting up the neat separation that differentiates an inside from an outside. The subject that comes into being in the moment of reflection is the very principle of optical symmetry as ground, as the grounding of all structure, optical repetition as the principle that allows for the engendering of entities and shapes. "Shape all light" is referentially meaningless since light, the necessary condition for shape, is itself, like water, without shape and acquires shape only when split in the illusion of a doubleness which is not that of self and other. The sun, in this text, is from the start the figure of this self-erotic specularity. "Shape" and "mirror" are inseparable in this text, just as what is inseparable from the sun can only be the eye, and just as the sun is inseparable from itself since it produces the illusion of the self as shape. The poem can say of the sun that it "stands," a figure which assumes an entire spatial organization, because it stands

amid the blaze
Of his own glory, ...

(ll. 349–50)

The sun "sees" its own light reflected, like Narcissus, in a well or water source that is a mirror as much as an eye, an eye eroticized in the figure of a male sun and a female eye or well:

17. *difforme* (misshapen) replaces a crossed-out *autre* (other).

18. "the manifestation of shape at the expense of its possession" replaces a crossed-out "the intangibility of Narcissus."

... the Sun's image radiantly intense
 Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
 Like gold, ...

(ll. 344–6)

Because the sun is itself the specular structure of the sun and the eye, the eye can be said to generate the world of natural forms. The radical otherness of the world thus becomes a maze made accessible to solar paths cleared by the eye, inasmuch as the eye turns from the white radiance of the sun to the green and blue color (*farbigen Abglanz*) of the world, and allows us to be in the world as in a landscape of roads and intents. Just as one threads the eye of a needle, the sun

threaded all the forest maze
 With winding paths of emerald fire....

(ll. 347–8)

In one of the boldest images of the passage, the sunray is, or is like, a thread that stitches the texture of the world, the necessary and symmetrical background for the eye of Narcissus. The water of the eye generates the iridescent rainbow of natural forms among which it remains suspended, in a repetition of the self-erotic contact between the sun and the water at the beginning of the passage. The shape is said to

... bend her
 Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
 Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
 That whispered with delight to be their pillow.

(ll. 363–6)

(I cite this passage in English because, as in all the explicitly erotic passages in Shelley and in Keats [unlike in Wordsworth], the literalism risks producing a ridiculous effect that would be intensified by translation and that remains somewhat blurred [*estompé*] in the original.)

Shelley's imagery (*métaphorique*), often and incorrectly assumed to be incoherent and arbitrary, is in fact extraordinarily systematic whenever light is being thematized. The passage condenses what innumerable later and earlier poets (one thinks of Valéry and Gide's Narcissus, but also of the *Roman de la Rose* and of Spenser) have done with light, color, and mirrors. It also bears witness to Shelley's affinity with Rousseau, who, we recall, allowed the phantasm of language to be born around a water source, before he took back all that was given in and by that image. For the investment in the luminous metaphor is considerable, since any principle of organization, however primitive, depends on it. To efface it from this text, for example,

would be to take away the sun, which would leave little else. *And still*, this light is allowed to exist in the text only in the most perilous of conditions.

The extreme frailty of the predicament is dramatized in the supernatural delicacy which gives the shape “palms so tender” that it can *glide* along the river without sinking. The entire passage is set up as an unimaginable balance between this gliding motion, which remains on this side of the reflective surface and allows the specular image to come into being, and the contrary motion which, like Narcissus at the end of Ovid’s story, breaks through the surface and thus destroys its suspended existence. The two motions named in the text as “gliding” and “treading” cannot come together in the representational logic of the figure. The “threading” sunrays become the “treading” of feet upon a watery surface which, unlike what happens in Mallarmé’s *Hérodiade*, for example, does not stiffen into solidity. Although it acts as a mirror, the text does not accord it stasis: the water is kept in motion and called a “billow”; the surface is roughened by the winds that also give some degree of verisimilitude to the shape’s motion. By the end of the passage, we have moved from “glide” to “tread” to “trample,” in a movement of increased violence. There is no doubt that, when the shape reappears for the last time in the text (ll. 425 ff.), it is no longer gliding along the water but is drowned, Ophelia-like, under the surface. This violence is confirmed by the resurrection of the rainbow (*l’arc-en-ciel*) metamorphosed, in the final section of the poem (l. 440), into a solid victory arch (*arc de triomphe*), under which marches the funereal *Trionfo* of historic life, said “fiercely [to extoll]” the shape’s defeat by what the poem calls “life” (l. 440).

The transition from “gliding” to “trampling” passes, in the action that is being narrated, through the relay of what the poem calls “measure.. The term actively reintroduces music, which, after having appeared on the same level as light in the initial scene, remained present only by analogy in this phase of the action (ll. 359–74). Measure is articulated sound, that is to say language. Language rather than music, in the traditional sense of melody and harmony. As melody or “song,” the noise of the water and, by extension, the various sounds of nature, provide a unified background that easily blends with the seduction of the natural world:

... all the place

Was filled with many sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun; ...

(ll. 339–42)

The melodious and harmonic music participates in the same gliding motion that is interrupted only when the melody is reduced to measure and the “feet” of the figure – (let’s call her Julie) –

to the ceaseless song

Of leaves and winds and waves and birds and bees
And falling drops moved in a measure new...

(ll. 375–7)

The step or “tread” of this dance is no longer based on melody but reduces music to the mere measure of repeated articulations. It singles out from the musical material the accentual or tonal punctuation which is also present in spoken diction (*langage articulé*). One could say of this scene that, in contradistinction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, it narrates the birth of music out of the spirit of language, since what is retained as music’s dominant property is the principle of verbal articulation prior to any principle of signification.

It is thus tempting to interpret the most enigmatic and ominous moment in the poem, Julie’s trampling the fire of thought “into the dust of death,” as the conflict of language as measure with language as representation and metaphor, the bifurcation between the semantic function of language as a process of signification achieved by its various devices of articulation, and the generative power of those same articulations separated from their semantic constraints. The superficial and the underlying structures of language do not necessarily determine each other. If in this poem, for instance, compelling (*contraignantes*) rhymes or assonances such as “billow,” “willow,” “pillow,” or transformations such as “thread” to “tread” or “seed” to “deed” occur at crucial moments in the text, then the legitimate question arises whether these particular punctuations are not being generated by properties of the signifier rather than by constraints (*contraintes*) of meaning. The obliteration of thought by measure would then be the loss of semantic and tropological depth in the face of what Mallarmé calls “le hasard infini des conjonctions.”

But this is not the lesson, or not in any case the entire lesson, of *The Triumph of Life*.¹⁹ For the arbitrary alignment between meaning and linguistic articulation does not by itself have, within the allegory of the text’s narrative, the power to break the specular structure which the text erects and then claims to dismantle. It does not account for the final phase of the myth,²⁰ when Julie traverses the surface of the mirror and drowns, repeating identical moments elsewhere in the text, for example when, at the beginning of the poem, the light of the stars is conquered and replaced by that of the sun, and the sun is replaced in turn by Julie, Julie by Rousseau, Rousseau by the chariot of Life, Life by Shelley, Shelley by us, his readers, and so on. For it is the alignment of a signification with any principle of articulation whatsoever, sensory or not, which constitutes the figure. The concepts of language

19. In both cases, *leçon* replaces a crossed-out *histoire* in the manuscript.

20. *du Narcisse* (of Narcissus) is crossed out.

as signification and language as figure are as inseparable from one another as the eye and the sun within a specular system. The structure is necessarily at least twofold and when illustrated, by hypotyposis, in a sensory substance or, to speak the language of Pierce, when it is iconized (an inherent tendency in the logic of the model), the latent specularity is confirmed, but it is not constituted by the illustration. It was already constituted, it existed already in the latent state, just as the movement of the shape “Julie” is dual independently of whether it is considered as a figure of light (the rainbow) or as a figure of articulation in general (music as measure). The particular seduction of the figure is not that it creates the illusion of sensory pleasure (*jouissance sensorielle*), but that it creates the illusion of meaning (*sens*). The transition is clearly marked in the passage we just read, as one moves from the figure of the rainbow to that of the dance, from light to measure. It corresponds with a movement to a generalized theory of figure beyond traditional conceptions of figure as the polarities of subject and object, part and whole, chance and necessity, or sun and eye, beyond tropological models such as synecdoche, metaphor, metalepsis, metonymy, prosopopoeia, and even catachresis (all of which necessarily imply a degree of iconicity) to grammar and syntax, structures which function at the level of the letter, without the intervention of an iconic factor, but which nevertheless must be considered as trope. What one can say, based on this text, is that this extension of the notion of figure to syntax and its consequent undoing of the limits of the aesthetic prepares for the erasure of the disfiguration, but is not by itself capable of bringing about that which, within the text’s system of images, corresponds to Julie’s death or the trampling of thought. Another aspect of language has to intervene.

The narrative sequence with which we are concerned follows (*reprend*) a motion framed by two events that are acts of sheer power: the sun erasing and overcoming the light of the stars, the light of Life erasing that of the sun. The movement of these punctual actions determined in time by a quantitative relation between forces, which transforms into a movement of spatial gliding, repeats (*reprend*) the paradox of the poem’s title. As several commentators have pointed out, “triumph” designates the moment of victory as well as the *Trionfo*, the procession, the syntagmatic structure that celebrates the outcome of the battle. If, as we maintain, the specular nature of the scene as a visual narrative of water and light is not a determining factor in itself but merely an illustration or hypotyposis of a more general movement, then these movements of force cannot be assimilated, even by analogy, to natural and referential events. The appearance of the solar shape is not a natural event but a power of language that exists independently of all referential function, of any transcendental referent. The gaining of power proceeds from a passage of the cognitive and tropological function of language to the positional function of language. The sun erases the stars because it posits

natural forms. The positional power does not reside in Julie, in Rousseau, or in Shelley as subjects. As subjects, their function in relation to this power is entirely passive. The positional power of language is at one and the same time entirely arbitrary, in that its strength cannot be reduced to necessity, and inexorable, since it allows for no alternative.²¹ It is only after the fact, through a retrospective illusion, that such positional acts can appear as the result of a dialectic between antithetical powers like day and night. The beginning of the poem, the appearance of the sun, which is perhaps not just its rising and its dawn, imposes this reading, which our entire being rejects and opposes.

Unlike the *Prometheus* and other epic poems based on titanic myths, such as Keats' *Hyperion*, or, the model common to all, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *The Triumph* does not begin with the pathos-laden spectacle of defeat, of Satan or of Saturn, of the forerunner or the ineffectual rebel, the dead father or the defeated son. Shelley's poem does not begin with an elegy on the disappearance of the night or the stars conquered by the power of the sun. The sun does not appear in reaction against the night, but entirely by its own power; this is why the emphasis is entirely on the rapidity and sudden aspect of its appearance. "Swift as the spirit hastening to his task...." No one triumphs through battle in this poem, which is neither epic nor religious. The first occupants of the narrative space are expelled by decree, by the sheer power of utterance. In the vocabulary of the poem, this occurs by *imposition*, the emphatic mode of positing:

Isle, Ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil which he of old
Took as his own and then imposed on them....

(ll. 16–20)

This thematization of language as the performance of position accounts for the absurdly brusque character of the scene, in which the most nuanced and gradual of natural movements are absurdly condensed into a single moment:

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
... the Sun sprang forth
... and the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.

(ll. 1–4)

21. On the following, otherwise blank page in the manuscript, this sentence (which here is crammed into the margins) is rewritten as follows: "The positional power of language is at one and the same time entirely arbitrary, in that its strength cannot be reduced to the necessity of a 'for-itself,' and entirely inexorable, since it allows for no alternative."

The appearance, later in the poem, of the allegorical chariot charged with representing the historical existence of men and whose light displaces and erases in turn that of the sun, is equally brusque and inexorable. It does not occur as the continuation of the sun's original positing, but as an independent positing accomplished in its own right. Unlike the sequence of day following night, the positing always has to be done again, which explains why these punctuations are repetitions and not origins or beginnings.

Why is the most continuous and most natural event of all, the rising of the sun, chosen, against all verisimilitude, as the analogy, the metaphor for the positional power of language? An act of position which is unrelated to anything antecedent or subsequent cannot, in principle, be inscribed in a narrative sequence. How can a speech act (not the language of action, as in Condillac, but the action of language) become a trope, a catachresis which then displays (*déploie*), by anamorphosis, the total spectrum (*spectre*), the allegory of tropological transformations?²² It can only be because we *impose*, in our turn, on the senseless power of positional language the authority of sense and meaning (*sens*). But this is radically inconsistent: *language posits and language means* (signifie) (since it articulates) *but language cannot posit meaning* (signification). Nor does the statement of this impossibility make it any less impossible. This impossible imposition is precisely figure, trope, metaphor as violent light – and not as dark light (*dunkles Licht*) – a violent and deadly Apollo. The trope is imposed in the form of ontological questions that mark the text throughout: who, or why, how am I? We cannot hope for a response since, as subjects, we have chosen to pose ourselves this way in questions, since the hypothesis of meaning is precisely that by which we pose ourselves arbitrarily as subjects in the very figure of questioning. This can be done only by “forgetting” the positional power of language and by retaining only its cognitive power, just as the poem develops it in the sequence leading from water to sound to measure and to the trampling of knowledge. But this movement is inscribed from the first scene, in the very fact of forgetting position by representing it in the form of what is most foreign to it, which is to say the natural succession of solar movement. The sudden and totally discontinuous character of imposition immediately becomes sequence, narrative, allegory, succession, while the poet knows that this aberration can only be a trance and a fiction, and is destroyed in its being posited. The poem describes the gradual emergence of a language of questioning and cognition through the erasure, forgetting, and disfiguration of acts that this language itself has in fact carried out or, as one says more rigorously, performed. It culminates in the appearance of the figure of light or Julie, a figure of thought but also a figure of the element in thought which

22. *déploie* replaces a crossed-out *engendre* (engender).

conquers and destroys thought, “thought’s empire over thought.” This is just what the gesture of trampling implies: the figure of thought, the very light of cognition, destroys thought as figure and disfigures it. The disfiguration of Rousseau is announced and represented in the text, in his metamorphosis into roots. It is repeated in a more general form in the passage where

... The fair shape waned in the coming
light
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite

Of sunrise ere it strike the mountain tops –

(ll. 412–15)

Lucifer, *photon-phorein*, lampadephore or Prometheus, the carrier (*porteur*) of fire who transports the light of the senses and of sense (*des sens et du sens*)²³ from events and entities to their meaning (*signification*) [*sic*],²⁴ it is the metaphor that is undone and dispossessed under our eyes in the very act of figural comprehension. Disfiguration brought about by (*sous l’empire de*) the performative power of language is irrevocable. It parades in front of us in the *Trionfo* where the figure first appears as water music, then as rainbow, then as measure to finally sink “below the watery floor,” trampled by its own power.²⁵ Unlike Lycidas or Adonais, in the elegies of Milton and Shelley that bear these names, it is not reborn in the form of a star, but is repeated at a lower and more violent level of literality. The process is endless, since the knowledge of language’s performative power is itself a figure and thus bound to repeat the disfiguration of metaphor, just as Shelley’s poem is condemned to repeat the ambient violence of *Julie* in the more violent mode that also implies its forgetting and erasure.

That Shelley chose to give the name of Rousseau to the process of disfiguration indicates that his understanding of Rousseau is something we are only just beginning to perceive ourselves. But this also serves as a warning that such an understanding risks not being able to provide (*apporter*) us with any kind of reassurance.

For Geneva. May 28, 1978
(partial translation) [de Man’s comment]

23. *du sens* replaces a crossed-out *de la connaissance*.

24. *signification* replaces a crossed-out *sens*.

25. In the manuscript, *Trionfo* is followed by a crossed-out *negative*.

Introduction to *Studies in Romanticism* (1979)

The essays collected in this issue come as close as one can come, in this country, to the format of what is referred to, in Germany, as an *Arbeitsgruppe*, an ongoing seminar oriented toward open research rather than directed by a single authoritative voice. Some of the papers originated in a year-long seminar sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities conducted at Yale during the academic year of 1977–78. It was entitled “The Rhetoric of Romanticism,” and the title seemed suitable enough to be retained in this expanded version of the initial group. The additional papers were often written in connection with various graduate seminars, but it would be an injustice to see in them only the products of a single “school” or orthodoxy, thus reducing their challenge to a mere anecdote. However, since it is much easier to dwell in the presence of banality than of inquiry, the tendency to stress the “group” aspect rather than the work accomplished may well prevail. This would be unfortunate, for whatever characterizes these papers as the recognizable products of a common workshop is their least important aspect. Most, though not all, of the authors are indeed at the onset of their productions, and this fact has its influence on the choice of the authors and texts that are being singled out; of all the coercion exercises by graduate instruction, none is more tyrannical than the predetermination of the textual canon. Yet, both in what these papers have in common and in what sets them apart from each other, something is happening that is by no means confined to the idiosyncrasies of a particular configuration of individuals. It has to do with a larger question which can be considered as a generational process – although this perspective, too, is misleading; one can as little wish away the innovative and subversive impact of these essays by attributing it to oedipal struggles as to academic provincialism. The validity of a genetic or generational model for literary history is one of the received ideas the papers leave behind. It is a matter of chance that the contributors turn out to belong by and large to the same generation, thus providing at

least a conveniently fallacious point of view from which to attempt a collective characterization of their achievement.

People of my generation (now roughly speaking in their fifties) interested in Romanticism began to write in the shadow of historical works that considerably refined [*sic*] on preconceived notions of periodization but without losing the sense of historical order to which these works owed their learning and aesthetic discrimination. The answer to such questions as “What is (or was) Romanticism and did such a thing ever occur?” became increasingly difficult to formulate but the question itself continued to make sense. The debates surrounding the historical definition of Romanticism helped to isolate a set of concepts and categories (nature, self, temporality, history, the imagination, the sublime, etc.) of considerable theoretical and exegetic power. Comparative studies made for an internationalization of the canon and for an expansion in time as well as in depth. The closer articulation of English high Romanticism (from the *Lyrical Ballads* to the death of Shelley) with its eighteenth-century antecedents in the “pre-Romantic” speculations of such authors as Diderot, Rousseau, Lessing, and Herder – to mention only the most obvious names – led to a much more delicate diagnosis of what has been referred to as an epistemological scission (*coupure*) in eighteenth-century thought; the distance between Meyer Abrams and Michel Foucault on this point is much less considerable than their respective ideologies make it appear to be. Moreover, the increased attention paid by literary scholars to the German philosophical tradition contemporaneous with Romanticism and extending from Kant to Hegel inscribed Romantic thematics within a larger intellectual context. It allowed, more specifically, for a measure of coordination between the stylistic and rhetorical devices of Romantic diction and the speculative aspects of idealist thought; in the Kantian tradition, *aesthetic* theory emerges as the link between the abstraction of philosophy and the self-reflexive, confessional mode that abounds in Romantic texts.

To those who were beginning to write on Romanticism in the 1950s, this opened up challenging avenues of research. Our elders provided models that may have seemed intimidating by the extent of their learning but that were certainly benevolent in their generous, liberal belief in the historical disciplines which their own books made manifest. Many of their students started out with the ambition to write their own syntheses or *summae* of Romanticism. For all I know, some may still be about to succeed, yet the fact remains, looking back over the production of the last twenty years, that no general works on Romanticism were produced comparable in scope and serenity to those of the previous decades. More important perhaps, the reasons for this apparent failure became themselves part of the problem.

Those reasons were actually already visible, albeit as on a photographic negative, in the earlier works. So, for instance, in a latent incompatibility

between the prevailing methods of intellectual history and procedures of close textual analysis that were also developing at the time: the New Critics, with their astute awareness of paradox and of imagery, were more at ease with earlier and later than with Romantic texts, and at times expressed this incompatibility as an overt hostility. Also, some of the major works of literary scholarship, such as Auerbach's *Mimesis* or Curtius' *Latin Middle Ages*, which started out from non-thematic elements (the rhetorical figure of representation or *topoi* considered independently of valorization), consequently seemed to shun Romanticism, as if it were not truly a part of the major Western tradition. Equally symptomatic is the relationship between the history of ideas and the criticism that was developing in the 1940s and 1950s on the Continent, under the name of thematic criticism. There seemed to be little in common between the straightforward paraphrases and the careful chronology of the intellectual historians and the synchronic *découpage* of entire works or periods in terms of a dominant system of figuration (Bachelard), or of a dominant metaphysical theme (Poulet), or even, with qualifications, of a rhetorical grid (Northrop Frye). Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, the two approaches are remarkably similar in their results. Both see Romanticism as a mimetic mode grounded in the distinctive experiences of the human consciousness conceived as an interiorization of a subject/object polarity. By different roads, thematic and historical criticism converge toward conclusions that make their shared preconceptions explicit.

What they have in common is a shared confidence in the semantic reliability of literary language, an assurance which the New Critics as well as stylistically sensitive authors such as Spitzer, Auerbach, and others were, in spite of themselves, beginning to undermine. Intellectual historians as well as "critics of consciousness" favor aesthetic and existential values over the intricacies of close reading. They paraphrase prior to reading, preferring the blanket understanding and identification which is possible on the level of received ideas to the actual complications of the texts. Their successors discovered that the writing of literary history and the reading of literary texts are not easily compatible. My generation adopted as a matter of course the historical schemes that had been worked out by its predecessors, but found that elements in the texts which did not fit these conclusions had been systematically, though unconsciously, overlooked. Ways of reading better attuned to some of the intricacies of figural language revealed areas of signification that had remained invisible. As a result, the readings became so intricate and lengthy that no space or energy was left to return to historical generality. On a somewhat more advanced level of interpretation, the large overviews on which traditional history depends are no longer possible. The general ideas become shadowy and begin to fall apart, the material becomes too unwieldy for synthesis or for definition. There is so much minute detail, the distinctions

become so diversified, that no discussion of generations, movements, or specific experiences of consciousness is any longer conceivable.

Caught between historical norms inherited from their predecessors and their own reading practice, the “generation” which, for the sake of convenience, I have chosen to invent (and to which no individual will exactly correspond), finds itself in an awkward double bind, reflected in writings that are lopsided in their emphasis on textual analysis as compared to the paucity of the historical results to which they continue to aspire. The tension produced frustrating books and teachers, skillful at best in the techniques of reading but inconclusive with regard to the problems which the readings discover. That so many remained selectively interested in Romanticism is clear evidence of a persistent commitment to the historical outlook that keeps haunting the textual analyses as their bad conscience.

The papers in this issue of *Studies in Romanticism* are remarkably free of this feeling of guilt. They perform their parricide with such a light touch that the target may not even realize what has hit him. The scope is certainly not wider, far from it. Close reading and rhetorical analysis are eminently teachable, and it is a common and productive gesture of all these papers to outdo the closeness of reading that has been held up to them and to show, by reading the close readings more closely, that they were not nearly close enough. The selective corpus grows smaller and smaller and gets stuck, at times, on a sentence, a title, or a word. But far from causing anxiety, the authors wrest their best findings from these obsessive interrogations. Techniques of rhetorical, as opposed to thematic, analysis are used with remarkable ease, with none of the nervousness which, speaking for myself, makes me feel as if someone were looking over my shoulder whenever thematic assertions can be shown to be subservient to rhetorical overdeterminations. Tropes are taken apart with such casual elegance that the exegeses can traverse the entire field of tropological reversals and displacements with a virtuosity that borders on parody. Freed of the constraints of ideological and aesthetic valorization (though not devoid of the corresponding sensitivities) they can begin to perceive the consequences of their rhetorical deconstructions with enough clarity to distinguish the necessity as well as the borderlines of their own method. At their strongest moments, the shape of another critical discourse begins to emerge, and the critical analysis of the figuration gropes for its own context. This is often accomplished by ways of psychoanalytical schemes of understanding that are no longer ego-centered or by performative modes disencumbered of ethical considerations. The most interesting occurrence of all is that, at the far end of this ongoing enterprise, the question of history and of ethics can be seen to reemerge, though in an entirely different manner, no longer predicated, as it was for us, on identifiable evasions of complexities. It would be preposterous to try to state succinctly, in paraphrase, how

this reemergence of history at the far side of rhetoric can be said to take place, as if one could spare oneself the labor of reading accomplished in these papers. They deserve at least to have some of their own rigor applied to themselves. Such a reading would reveal that the question of Romanticism can no longer be asked in the manner to which we are still accustomed and that, by extension, the genetic and monumental patterns that are commonly associated with Romanticism have lost much of their authority. The new problems that appear as a consequence are not less redoubtable, but it is exhilarating to capture the moment at which the emancipation is taking place. I am most grateful to the editors of *Studies in Romanticism* and to Professor Wagenknecht in particular for their progress that is avowedly speculative. Professor Wagenknecht's patient and attentive cooperation in editing the issue has greatly assisted in making it as accessible and informative as it could be.

Hommage à Georges Poulet (1982)

The first essay by Georges Poulet I ever read was in an ephemeral avant-garde review, *Sang Nouveau*, published some years earlier in the 1930s at Charleroi. The piece was signed with a pseudonym, “Georges Thialet,” and dealt with what now appears a somewhat odd grouping of four contemporary English novelists: Huxley, Priestley, Lawrence, and Joyce. Never had I heard literature talked about in quite that way, with an inner intensity that went far beyond critical evaluation, historical narration, or formal description – although this description, especially in the case of Huxley and Joyce, was both tantalizing and exact. Later, at the beginning of the 1950s, I read an essay on *Igitur*, published in *Deucalion* and signed with the author’s real name, coincident with the appearance of the Paris edition of the first volume of *Studies in Human Time*. I read them with the same sense of discovery, despite the considerable amount of innovation that had occurred in the meantime in French criticism. There was something about Poulet’s work that made it stand apart and speak with a timeless authority, very different from the timely innovation one admired in others, such as Bataille, Blanchot, Sartre, and Bachelard. Nowadays, after thirty more years of critical dialectics, the same holds true. Re-reading Poulet on one of the many authors that are close to him – Pascal, say, or Constant, or Proust (and there are many others) – one is overcome and enlightened in a manner that reaches well beyond methodological or technical preoccupations. Poulet’s impact on contemporary criticism has been as extensive as it has been salutary, yet his true importance lies elsewhere, in a less explored, less public domain.

The formal and systematic aspects of his own method have become part of the critical canon. In the context of French literary and academic criticism before 1940, these initiatives were extremely bold. One should mention the practice of a thematic *decoupage* that deliberately ignores the borderlines and the closures of actual texts (Poulet never deals with specific poems or novels but always with a corpus in its totality); the extension of the corpus

to include correspondence, journals, fragments, etc., used as if they existed on exactly the same plane as the finished, major works; the focus on origins, beginnings, and centers as generating principles of composition; the suspension of aesthetic, critical, and ideological judgment as the main obstacle to the acquiescent acceptance of the other which is the necessary condition for insight; the assertion of a new canon that bypasses some of the major names but displaces the attention upon an altogether different set of writers – Joubert, for example, or Maine de Biran, or Amiel, or Maurice de Guérin. Many other innovations could be cited, which all had a powerfully liberating effect. They lead to a criticism that is meta- (but not anti-) historical in its stress on the synchrony of thematic invariants, as well as meta-formal in its systematic undoing of aesthetic categories.

All this is important and open to productive discussion. It allows one to *place* Poulet within the configuration of contemporary criticism, as one genuine innovator among very few others. It allows for an evaluation of what he has contributed. But it fails to account for the singularity of a work that resists being assimilated to the collective trends, methodological or ideological, that have shaped the history of literary criticism over the last fifty years. Besides being an important chapter in this history, Poulet's work is also something entirely different that has little to do with literature considered as an academic or cultural institution.

Poulet's thought is put in motion by a powerful impulse or vision that bears, in fact, little relation to literature, especially to literature valorized as an aesthetic function of language. What counts for him is the experience of an unmediated presence of the mind to itself, in a barely articulated or actualized act of inner participation. It is a *cogito* that precedes all reflection, let alone doubt, and that has no existence in time or in the world of organized forms. It is the hypostasis of an experience which is not just an act of faith, since it is an act of pure intellect, and which stands as an unmovable background behind any manifestation of thought. It transcends the distinctions and similarities between philosophy and literature as well as those between authors and between periods. All take part, in their own way, in the same negative quest: the undoing of the elements that distract or distance them from the absolute purity of intellectual self-presence. This undoing is accomplished by assimilating those elements to the substance from which they separate us.

One of these elements is time, explicitly treated by Poulet through his entire work. The recurrent narrative of his essays tells how the sense of temporal loss can be recovered, transformed into pure mind by the full recognition and acceptance of this loss. On this central metaphysical theme Poulet partakes of a tradition that includes Augustine and that is accessible only to an innate quality of mind.

There is, however, another element besides time and its correlates, that threatens the immediacy of intellectual self-presence, and which Poulet does not mention by name: this is, of course, language itself, and especially language in its duplicitous and ambivalent aspects that are particularly in evidence in literature. Poulet belongs to the highest tradition of literary criticism in which the criticism, as its name literally indicates, is primarily the criticism, the devalorization, and destruction of literature itself. His work can be seen as an infinitely subtle, tenacious, and effective struggle with the deviousness of language, in which the structure of this deviousness is manifest as in the negative film of its positive revelation. Especially for those who know the power of language as well as the seduction of its delusions, the work of Poulet proves to be indispensable.

A Letter from Paul de Man (1982)

In May 1981 we [the journal *Critical Inquiry*] invited Paul de Man to reply to Stanley Corngold's essay, "Error in Paul de Man." We received the following letter.

You generously invited me to reply to Stanley Corngold's essay, a somewhat ambivalent assignment since I can hardly feel to be "addressed" by a discourse which, as is so often the case, addresses its own rather than my defenses or uncertainties. But since the tone of the essay suggests indictment rather than dialogue, and since the only alternative thus left to me is a plea for mercy, I welcome the opportunity to set the record straight on one specific point: the Nietzsche passage which is offered as the main exhibit to establish probable cause of my guilt.

I am grateful to Stanley Corngold for having pointed out a polarity (error/mistake) that I have not explicitly thematized in these terms. If "mistake" is random and contingent (of the order of "can" or "may") and "error" is systemic and compulsive (of the order of "must"), then I have stated, in a variety of terminologies, the impossibility of ever coming to rest on one or the other side of this distinction. I suppose the most sustained attempt to work out the problem is in the reading of a section of Nietzsche's posthumous fragments in my *Allegories of Reading* (chapter 6), in which "can" is opposed to "must." But the gesture certainly recurs, contingently as well as compulsively, all too frequently. I therefore can only agree with Corngold when he says that "it is not possible to discriminate between these categories" in my writings (p. 504). Since I use the terms "error" and "mistake" casually rather than systematically or self-consciously, I do not control their usage as consistently as I should have. I can remember, with some embarrassment, at least one passage in *Blindness and Insight* in which

mistake is peremptorily distinguished from error (or “blind spot”);¹ all I can say for myself is that it took me a large number of pages to try to disentangle the snarl that resulted from this rash assertion.

I take it that for Corngold the distinction between mistake and error is clear and that he can distinguish between them without fail. This accounts for his trenchant tone of accusation: only someone very certain to tell one from the other can denounce mistakes with such conviction. The tonality gets transposed to my own diction: I am said to *force* crises, to *devastate* horizons and perceptions, to *demolish* metaphors, and to *hate* genealogies, but all this sound and fury never allows me to move one jot beyond the benign and self-tolerating universe somewhat surprisingly attributed to Kant. I sound, in short, like a bully who also wants to play it safe. The pattern of defense is familiar coming from those who feel threatened by readings that lay claim neither to hostility, nor to tolerance, nor indeed to any easily personifiable mode of relationship. With regard to concepts or to the fellow-critics I write about, I have never felt anything approaching hostility nor, for that matter, benignity; very different sets of terms would have to be used to designate a rapport that is a great deal less agonistic than that of forensic, familial, or erotic combat.

Whenever a binary pair is being analyzed or “deconstructed,” the implication is never that the opposition is without validity in a given empirical situation (no one in his right mind could maintain that it is forever impossible to tell night from day or hot from cold) but only that the *figure* of opposition involved in all analytical judgments is not reliable, precisely because it allows, in the realm of language to which, as figure, it belongs, for substitutions that cannot occur in the same manner in the world of experience. When one moves from empirical oppositions such as night and day to categorical oppositions such as truth and falsehood, the epistemological stakes increase considerably because, in the realm of concepts, the principle of exclusion applies decisively. The critical function of deconstruction is not to blur distinctions but to identify the power of linguistic figuration as it transforms differences into oppositions, analogies, contiguities, reversals, crossings, and any other of the relationships that articulate the textual field of tropes and of discourse. Hence the distinctively critical, in the not necessarily benign Kantian sense, function of texts, literary or other, with regard to aesthetic, ethical, epistemological, and practical judgments they are bound to generate. These judgments are never merely contingent mistakes or merely preordained errors, nor can they be kept in abeyance between the two mutually exclusive alternatives. As Pascal said with regard to the coercive

1. See my *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York, 1971), p. 130 n.51.

choice between dogmatism and skepticism, the refusal to decide between them, since it is itself a conceptual rather than a contingent decision, is always already a choice for error over mistake. Conversely, any decision one makes with regard to the absolute truth or falsehood value of a text always turns out to be a mistake. And it will remain one unless the perpetrator of the mistake becomes critically aware of the abusive schematization that caused his mistake and thus transforms the mistaking of error (for mistake) into the error of mistaking.

For example, it is Corngold's pragmatic mistake to have chosen Nietzsche to establish his claim to an essential, grounded distinction between error and mistake. Among the various authors discussed, Nietzsche is the least likely to offer any support to his assertion – and the defiance involved in this gesture is the closest Corngold's text allows one to come to the point where his mistake shades back into error. I am, alas, all too certain that other mistakes of translation I have committed could have served him better, for such translations, dictated by hasty necessity, are more likely to give away an author's wishes than are his readings or translations done for their own sake rather than used in the context of an argument. But in the case of the Nietzsche passage that Corngold singles out, I would not have to change a word in the conclusions drawn from a translation adjusted to conform more closely to the original. Nor would I adopt Corngold's version of the passage as a correction of my own. The reasons for this have directly to do with the undecidability of the distinction between error and mistake.

The Nietzsche passage, which is part of material ancillary to *The Birth of Tragedy* but not included in the published text, deals with the altogether Kantian distinction between teleological, intentional (*zweckmässig*) judgments which belong to the realm of the intellect, of consciousness, and (I would feel entitled to add) of discourse, and what Nietzsche calls “die Natur der Dinge,” to which such schemes cannot *a priori* be said to apply. “Von Intelligenz kann nur in einem Reiche die Rede Sein, wo etwas verfehlt werden kann, wo der Irrtum stattfindet...” A corrected and overliteral translation could read: “The mention of intelligence can only occur in a realm where something can be missed [as one misses a target or a train], where [the] error takes place in the realm of consciousness.”² Nietzsche says “wo der Irrtum stattfindet,” which, especially after the use of “Reiche” for “world” and with the temptation of alliteration, is better rendered by “error reigns” than by Corngold's “where such a thing as error can take place”; Nietzsche certainly did not write “wo so etwas wie Irrtum stattfinden kann.” He would

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1967), p. 266. For the original, see Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta, 3 vols (Munich, 1954–56), vol.3, p. 239.

not have written this without going against the grain of his knowledge, for “der Irrtum” has for him a very specific and precise meaning. It is, as in *The Will to Power*, “the old error of the ground [der alte Irrtum vom Grunde],”³ the error which consists of mistaking the figure of a ground for an actual cognitive grounding when it is at most, as Kant already knew and as Heidegger developed in *Satz vom Grund*, a hypotyposis for mind in general as *hypokeimenon*. Error is not, here, just any error, let alone “such a thing as error,” but *the* error that cannot be separated from cognition to the precise extent that cognition cannot be separated from discourse. But if error is thus “fundamentally” linked to cognition, with all the indeterminacy inherent in this metaphor of foundation, then the mind cannot be expected to master the distinction between possibility and necessity. Which is exactly what Nietzsche asserts two sentences further along in the same text: “What is necessary [in the realm of nature] is the only thing that is possible [Was notwendig ist, ist das einzig mögliche].”⁴ The unmasterable distinction between necessity and possibility (error and mistake) characterizes the realm of the mind as differentiated from that of being (here hellenistically called “nature” or, rather, “die Natur der Dinge”) and thus has no transcendental authority. By no stretch of the imagination can one read a categorical distinction of the type error/mistake between “etwas verfehlen” and “[als] Irrtum stattfinden” in Nietzsche’s sentence; one could indeed argue that Corngold’s and my own translation of “etwas verfehlen” as “mistake” is a mistake, since the teleological context and the inference of interest in the attempt to hit a mark which “can” be missed (*verfehlt*) implies that the notion of contingent “mistake” is entirely absent from the text.

Because mind is at most a representation or a trope of being and because *The Birth of Tragedy* has consistently argued, against Schopenhauer, that will and representation (Dionysos and Apollo) cannot be antithetically related, it follows that the will, or Dionysos, like the mind, is subject to “*the* error of the ground” and hence (in a vocabulary which I would no longer use in this way but which is not simply false) “mere error and mystification.” “Willie, wenn damit eine Vorstellung verbunden sein muss, ist auch kein Ausdruck für den Kern der Natur [Neither can the will, since a representation has to be linked to it, be considered an expression of the kernel of nature].” The passage certainly is not without its difficulties (such as the “muss” that links Apollo to Dionysos and makes such a link part of “the nature of things”), and I am far from satisfied with the concluding pages I wrote on *The Birth of Tragedy*;

3. See Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (London, 1968), sec. 479, pp. 265–6.

4. Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Werke*, 23 vols (Munich, 1920–29), vol. 3, p. 239. I translated more freely: “Necessity means that there can only be one possibility.”

I only hope that some of the unresolved questions become somewhat clearer in the two subsequent chapters on Nietzsche. But Corngold's remarks, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, move in the wrong direction. I can only speculate what ghost or phantasm he is fighting: possibly Nietzsche himself and all that "Nietzsche" stands for in terms of critical clarity and rigor.

One minor point: I was indeed surprised to hear that I was born in 1918.* The correct date is December 1919. I trust, perhaps optimistically, that this at least is a mistake and not an error. But if it be error, one can readily, for the sake of the joke, pardon the gloomy grimace of its trope.

*Corngold has corrected this error in his essay. – *Editor's note.*

Reply to Raymond Geuss (1983)

The tenuous relationships between the disciplines of philosophy and literary theory have recently been strengthened by a development which, at least in this country and over the last fifty years, is somewhat unusual. Literary theorists never dispensed with a certain amount of philosophical readings and references, but this does not mean that there always was an active engagement between the two institutionalized academic fields. Students of philosophy, on the other hand, can legitimately and easily do without the critical investigation of literary theorists, past or present; it is certainly more important for a literary theorist to read Wittgenstein than for a philosopher to read I. A. Richards, say, or Kenneth Burke. But the situation has become somewhat more mobile. Several members of the philosophical profession have prominently taken part in literary conferences, including the yearly meetings of the Modern Language Association, and some literary theorists have been present in person or have been represented by their writings at gatherings organized by philosophers. It would certainly be an exaggeration to speak of an active, lively dialogue between them; yet symptoms of a renewed interest are discernible on both sides. Since many problems, technical as well as substantial, are shared by both fields, such a trend can only be salutary. It may not only prevent duplications but also renew the approach to recurrent questions by the shock of unfamiliar, perhaps even incongruous, perspectives.

From the narrow point of view of the literary theorist, the interchange offers at least one immediate advantage: the benefit of truly attentive and close readings. The exchanges within the precincts of the literary establishment have not lacked in animation, but they tend to remain personal, moralistic, and ideological in a manner that is not exactly conducive to precision. Most of the recent polemics aimed at literary theory bear no relationship whatever to the texts they claim to attack. Philosophical readers, more accustomed to the rigors of argument, are less prone to be obviously *ad hominem*: they have a tighter sense of the nuances and the specificities of

discursive texts. Of course, they do not have a monopoly on the subtleties of close reading, and it is only on a first level of approximation that they can thus be set apart from their counterparts in departments of literature. The real problem starts a little further on, in an attempt to state the difference (if it exists) between a close “philosophical” and a close “literary” reading of a text. It is clear, for example, that most of Raymond Geuss’ objections to my paper “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*” have to do with the manner of reading philosophical writings prior to the substance that such a reading reveals. In the remarks that follow, I will try not to lose sight of this pragmatic aspect of the encounter.

Geuss’ stance, throughout his commentary, is to shelter the canonical reading of what Hegel actually thought and proclaimed from readings which allow themselves, for whatever reason, to tamper with the canon. Such an attitude, I hasten to add, is not only legitimate but admirable; when it is pursued – as is here the case – with genuine authority, it is in no way reductive. There is no merit whatever in upsetting a canonical interpretation merely for the sake of destroying something that may have been built with considerable care. This is all the more so in the case of a truly systematic, consistent, and self-critical philosopher, who certainly would not have taken lightly to such epithets as “vacillating” or “duplicitous” applied to his writings. The commentator should persist as long as possible in the canonical reading and should begin to swerve away from it only when he encounters difficulties which the methodological and substantial assertions of the system are no longer able to master. Whether or not such a point has been reached should be left open as part of an ongoing critical investigation. But it would be naive to believe that such an investigation could be avoided, even for the best of reasons. The necessity to revise the canon arises from resistances encountered in the text itself (extensively conceived) and not from preconceptions imported from elsewhere.

My misgivings about a non-problematical reading of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and about the acceptance at face value of Hegel’s main pronouncements about art do not stem from some previously arrived at conviction about the nature of the aesthetic, of symbolic language, or of any other key concept. Nor does it stem, as Geuss suggests, from an allegiance to Nietzsche’s notions of interpretation. It starts out from a difficulty, a recurrent uncertainty in the *reception* of the *Aesthetics*, a difficulty perhaps more acute in the case of this particular Hegel text than of any other. The *Aesthetics* always was and still is a crux in the interpretation of Hegel. It was so for Kierkegaard, who extended the problematic in the direction of religion, and for Marx, who extended it in the direction of the philosophy of law. The same configuration is repeated today in the decisive importance given to the *Aesthetics* in the two main twentieth-century attempts to reinterpret Hegel: in Heidegger

and in Adorno (who started out from Kierkegaard).¹ For obvious reasons of economy, I could only allude to this complex matter by referring not to a philosopher but to a literary historian, Peter Szondi. Szondi's poetic sensitivity as by instinct locates the question of the aesthetic where it belongs – in the area of symbolic language.

It is on this same point, the symbolic nature of language and art, that Geuss' canonical defense appears for the first time open to the reproach of literalism. The term "symbolic" appears conspicuously in the *Aesthetics*, though it is not always used in the same sense. In part 2 of the treatise, the history of art, as is well known, is divided in three parts: symbolic, classical, and romantic art. "Symbolic" here functions as a historical term in a system of periodization. Geuss is certainly right in saying that the symbolic art form Hegel associates with India and Persia is only preartistic and preparatory to the high period of art which Hegel, following Winckelmann and Schiller, locates in Hellenic classicism. As such, "classical" art is not "symbolic" art. Hegel says as much, albeit with more qualifications than Geuss: "It follows that a classical style [*Darstellungsweise*] can in *essence* no longer be *symbolic* in the more precise sense of the term, although some symbolic ingredients remain intermittently present in it."² This "more precise sense of the term" is the historical sense, the only one that Geuss acknowledges. But, in the same section of the *Aesthetics*, Hegel also glosses "symbolic" in purely linguistic terms, by setting up a distinction between sign and symbol (see *Aes II*, p. 327). This differentiation belongs to all language in general, regardless of period or nationality. It accounts, among other things, for the fact that Hegel extends his discussion of symbolic art forms way beyond primitive art into the present, whereas, in the case of classical art, the end is put where it chronologically belongs, in Roman satire.³ The term "symbolic" thus functions in a linguistic as well as in a historical register. The two realms are not unrelated, but different properties prevail in each. In the linguistic perspective, for example, it cannot be said that classical art is not symbolic. On the contrary, it is the highest possible fulfillment of symbolic language,

1. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), vol. 2, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Aesthetischen*, and *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970).

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), vol. 14, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetic I*, p. 20; all further references to this volume, abbreviated *Aes II*, to vol. 13 (*Vorlesungen über die Aesthetic I*), abbreviated *Aes I*, and to vols 8 and 10 (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, I and III*), abbreviated *Enz I or III*, will be included parenthetically in the text; my translations.

3. In the last section of the symbolical art forms, entitled "The Conscious Symbolism of the Comparative Art Form," Hegel deals with such "modern" genres as allegory, fable, enigma, parable, etc., all of which are notoriously post-classical (see *Aes I*, pp. 486–546).

the very Hegelian dialectical moment in which the symbolic fulfills itself in its own sublation. For Hegel always considers the symbolic by way of an increasing proximity between sign and meaning, a proximity which, by principles of resemblance, analog, filiation, interpenetration, and so forth, tightens the link between both to the ultimate point of identity. This identity reaches its climax (*Vollendung*) in classical art, though not without its own costs in negation, sacrifice, and restriction that do not have to concern us here. Far from being non-symbolic, classical art is the moment at which the semiotic function of language, which is, in principle, arbitrary and detached from meaning, is entirely transformed into a symbolic function.

The quotation which asserts Hegel's explicit commitment to a symbolic concept of art is therefore entirely devoid of ambiguity. Later complications make sense only against the background of this categorical assertion: "In the case of art, we cannot consider, in the symbol, the arbitrariness between meaning and signification [*Gleichgültigkeit* von Bedeutung und Bezeichnung derselben], since art itself consists precisely in the connection, the affinity and the concrete interpenetration of meaning and of form" (*Aes* 1, p. 395; see my pp. 763–4). Indeed, I cannot see how Geuss can deny (see p. 381 n.3) that this sentence has to do with the distinction between sign and symbol, when it appears in the context of a discussion of this very distinction; the terminology (*Symbol* and *Zeichen*) in the immediately preceding sentence, as well as the examples (national banners), and the analytical inferences are all very close to the section in the *Encyclopedia* (par. 458) in which the differentiation between sign and symbol is worked out in greater detail. The burden of translation in this sentence is not, as Geuss maintains, the antecedent of "derselben" but the italicized term *Gleichgültigkeit* ("indifference," in the sense of not caring for or not relating to something or someone). "Derselben" simply refers to "Bedeutung" and distinguishes between the substance of a meaning (*Bedeutung*) and the mode of signification by which the meaning is reached (*Bezeichnung derselben*). In the case of the sign, as Hegel has just stated, the sign and the meaning do not share a common property and are therefore estranged ("indifferent," *gleichgültig*) from each other. Whereas, in the case of the symbol and of art, the opposite is the case, and the estrangement has become a close affinity (*Verwandschaft*). The sentence says exactly what it means to say: the aesthetic sign is symbolic. It is *the* canonical sentence of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, and any attempt to make it say something else is either false or, as I suspect is the case here, says the same thing but in less precise terms.

The reference to the discussion of sign and symbol in paragraph 458 of the *Encyclopedia* leads to the other main disagreement between Geuss and myself, namely, his contention that "the philosophy of subjective spirit does not seem a promising place to start [a discussion of the *Aesthetics*]"

(p. 381). The canonical bent of his reading here extends to my own text and schematizes it beyond recognition. It is, for example, not the case that, in my essay, “sign” and “symbol” stand in a constant “relation of opposition to each other” (p. 375). This reference is presumably to my statement that “the relationship between sign and symbol . . . is one of mutual obliteration” (p. 770). “Obliteration” is both more and less than “opposition,” and the entire argument can be seen as a way to account for the change that leads from a “dichotomy” between sign and symbol (see p. 763) to the metaphor of “obliteration.” At the point in the exposition when I discuss Hegel’s distinction between sign and symbol, the stress is not on the arbitrariness of the sign (which could possibly, though not necessarily, be put in polar opposition to the *motivation* of the symbol) but on the active power which permits the intellect to appropriate the properties of the outside world to its own ends (see pp. 766–7). By this *activity* (Hegel refers to *Tätigkeit der Intelligenz* [*Enz III*, p. 270, par. 458]) the intellect becomes the subject that subjects the natural object to its powers. Hegel’s interest in the sign is entirely based on the similarity between the intellect as speaking and thinking subject and the sign as the product of this same intellect. There is a direct connection between Hegel’s considerations on the sign, in paragraph 458 of the *Encyclopedia*, and his affirmation, in the same book, that “the simple expression of the existing subject, as thinking subject, is I” (*Enz I*, p. 72, par. 20). The move from the theory of the sign to the theory of the subject has nothing to do with my being overconcerned with the Romantic tradition, or narcissistic, or (*c’est la même chose*) too influenced by the French. It has, in fact, nothing to do with me at all but corresponds to an inexorable and altogether Hegelian move of the text. That this “thinking subject” is in no way subjective, in the ordinary sense of the term, nor even specular, in the Cartesian mode, is something that any careful reader of Hegel knows.

The same direct line travels from the assertion that the thinking subject somehow erases (the term in Hegel’s lexicon is *tilgen*) the natural world to the disagreement on the use of the verb *meinen* in paragraph 20. Geuss contests my reading of *meinen* as having, next to others, the connotation of “opinion” in the sentences: “Was ich nur *meine*, ist *mein*” and “so kann ich nicht sagen, was ich nur *meine*” (*Enz I*, p. 74, par. 20; see my pp. 768–9 and Geuss, p. 380). In my turn, I must accuse him of mishearing the German language when he interprets *meinen* only as *vouloir dire* (or, as in Stanley Cavell’s title, *can we mean what we say?*), that is, as signifying intent, as “intend[ing] to refer to some particular individual thing” (p. 380). The “nur” in “was ich nur *meine*,” which I in no way neglect (and bracket on one occasion – but for entirely different reasons than those attributed to me), is precisely what confirms the normal vernacular use of “eine Meinung haben.” *Meinung*, or “opinion,” is, from an epistemological point of view

(“*nur Meinung*”), inferior to *Wissen*, for example, as *doxa* is “inferior” to *episteme*. The possessive article, indispensable when one speaks of opinion, disappears when one speaks of truth: one says “*meine Meinung*” but “*die Wahrheit*.” That the question of opinion has to come up at this point stems from the fact that Hegel also has defined “thinking” as being – like the sign – “appropriation,” “making mine.” The pun on *meinen* as “making mine” around which Hegel keeps circling, also at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, is therefore entirely legitimate. But it underlies what turns out to be an ever present point of resistance in the Hegelian system: if truth is the appropriation in thought and, hence, in language, of the world by the I, then truth, which by definition is the absolutely general, also contains a constitutive element of particularization that is not compatible with its universality. The question always surfaces, in Hegel, when language surfaces, in paragraphs 20 and 458 of the *Encyclopedia*, in the section on sensory evidence in the *Phenomenology*, in the *Science of Logic*, and so on. The aporia is admirably condensed in the sentence which names the double function of the word “I” as being, at the same time, the most general and the most particular of terms: “Wenn ich sage: ‘Ich,’ *meine* ich mich *als diesen* alle anderen Ausschliessenden; aber was ich sage, Ich, ist eben jeder” (*Enz I*, p. 74, par. 20; see my p. 769). By restricting his reading of *meinen* to the question of conceptualization (which derives from what is being said but does not reach nearly so far), Geuss needlessly cuts himself off from an entire cluster of problems (the deictic function of language, the proleptic structure of thought, the distinction between knowledge as *erkennen* and *wissen*, etc.), all of which run as the proverbial *roter Faden* through the entire corpus of Hegel’s works. And he especially cuts himself off from the possibility of linking Hegel’s epistemology and, by extension, his logic to a largely implicit theory of language, a theme that gives its importance to the sections in the *Aesthetics* where this link is most openly being established.

The same misplaced timidity distorts Geuss’ discussion of the term “idea” in Hegel’s definition of “the beautiful” as “the sensory manifestation of the idea” (p. 378). According to Geuss, “the idea’ in Hegel’s technical sense, as a term in metaphysics, plays no role” in the consideration of the faculties of the mind (p. 379). Consequently he can reproach me for having confused, in Hegel’s definition of “the beautiful,” the metaphysical sense of idea with that of the psychology of representation (*Vorstellung*).⁴ Indeed, by linking

4. I cannot agree with Raymond Geuss when he asserts that I interpret the idea, by analogy with the English Romantics, as interiorization (see pp. 378–9). At the point in the paper that refers to English Romanticism (see p. 771), I am not giving a reading of “the sensory appearance of the idea” which “assimilates Hegel to Wordsworth and the English Romantics” (pp. 379, 378). The passage is instead polemically directed against the interpretation of Romanticism as interiorization that is so prominent in authors

this definition to the question of language, one is directed to the section in the *Encyclopedia* that has to do with what is called, in the tradition of the eighteenth century, psychology: the study of the faculties of consciousness, including the faculty of representation. It is under the general heading “*Psychologie*,” in subdivision “B” (“*Die Vorstellung*”) of subdivision “a” (“*Der theoretische Geist*”) that the discussion of sign and symbol is located. We are at least two stages removed from the absolute Spirit where the discussion of Art as Idea should presumably take place. But the idea, which is the metaphysical ground of its own activity as spirit (*Geist*), is omnipresent throughout and at all stages of the system. When Hegel speaks – on the level of the subjective spirit – of perceiving, imagining, representing, and thinking, this always occurs from the perspective, so to speak, of the idea. Perception, representation, or thought is always perception, representation, or thought of the idea and not just of the natural or empirical world. This is precisely what sets Hegel apart from his eighteenth-century predecessors. In discussing language, which is an agent of representation, one discusses the idea. This is all the more obvious when what is under discussion is the aesthetic, not just as idea but as its sensory manifestation.

Hence, also, the transition to what is avowedly the most tentative and least developed assertion of Geuss’ article: the link between language (as inscription) and the aesthetic (as sensory manifestation), through the mediation of memorization (*Gedächtnis*). Perception, imagination, representation, recollection, and such are all *manifestations* of the idea, but it is nevertheless the case that none of them necessarily entail its *sensory* manifestation. Only memorization (as opposed to recollection, *Gedächtnis* as opposed to *Erinnerung*), to the extent that it implies notation and inscription, is necessarily a sensory and phenomenal manifestation; hence the link with inscribed language and with the particular temporality which makes art both the most proleptic and the most retrospective of activities. Again, by reducing the “pastness” of art to a merely descriptive, historical observation that differentiates classical from modern art, Geuss’ literalism loses contact with the generalizing dynamics of the dialectic.

What is always at stake, in each of these areas of disagreement, is an accusation, in the best of circumstances, of overreading or, more often, of plain misreading by misunderstanding or falsification of the German syntax:

such as M. H. Abrams, Geoffrey Hartman, Harold Bloom, etc. The theme is taken up more extensively in a sequel to the paper, entitled “Hegel on the Sublime.” What is being discussed in these sections is not Hegel’s definition of “beauty” but what is called “the ideology of the symbol” as a defensive strategy aimed against the implications of Hegel’s aesthetic theory. My own reading of “the sensory appearance of the idea” is given as concisely as possible when it is said that “it could ... best be translated by the statement: the beautiful is symbolic” (p. 763).

“even when it is not incorrect, the reading is forced, because it does not faithfully reproduce what Hegel said.” It is true, to take the most vulnerable point, that Hegel nowhere says, in so many words, that the aesthetic is structured like a linguistic inscription in a memorization. It is also true that he does not exactly tell the story of a threatening paradox at the core of his system against which his thought has to develop a defense in whose service the aesthetic, among other activities, is being mobilized. No one could be expected to be *that* candid about his uncertainties: Hegel could hardly openly say something like this and still be Hegel. What is suggested by a reading such as the one I propose is that difficulties and discontinuities (rather than “vacillations,” which is Geuss’ term rather than mine) remain in even as masterful and tight a text as the *Aesthetics*. These difficulties have left their mark or have even shaped the history of the understanding of Hegel up to the present. They cannot be resolved by the canonical system explicitly established by Hegel himself, namely, the dialectic. This is why these difficulties have at all times been used as a point of entry into the critical examination of the dialectic as such. In order to account for them, it is indispensable that one not only listen to what Hegel openly, officially, literally, and canonically asserts but also to what is being said obliquely, figurally, and implicitly (though not less compellingly) in less conspicuous parts of the corpus. Such a way of reading is by no means willful; it has its own constraints, perhaps more demanding than those of canonization. If one wishes to call it literary rather than philosophical, I’d be the last to object – literary theory can use all the compliments it can manage to get these days. That the terms “literary” and “philosophical,” then, do not correspond to “members of a department of literature” and “members of a department of philosophy” is clear from the virtues of Geuss’ own text. Since my topic here has been Hegel and not Geuss, I did not have the opportunity to stress those virtues. I think, among other things, of the defensive energy that is manifest in the refusal to concede anything, in the *acharnement* of his critique. This reaction proves conclusively that he has heard, in my essay, uncertainties that go well beyond my canonical assertion of their existence and that his reading is therefore, in the best sense, “literary.” Why should it otherwise have compelled me to repeat once again, with worse intolerance, what, in my own terms, should be beyond doubt and contestation?

Interview with Robert Moynihan (1984)

(Q) Let me ask you about your work on the concept of irony. There's a notorious exchange in a Hemingway novel when one of the characters thumbs his nose at the mention of the term. This may have been an oddity of response during the 1920s, but the same reaction no longer holds true, certainly, today. But why should irony, this emphasis on doubleness, tripleness, be so prominent in recent discussions of literature?

You speak of doubleness, tripleness, and so on, and you immediately ask the question in a historical context by asking what has happened now that irony is again emphasized. That's surely not the case – whether there is now more emphasis or less emphasis on irony, and how you would measure just how much irony. You know, you can't be a “little bit ironic.”

But nevertheless, what you speak of is true in a sense. What you are speaking of is a certain degree of self-consciousness, self-awareness, doubleness, and one always assumes this in any critical enterprise, because it is in the nature of that enterprise to work on something that already comes to you so that you have the impression of knowing more than one who went before and having yourself in a distancing relation to it. So, inherent in the critical act is a self-reflective act, and there is certainly, in irony, a self-reflective moment.

If one looks at it historically, the great moment as far as the theory of irony is concerned would not be contemporary, but would be Romantic irony in Germany in the early nineteenth century. If you want to go to the major texts on irony, you will not find them in contemporary writers. You would have to go back to at least the nineteenth century.

Still, it appears that there is always something self-conscious about criticism and which has some emphasis on criticism. Even when it is flourishing, criticism tends simply to be equated with irony.

(Q) I'm just saying that it is one of the tropes or one of the terms that is used more often than thirty or forty years ago.

That's especially true in the American perspective. The New Critic put the term *irony* into circulation. But in speaking of tropes, just as of metaphor, there would now be a stronger emphasis on irony, as there has been more emphasis on prose narrative than on, let's say, lyrical poetry, and from the moment you get into problems of narrative and the novel, irony is connected to narration. That emphasis is very prominent.

(Q) There are several techniques used to control the fictional text: one is the fiction masquerading as autobiography because it represents the greatest validity. Is the claim itself ironic? Is it too pretentious?

The claim of control, yes, when it is made, can always be shown to be unwarranted – one can show that the claim of control is a mistake, that there are elements in the text that are not controlled, that it is always possible to read the text against the overt claim of control. But irony is for me something much more fundamental than that. One gets beyond problems of self-reflection, self-consciousness. For me, irony is not something one can historically locate, because what's involved in irony is precisely the impossibility of a system of linear and coherent narrative. There is an inherent conflict or tension between irony on the one hand and history on the other, between irony on the one hand and self-consciousness on the other.

Irony comes into being precisely when self-consciousness loses its control over itself. For me, at least, the way I think of it now, irony is not a figure of self-consciousness. It's a break, an interruption, a disruption. It is a moment of loss of control, and not just for the author but for the reader as well.

(Q) Is irony temporal, essentially?

Not essentially. The proof for the fact that it is not entirely temporal or not simply temporal is that you can localize ironic moments in an effect as if they happened at one specific instant.

(Q) Do you distinguish this, then, from more conventional forms of irony, such as found in the drama or in Shakespeare?

I'm not at all comfortable with those various distinctions – dramatic irony, narrative irony. Irony, of all tropes, if it is a trope, is the most difficult, the most all-encompassing, and the hardest of all to pin down. The great ironists and the great texts on irony are very difficult and very hard to locate. Socrates is the original *eiiron*, the original ironist, and the original figure has a lot to do with relationships between philosophical and literary texts. That would be a way to answer your original question.

Yet the interest in irony at the present seems more or less to converge, or be symptomatic of, the relationship between the philosophic and literary. Anything having to do with irony includes figures like Plato, Montaigne,

Schlegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, who are on the borderline between literature and philosophy.

(Q) Who before Nietzsche would be the main representative of this?

Friedrich Schlegel was a critic who made very high claims for criticism and also had a strong interest in philosophy because of the predominance of German idealist thought; but he was also a writer of fiction and his work is therefore very hard to locate in terms of generic distinctions. He was also a theoretician of irony.

(Q) Would you include Kierkegaard in this tradition? His first long written work was on irony.

Yes, it was his master's thesis.

(Q) Does Kierkegaard's later interest in the quest as a literary and philosophical topic add to the ironic?

The quest motif in itself is not an ironic motif. The quest is a story that has a beginning and an end, which sets its own aim, and which then proceeds, as a continuity, to an end. A quest romance, myth, story is a linear and coherent narrative which allows us to order a variety of episodes to a totalizing principle in which the elements converge. Such a process is not incompatible with irony, but, on the other hand, irony would always undo or undermine that type of narrative. So there is indeed a relationship between quest and irony, but it is itself ironic.

(Q) Why is the quest theme so pervasive in Western literature, particularly since the medieval period?

Again, I would rather not use such historical terms. I would rather see them as different ways of reading. I think you can take any text and read it as if it were a quest. You will find in any text elements which are of the general questing kind. Namely, more than merely a "reward" (the "lady" of the quest), the text itself contains meaning, the attempt of its own understanding. A text is always difficult to understand, and what you seek and attempt to find is always the meaning you want to catch.

However, in every text, the questing you have succeeded in achieving is being undone. That's true in medieval texts or in contemporary ones. I'm not much given to historical categories.

(Q) Let's posit one text, not the Bible because it is too variegated, but, let's suppose, one work, a national poem which was studied and was the only text available. Hypothetically then, irony would be lessened because of the single specimen?

If there were one reading, yes.

(Q) So the ironic stance depends on multiple readings?

Yes, precisely. It's the play between the various readings that the ironic disruptions are awakening. One thinks of *The Divine Comedy*, which is a text, a canonical text. But another way to get at it is to say that irony undoes either canonical, historical patterns, or the deliberate meanings associated with a text, or the specific canonical associations made with a national literature, such as in England with the models of Milton, Spenser, or Shakespeare. It's a quest from then on to "recapture" the work.

It's that kind of myth, scheme, or sport that irony is concerned with.

(Q) True, perhaps, for such models, but why aren't the English Romantics often associated with irony?

This is partly in contrast with the Germans, because, again, in the theory of irony, the German Romantics were clearly important. So the English do not appear to be ironic, but that has to do with a misunderstanding of the term. With eighteenth-century fiction writers, the English models are fully apparent. But that too is a misunderstanding and an oversimplification of the term. Some think that the romantic stance can be schematized and constrained. But the correct answer would be to say, certainly, that there are ironic readings of Wordsworth, certainly, and of Shelley. They are not ironic in the ordinary sense. But in a deeper sense, or in a sense which is more germane to the theory of the term, the English Romantics are susceptible to ironic readings.

(Q) It's difficult to imagine an ironic reading of Wordsworth's "Lucy Poems," even with the aid of F. W. Bateson's commentary. But a poem of such high purpose as the "Intimations Ode" would not, by most readers, be seen as ironic. How is irony present in that ode?

I'm not sure that I can improvise that. I would have to preface it again by saying that an ironic reading of that type would be very hard to establish, since you would first have to follow through something already mentioned, the quest theme.

(Q) Well, there is an obviously ironic reading of Pope or Swift in the previous century. How can the nineteenth century be called "ironic," especially Wordsworth?

There is an obviously satirical edge to Swift and Pope, but irony is neither satire nor parody. To take a recent example from Wordsworth I have been thinking about, though not from the poems: Wordsworth in the "Essay upon Epitaphs" advocates a mode of writing which he exemplifies with "gentle transitions," by means of development of no "sharp" disagreements or

antitheses. Indeed, the essay usually respects those prescriptions. The transitions in that essay are indeed often very gentle, very subtle, very carefully managed. The oppositions are very carefully mediated. So he seems to be entirely practicing what he preaches, but with one exception, namely when he talks about Pope. There, he loses all control whether gentle, transitional, subtle, or dialectical. Pope becomes the enemy. So the style, Wordsworth's, becomes highly antithetical, which is precisely the mode he has been arguing against. According to this commentary, to write like Pope is the worst thing one can do; Pope had demolished the faith of the English once and for all.

Wordsworth has a splendid argument to recommend and to explain that the mode he wants should be entirely different. *But* when he starts to write about Pope he does so in exactly the way he reproaches Pope for writing. At that moment, Wordsworth loses control, in a sense. At that moment, his text, which had set up its own familiarity, mode, quest, its own coherence, suddenly breaks that coherence. I would call a moment like that ironic. We as readers, to the extent that we laugh or smile when we have irony, sort of have Wordsworth at that point: "There, you really go against your fixed text."

That's an ironic moment, though it's not an obviously political one because it's not particularly a moment of parody; but it's where the rhetorical mode applied in the text is not kept by the text. It's also a moment that frequently happens: at the moment you take a critical stance towards an author, you yourself repeat the gesture you reproach the author for making.

So that's a complex structure, because it's not Wordsworth self-consciously reflecting on that. He might become self-conscious of it, but that wouldn't change things very much. Some control is lost at that moment, and the reader thinks that he gains some control over Wordsworth. At that very moment the reader had better beware, because the process is being repeated whereby Wordsworth thought he was gaining control of Pope and then fell into the same stance.

So irony doesn't stop. You are always yourself described. The critic finds himself in his own attempted analysis. One could say that there are moments like that on another level in Wordsworth's own *Prelude*. There's irony when language starts to say things you didn't think it was saying, when words acquire meanings way beyond the one you think you are controlling and start saying things that go against your own quest for meaning or admitted intention. So irony is so fundamental, that, for me, it is no longer a trope. Irony is generally called a trope of tropes, but actually irony is a disruption of a continued field of tropological meaning.

So all people who write on irony try to limit its meanings and singularly fail to do so. It's uncontrollable because it is just that: it has to do with the lack of control of meaning.

But that's not what I used to say.

(Q) It has to do then with the relations of text to text, writer to text, and reader to text? Can you think of any other relations of varying meaning?

All those relationships which set up illusions of consciousness or illusions of conscious contact, or any image of mastering a text by some standard....

(Q) There's an adage of scholastic philosophy that the human being is in part defined by contemplation, but can also contemplate the act of contemplation itself. In other words, there is self-awareness, in many dimensions, in the act of writing?

It has those aspects in it of self-reflection, but it is in precisely – let's call it the hyperbole of that structure – that there is no end to such juxtapositions, to the consciousness of consciousness; but it is a process, a game of infinite reflection which somehow cannot close itself off. So there is in irony, and all writers who deal with it become aware of this, a moment when a kind of dizziness develops which is threatened by many who try to define it, such as Wayne Booth. The "problem" is that an ironic text can be read ironically, and then you don't know where you are. Most commentators have in effect said, let's put an end to it, because this is madness. Yet that moment is present in all reflections on irony.

(Q) Is it the vertigo one could associate with the solipsist, or another kind of irresolution? Can you be ironic and be a solipsist?

No, because the solipsistic position, fundamentally, is reassuring. It's precisely the moment where the consciousness is invaded by something outside of it, or something that seems to be outside of it which cannot assimilate, or worse than that, which it thinks it has assimilated but which gets back at it in some other way.

But the real point is that you cannot say that this text is ironic and this text is not. Again, it would be very hard to determine that the texts which *seem* to be are necessarily the ones that *are* the most ironic, because they will always be best understood on the level of reading. There are always ironic readings possible, though just what such a reading of the Bible would be I'd prefer not to think about. Don't ask me that.

(Q) Are there, then, such things as valid texts?

There are no such things as valid texts. There should be no fundamentalists in criticism. There is no valid text because of various reasons. Neither is there a valid reading. There is no final authority. It *doesn't* mean, to get rid of one objection, that all readings are equally valid. There is no valid text, but some invalid texts are more validly invalid than others!

But that doesn't mean that anything goes, that you can say anything about reading. There is a considerable rigor in the way in which that statement

can be made. It means that any reading of a text can be put in question, “ironized,” if you wish, by another reading. This has to do with the figurality of language to the extent that figuration is not resolvable or doesn’t lead to a simple pattern of meaning.

(Q) I asked about the temporal possibility of irony because of multiple consciousness in time. Isn’t that also an aspect of what we’ve been discussing?

Texts in time can be structured, and can be categorically understood. So the temporal is assimilated into other modes of consciousness. So when we say there are no valid texts, it means that no text can be exhausted, or saturated, or fully understood in terms of its own temporal category. There will be temporal or spatial aspects of a text; they will readily be apparent in a text, but they will not saturate.

Your readings will always be overdetermined in the sense that you will end up with several more or less incompatible readings, or underdetermined in the sense that you don’t even come near to what the meaning seems to be. So you are never quite there. Whether you put that temporarily or in terms of the experience of the consciousness, the difficulties are inherent – I hesitate to call it in nature, but in the fact that the text is in many ways not an entity, not something that as such can be hypostasized.

(Q) There’s a fairly well-known problem in the writing of Augustine, who concludes his *Confessions* with a treatise on time, remarkable in part, because he admits there is no solution to the questions raised. For a solution, he therefore simply throws himself on the idea of totality in the “divine.” Is your intention to take the “divine” out of reading?

Yes, I intend to take the divine out of reading. The experience of the divine is one that is totally conceivable, but which I don’t think is compatible with reading. One of the best theoreticians of irony, Friedrich Schlegel, after having said about irony some of the most astute things that anybody has ever said about it, including Kierkegaard, and, I guess, Plato to some extent, did indeed go over to a certain mode of belief and adopted a religious life. He did not after that continue as a reader. The things he then still wrote which have to do with reading don’t compare with what he did before.

Generally, the act of faith is not an act of reading, or for me is not compatible with reading.

(Q) You’re refuting a long tradition of one kind of reading?

Not really. The vision of reading has always had its problem with creeds. The traditional battle in the history of reading is between hermeneutics on the one hand, which is the interpretation of meaning, and rhetoric on the other hand.

(Q) The hermeneutic would pursue the single, the unified, and the rhetorical would celebrate the varied and multiple?

That would certainly be one way of putting it. Rhetoric as I understand it, for which irony is the concept of limit, is not only multiple. The multiple is also totalized – it's the disruption of the single.

(Q) Would you say something about the dogmatic approach to texts, that is, the attempted establishment of single meanings? This has been a consistent attempt in every history of interpretation, or reading, has it not?

The attempt to control is characteristic of all fundamentally theological modes of reading. There is indeed something in texts which is undecided, generally threatened, and one would see that a threat exists, that there is a considerable need for setting up canonical defenses. So you could take this as a defensive reaction.

But that's a subjective way to answer this very pertinent question. We should not merely say that texts are multiple or texts undo their unity, and so on. This is a part of a process that is at least two-faced; because if it is true that texts always undo readings, it is equally true that texts constitute meanings. So the real theoretical question is what it is in language that necessarily produces meanings but that also undoes what it produces. That question would lead one either to speculations on the nature of language, or to questions about the philosophy or epistemology of language which would assume tropes and something else that is not tropes – and this would lead to speculations on the nature of language.

But if the question is asked like this – Why a given reaction at a specific time? – the discussion can always be put in historical terms.

Therefore, I like the idea of the quest for meaning, because it is inherent in any text or language. So the position I'm holding is not one of radical skepticism, or one like it. As a matter of fact, with any text it is interesting to see the immense elasticity of the hermeneutic pressure, the immense ability the mind has to set up meanings and to try to outwit any undoing of meaning.

On the other hand, there is between those two tendencies an irresolvable conflict. Pascal, who is good on that, will look at the history of philosophy as an opposition between what he calls the *dogmatic* and the *skeptical*. That irreconcilable battle which one tries to reduce to a dialectical opposition of tensions which could possibly be resolved is not, for Pascal, resolved.

(Q) In other words, commentary in all its forms, Biblical exegesis, criticism, explanation, is illusory?

Yes, that is illusory at all times, and patterns of totalization are...

(Q) Always open to correction?

Worse than correction, demolition.

(Q) So the process of criticism is itself, and this word, with *aporia*, frequently appears in criticism recently, is itself oxymoronic, and you were of course aware of this in titling your book *Blindness and Insight*?

Darkness and the relation to the sun, dark and light, always come up in those patterns. Surely, poetic texts thrive on tropes of that type, that kind of binary opposition. It's very – it can always be shown that that runs to a set program of statement, or emphasis. That's not wrong, but what's naive, or a simplification of patterns, is that they are symmetrical – white, black, and so on – so they work like binary oppositions. An attentive reading can show that those simple oppositions are not operative at the really crucial moments in the text.

Aporia, which you mentioned, is no longer an oxymoron, because in *aporia* you have a truly logical conflict, a true opposition which blocks. This is not true of oxymoron, which goes on continually and can keep going on and engendering texts.

(Q) At least one source, however, gives *aporia* a much more polite definition that can be related to praeterition, mainly a rhetorical device or strategy.

I would see it, rather, as an impasse which cannot be resolved, domesticated, or assimilated by a trope. Tropes are most amazing in putting together the most incongruous, incompatible things, but there are certain points where the trope cannot master the disruption. The history of the term is complicated. Therefore I don't know if it is that useful.

(Q) It's remarkable that you go back to rhetorical terms and revive a terminology thought antiquated. While there was a revival in the Midwest about twenty years ago of "rhetoric," and a revival of the terminology that reached even into a very few college writing texts, the tradition and its language were thought dead. No one at all, even the Chicago Aristotelians, generally used these rhetorical terms. Yet you seize the terms and shake them into life though many assume that rhetorical terminology is moribund. Why have you used it?

I have by no means always used that terminology. It is not at all present in *Blindness and Insight*, for instance. I come, in my own education, from a kind of existential philosophical mode of discourse that was used on the Continent by critics like Blanchot or philosophers like Heidegger, and while all people speak about language, they usually do so either in an ontological language or the language of the subject, the language of the self. That's the mode in which I was brought up.

Then in this country I was exposed to a new kind of reading, a much closer mode of reading, basically a new critical mode of reading. I had always had an attraction for, and was interested in, the writings of the French critics in the moment of close reading that seemed to raise certain problems that they were not expressing all too successfully.

(Q) Blanchot, Sartre?

Yes, Blanchot, Sartre, Bachelard, also Heidegger, Hegel – a language of consciousness of temporality, a language with some phenomenological overtones. But I've always been interested in categories that would be more linguistic. So I found great interest in the New Critics who were clearly more responsive to structures that were more linguistic, even though they did not use too much of the terminology that had to do with rhetoric, and even though they were interested in organic form, totalities of meaning, and so forth, interests which I didn't necessarily share. So I can't say when or how, but certainly not under the influence of the Chicago Aristotelians. But I had great relief in finding terminology that had something to do with tropes, by thinking about the relation between allegory and symbolism.

But incidentally, with structural linguistics, with Jakobson and people whom I had known at Harvard, that vocabulary became much more visible, though even with the so-called structuralists, the problem of rhetoric was never dominant. But at any rate, some of those terms were put more in circulation. One could not just say *metaphor* or *symbol*, or *image*.

But then it was really to some extent an eye-opener, first of all, to see how much in philosophy had already been said about it; but the main revelation for me was Nietzsche, whom I had been trying to read for many years without getting too far, precisely because the moment where Nietzsche reflects on language as a historical structure is a moment which one didn't know or didn't hear about. One was so concerned with problems of good and evil, problems of an ethical nature, or historical attitudes, much of which I couldn't get into. But Nietzsche is highly aware of rhetorical theory, knows those terms and uses them. It gives you a point of entry that is exceedingly fruitful.

(Q) Nietzsche provided you with this terminology?

No, I found it to be operative in Nietzsche. I found it in the New Criticism, certainly, and through the discipline of close reading. Because when you start to read closely you find that you cannot gloss the linguistic structures which you can account for only by means of tropes. Not that those are "complete" – I don't believe in them as a taxonomy but as a transformational system. However, I found the terms require a kind of attention to texts: [the reader is required] to look for those structures for which the tropes are the kind of reversals involved in metalepsis, the kind of totalizations involved in synecdoche, the kind of interruptions involved in aposiopesis.

But this was quickly rationalized or schematized in a simple binary system, metaphor–metonymy; Jakobson went so far as to call it poetry–prose, or paradigmatic–syntagmatic. That attempt to master a system of tropes by reducing it to an actual system is itself a typical tropological fallacy, though

it has provided for valid readings which can be shown, very specifically at certain points, to be false to the extent that there are elements in texts which cannot be accounted for by that system. It can account for certain elements in texts, but it has to ignore others.

(Q) Do you think that metonymy and metaphor are a kind of misreading? Of course, that word [metaphor] has loomed, or bloomed, large in *The Map of Misreading*, where it is called *misprision*. Isn't metaphor, and the whole apparatus of tropes, a species of misreading?

I don't so much speak of misreading, because misreading supposes a right reading. It's a mouthful and it's not felicitous, but I speak of unreadability, which means that the text produces not misreadings, but readings that are incompatible. So you can, from a text, deduce a reading which is perfectly consistent with figuration that's active in the text, but you can also deduce another reading which is semantically incompatible with the first. The two readings, to the extent that they can be reduced to statements that are not only incompatible but which undo each other, conflict radically.

In that sense, you can say that a text is unreadable – going back to the beginning of our conversation, the fact that there is no single reading. So I don't see so much a misreading as unreadability.

(Q) You said before that there's no validity of reading, but that does not mean that "anything goes." Now, what establishes a greater or lesser validity, or at the least, a greater or lesser estimate of process?

Certainly some kind of form of rigor; and again, the basis for that is topological. Tropes have a consistency: topological movements are not wild; they are systematic, or *systemic*, one would say – that is, they engender systems. As such, they have consistency, and their power as well as their seduction is in their coherence. One would expect readers to be sensitive to them. That's what I would call the rigor of reading.

The interesting point is that there may be two rigorous readings which are demonstrably disciplined, attentive, responsive to nuances, yet are incompatible, or lead to conflicts, or lead to unresolvable cruxes that one has then to face as steps. So in that sense, although one could say that there is no valid reading as such, nevertheless readings can never be rigorous enough and demand their own rigor. So it's not that they should be given merely subjective, or, in the bad sense of the term, impressionist reactions.

(Q) Are texts, or readings, inherently metaleptic?

Metaleptic in the sense that they take cause for effect, that they reverse the normal order in which the text precedes the reading?

(Q) Yes.

Surely there's a priority of the author before the critic, but that's a false model. Within the text itself it's impossible to separate moments of writing from moments of reading in the text, so that it is always possible within the text itself to reverse those priorities. An author doesn't invent something and then start to read it. Any invention is always already a reading, and any reading is an invention, to some extent.

That's often completely misunderstood, and people say, "Those critics, nowadays, want to equate reading with writing because they would really like to be writers." That's really not the point at all. The humility of the critic in relation to the work is total, and there is no attempt to get ahead of it or equate one order of writing with another. If that were true, it would lead to absolutely inane criticism.

Something more complicated is being said. When you write the text you are constantly reading. Anyone who writes a text is at that moment reading it, and the production of a text is as much an act of reading as it is writing. As a matter of fact, that opposition is not tenable but gets simply transported to the writer on the one hand and the critical reader on the other. There is a battle for power between both, a sort of naive allegory.

(Q) This has a great deal to do with other patterns of opposition in Western culture, such as soul and body, or in Descartes, body and mind?

Those binary models keep coming up. That's the trope, that's the metaphor of the binary. It sets up the substitution of resemblance, and resemblances are very easily put into antithetical concepts. Metaphor itself generates such polarizations.

(Q) You have been working with concepts of metaphor and theories of language in your work on Rousseau, and you have written a book on the subject. What's the title?

It's called *Allegories of Reading*. It deals mostly with Rousseau, but also deals with Nietzsche and Proust, while it continues the argument about Rousseau.

(Q) Do you deal with the confusions of Rousseau's literary personae?

No, the confusions of the literary traditions he engendered.

(Q) You were not interested, then, in Irving Babbitt's attack, or others based on moralistic grounds, on the "deceptiveness" of Rousseau?

No. I was interested, however, in the curiously perplexing and on the other hand quite outrageous tradition of Rousseau-reading. Rousseau is one of the authors who is read totally aberrantly, so that the commonplaces of literary and intellectual history associated with Rousseau are particularly remote from the text, especially in the traditional criticism.

(Q) What are the chief commonplaces?

The oldest is the one that deemed Rousseau to be a writer of “nature,” “primitive nature,” or “back to nature,” or thought of him as having advocated a “state of nature.” It started as soon as the *First Discourse* came out, and very soon after that Rousseau wrote a strong protest against it. Surely there was something to it? He was in a sense calling for it, and one can’t say that he was entirely innocent.

Certainly another and much more subtle reading is Rousseau as the “author of the self.” But that is also quite inadequate in dealing with some aspects of the subject. I have no special sympathy for Rousseau, that’s not it; but it’s a very interesting canon. It’s thematically so diversified, between its political aspects, its professional aspects, and the fictional, novelistic aspects that it’s a challenge to find – I don’t want to call it a unifying principle because it turns out to be a principle that is not unified – but at least to find some kind of language which allows you to circulate without falling into any traps of very simplified opposition, either political or aesthetic, “confessional,” or “objective.”

(Q) I would like to ask you about the title of your earlier essay “Theory of Metaphor in Rousseau’s *Second Discourse*” [in *Romanticism: Vistas, Instances, Continuities*, edited by David Thorburn and Geoffrey Hartman]. Seeing this title one might ask, why *metaphor* in Rousseau – isn’t that an astounding title?

I guess so. By now I am so used to it that I don’t find the association unusual. However, true, it’s not Rousseau-nature, Rousseau-confession, and so forth, but there had been awareness in some of the commentators, Starobinski for instance, that Rousseau was very concerned with theory of language. The eighteenth century was very involved with such theory. One knew that, but those texts were considered more or less secondary. Rousseau’s essay on the origin of language was considered a very minor text, but had not been totally ignored. So when I used that title it was not so paradoxical.

(Q) I would like to ask you to comment on two passages from the essay. The first is, “Rousseau seems to want to have it both ways, giving himself the freedom of the fabulator but, at the same time, the authority of the responsible historian.” Are you saying that he thought history was more reliable than fiction?

No, certainly not. In that piece I’m not saying how that is with Rousseau; I’m saying that’s what historians say about Rousseau. So this is not my argument. However, it is a frequent and legitimate complaint one can make about Rousseau, specifically in reference to the *Second Discourse*, where he says we must do away with all facts, and instead of facts start out with a pure fiction, which is the state of nature, not a historical fact but a pure fiction, as such. That creates an immediate methodological problem, which is what

I speak about in the passage cited. Because how can [Rousseau] have a text that claims to be historical and that claims to be talking about the actual structure of society as it exists for him at that time? You can only understand the political structure of society by resorting to pure fiction, a state of nature, but you have to posit this fiction in order to understand. So historians will say, what is this historian doing demanding fiction, and literary people will say what is this fabulator doing talking about history?

That's a good thing, but the crux, the difficulty, the trouble which halts the interpretation of Rousseau is the claim that you can understand what seems to be this methodological operation as a methodological insanity, which is then often explained by referring to the pathology of Rousseau, some of his own confessional statements about it. A critic may say, you know, that reality is something so unbearable that he had to invent all kinds of fictions and had to people the world with the creatures of his imagination because he couldn't confront a reality which is not very interesting.

However, you can really understand what's at play only if you understand Rousseau's concept of language, very specifically his notion of metaphor. Because then, when you see that it is in the nature of all discourse at all times to have its necessarily fictional component as a consequence of a linguistic domain, and [when you see that this component] is present in all discourse and especially genetic discourse of this type, you don't resort to biographical fantasy.

So, true, Rousseau *seems* to want to have it both ways, but there is in his concept of language an element that accounts for that necessity.

(Q) You conclude the paragraph that contains the comment about the fabulator and the historian with this: "How can a pure fiction and a narrative involving such concrete political realities as property, contractual law, and modes of government coalesce into a genetic history that pretends to lay bare the foundation of human society?" You say that that is accomplished through metaphor, in part?

Right. It is by taking into account the element in Rousseau which is curiously and systematically ignored, namely, his underlying theory of metaphor. I tried to show specifically that, at the crucial moment, theory comes into the foreground, and also how, in the tradition of viewing Rousseau, those moments are refused or put aside.

(Q) So the critical stereotype is that a writer is either a literal historian or a speculator, one or the other?

That runs true through the history of Rousseau interpretation. Either he is much too literally a historian or he is just totally mad, or totally private.

(Q) As you are describing this, I am reminded of a good deal of criticism of the Romantics, even of Shelley.

Yes, he is similar in his critics' eyes in many ways. He is viewed either as a vegetarian madman or a fanatical political activist who had no respect for historical or political continuity.

One can generalize this and say that is the way Romanticism is seen. That's still the general diagnosis. Romanticism is both irrational and, on the other hand, curiously literal-minded in its own political praxis.

(Q) The other quotation I want to ask you about is this: "The impossibility of reaching a rationally enlightened anthropology also accounts for the necessary leap into fiction, since no past or present human action can coincide with or be underway toward the nature of man." If one "leaps into fiction," that means there's reality somewhere, doesn't it?

I guess the key notion that this depends on is man. Rousseau in the *Second Discourse* starts to become a historian, and tells us about the history of mankind, and how mankind came to be in a deplorable condition. Of course, one can always agree that the condition of the present is deplorable – that is always the case!

Now, the curious thing in what he says is that for Rousseau the notion *man* is undefinable, and this is very much, again, in a tradition which includes Pascal, who also says that *man* is always beyond man. Nietzsche's *man* constantly transcends himself, which you can put in theological terms, if you wish. That's not the way Rousseau puts it, but in its own way, that is how the *Second Discourse* starts. It is impossible for man to define himself as an entity with specific links. Therefore, the anthropology, or science, or entity which is undefinable cannot be simply a history.

You can write a history, well, of the city of New Haven, which is a legal concept, more or less definable geographically. You can say that would be possible. That is a legitimate signature or entity. But *man* is never a proper name – it is for me, since I am called de Man – but *man*, in the sense of *mankind*, cannot be accurately generalized to include the variety of human life.

Again, Rousseau will say that writing is in a tradition that is very well established. There is no entity that can be defined as man. Therefore, there is necessarily in the history of this undefinable entity, *man*, an undefinable fictional, fantastic element.

In some ways, that's even Christian!

(Q) Sartre in *Nausea* develops such a theme with care in the characterization of Roquentin, a would-be historian who can never gather enough material about Rollebon, a courtier-opportunist at the court of Louis XVIII. On the other hand, Roquentin visits the official gallery of his own town and reads the official histories of the men in the portraits. He finds most of the accounts are falsified – so the perplexity remains for a much more nearly contemporaneous group. These themes are very much a part of the twentieth century?

That would be a very Rousseauistic moment in Sartre, certainly. Rousseau says, much more radically, that we must begin by forgetting all the facts. That's a sound historical instinct.

(Q) Is Hayden White's *Metahistory*...

Yes, Hayden White reads Rousseau well, and can see history as tropology. Hayden White is a contemporary Rousseauist!

(Q) Doesn't Descartes's *First Meditation* have a good deal of interplay between doubt and assertion?

I've recently been interested in Descartes and Rousseau, and it's very possible to show, not the same problems, but problems of the same type as those which are so glaring in Rousseau, or anyway are in somewhat the same tradition and occur there too. Though the argument is entirely different, it requires in both cases that you go back to theories of language. It is very interesting as a recurrence, that in the history of interpretations linguistic theory is always dodged. In a way, it makes one suspicious of that theory which people would rather not know about. That [suspicion] so deeply inhabits the tradition that you do not necessarily come upon the true Descartes in the *Meditations*.

(Q) Isn't this history of skepticism especially strong in France?

This is always said to be French. It's one of the ways of dealing with the problem, by saying, "Oh, it's French." So you can then claim that it is not very serious. By doing that it's made kind of harmless. But there are very English versions of that which are overlooked, in Locke and Shelley, for instance. One can take the other tack for German writing by saying Germans are incapable of irony; all is lost in pathos.

There is a French version of skepticism, certainly. Descartes is very French. Even though he wrote in Latin, the skepticism is apparent!

So the problem is not tied to a specific nationality.

(Q) What is meant by the "epistemology of metaphor"?

I think it's a false distinction to say that literary texts are aesthetic and therefore do not raise epistemological questions, whereas philosophical texts are scientific and address epistemological questions. That distinction doesn't hold. Aesthetics is not independent of epistemology. If there is a priority, that is if there has to be one, it certainly is epistemological. Any reading must include it. Certain decisions about truth and falsehood or certain presuppositions about truth and falsehood – that is, about the possibility of meaning – are epistemological.

(Q) Don't you bring Kant into this discussion as a "modern" in the stating of epistemological and aesthetic problems?

In “Epistemology of Metaphor” [*Critical Inquiry*, autumn 1978], there is a little section on Kant, and people who read Kant do not like that section. I discuss his treatment of metaphor, the use of illustrative, sensory passages to describe abstractions, the use of hypotyposis.

Kant is very important, and I think that whatever I tried to do with Rousseau one could do with Kant. As a matter of fact, Kant is constantly on my mind in Rousseau. Kant had considerable admiration for Rousseau and read him much better than most people do. I think that Kant is also very misread, and that one of the forms of misreading Kant has to do with the simplification of the notion of the aesthetic. Nonetheless, the *Critique* should be reread and reinterpreted.

(Q) Does he avoid the dualism you have spoken about by his emphasis on the *noumena*? Kant appears precisely not to be epistemological, seems to be attempting to leap over, to escape, earlier epistemological definitions, particularly skeptical ones?

Kant is a critical philosopher and a philosopher of limitations, and that is a very epistemological enterprise. So the critique of Kant in Fichte and Hegel tries to move away from a mere philosophy of limitations, boundaries, or prudence.

(Q) So this is part of your interest in the changing of boundaries through rereadings?

Yes. The tradition of readings of Kant is a good example of a rich tradition in which very diversified and incompatible elements come together. All the way up to Heidegger, Kant remains absolutely central. My main interest in the problem of reading in relation to Kant is that critics have read his aesthetic as a closing category, as a limitation for epistemological inquiry. That’s a way in which Kant still is used in a certain aestheticism, to degrees toward which I have a very polemical relationship. Because if you see in an epistemological relationship something dangerous, or in irony something dangerous – to go back to our starting point – very often the aesthetic is invoked to hold that “danger” within boundaries. Very often, Kant is invoked as the authority for that particular strategy. If there is something in irony that is vertiginous, but viewed as an “aesthetic effect,” it is not really “dangerous.” However, a careful rereading of Kant’s aesthetics would make the use of this stratagem much more suspicious.

(Q) How would you define the term *deconstruction*?

It’s possible, within a text, to frame a question or to undo assertions made in the text by means of elements which are in the text, which frequently would be precisely structures that play off rhetorical against grammatical elements.

(Q) The term *deconstruction* has a slightly negative connotation.

It is double-faced. *Construction* is inherent in the term *deconstruction*, but deconstruction is not demolition.

(Q) But one is not able to speak of *creation* and *un-* or *de-creation*. The problem with the term *deconstruction* is that it at first appears not to be creative, which is one of the supposed functions of the process of its view of reading.

Derrida used the term and put it on the map. Now it's become a war cry. That's too bad, because in a sense the term is no longer really useful. It's a mere label. Precisely the question about whether it's a positive or negative process is the question which should not be asked, or should not primarily be asked. There is a negative moment in it, as there is a negative moment in any critical reading that is not simply, shall we say, nihilistic. I don't want to be too sanguine about this. However, we are doing something positive.

I think the opposition of positive–negative as far as reading is concerned, or as far as certain historical valorizations are concerned, is just the binary opposition one would want to deconstruct. So if “deconstruct” is an effective way of questioning positive and negative valorizations, that's good.

(Q) Is it androgynous?

Well, it doesn't attempt to deconstruct male–female oppositions! It just says it is a form of division. So it's androgynous if you want, yes. But it's not totalizing.

(Q) Deconstruction asserts simultaneity?

It's simultaneous asymmetry.

(Q) The trouble with the term, perhaps, is its implicit assertion of temporality, of definite time patterns. Texts are constructed, then deconstructed?

Once you're sensitized to it, it's a metaphor that frequently appears, especially in a positive form, in architechtonic structures. To think of a text as a structure or a construction is against this somewhat naive notion of structuralism that assumed it could describe structures as synchronic systems. Though I don't really know if Derrida invented the term, I certainly first saw it in his writing in *Grammatology* – so it very much coincides with structuralism, the idea of texts as grids, as patterns. So it's in that polemical context.

(Q) There is writing about architectural modernism that comments on theories of positive and negative space and very consciously designed mathematical relationships of grids and proportions within grids.

Deconstruction is such a textual notion. There is a spatial metaphor when construction–deconstruction is mentioned.

(Q) Yet the relation is coincidental?

I think so.

(Q) I would like, finally, to ask you about Derrida's use of Freud, his reading of Freud, whom he not only rereads but uses in new ways of interpretation. Is this in part what you have been asserting about the generation of texts, of their power? Derrida addresses Freud as a text rather than as a psychoanalytic, medical scripture. This has created many different readings, among them the subject of irresolution, and levels of discontinuity. Why wasn't it recognized before that there were such topics in Freud?

No doubt, Derrida changed the emphasis. He's not the only one. Lacan did similar things, and the two enterprises are not entirely separable, though there are many, many points of dissent between them. First of all, in both cases, for Lacan and Derrida, Freud had first to be read, therefore had to be treated as a text and read as such. That's very different from canonical readings, which assume Freud to be an established, scientific certitude which has to be taken as such. Even if they admitted some of Freud's philosophical speculations, or his speculations on culture, religion, and so on, and separated them from the clinical element, the readings might still be canonical. So it makes a difference, not only in the reading itself, but where you put the emphasis.

But the test would be whether Freud were really unavoidable, or, even, perhaps, uncontrollable. No critical text, really, no theory of text, according to Derrida, can come into being if it avoids Freud.

(Q) So there's a certain scandal that is accomplished?

I'm not so sure. Whatever one would be saying about texts or a series of texts by use of rhetorical, and to some extent philosophical, terminology would necessarily fall short of valid critical commentary. I think that what was performed for Lacan, Derrida, and others by Freud was done for me by Heidegger.

(Q) However, doesn't Freud specifically write about the relation of the cryptic and the public, the hidden and the open, the different kinds of concealing that you write about critically?

What was performed for Lacan, Derrida, and others by Freud was done for me by Heidegger and those in his tradition – Hegel and Kant – and includes a way of reading, and [a way of] reading philosophical texts, and a way of putting philosophical texts in relation to poetic and literary texts.

(Q) What are Heidegger's own "revealing" and "hiding" metaphors?

Heidegger himself was very suspicious of metaphor, because his theory of language does not allow for the play of differences and the play of

misleading elements that are involved in the pattern of metaphor. I think he sees unmediated revelations of language. However, by speaking of them as revelations and by speaking of truth as *Realität* (which he sees in *Holzwege* as the destroying of the veil), he places you very much in that metaphorical system of hiding and revealing. Heidegger is engaged in attempting to account for certain recurrent operations in the repeated, interpretive gestures of cognition. His tropes are not so different from some of the fundamental tropes used by Freud, although there is a very constant avoidance of Freud in Heidegger's discourse.

I say Heidegger can play for me the role that [does] Freud for Derrida, that makes some sense in terms of both their predominant metaphors....

Part II: Translations

Introduction

Martin McQuillan

An entire volume could be devoted to de Man as a translator. It might include his wartime translation into Flemish of Melville's *Moby Dick*, or the texts produced while working as a hired hand for Henry Kissinger's journal *Confluence*, when he was making ends meet prior to becoming a Junior Fellow at Harvard and translating across a range of European languages. It would include his edition of *Madame Bovary* and the French edition of Rilke. It would certainly include de Man's translation into English of Martin Heidegger's **Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry**, published in 1959 in the *Quarterly Review of Literature*. This text demonstrates de Man's significant engagement with the work of Heidegger while living in America in advance of his meeting with Derrida and the subsequent self-characterisation of his work as 'deconstruction'. Such a volume would also include material from *The Portable Rousseau*, for which Paul and Patricia de Man translated substantial sections of *Julie* and the *Confessions*, as well as versions of 'On Public Happiness' and 'Four Letters to Monsieur de Malesherbes'. The de Mans also translated Rousseau's **Essay on the Origin of Language**, which is included in this volume, given the importance of that essay to the dialogue between de Man and Derrida concerning Rousseau (see 'The Rhetoric of Blindness', 'Bibliography', p. 333, and 'On Reading Rousseau', in this volume).

Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry¹ (1959)

Paul de Man's translation of Martin Heidegger

The five key-passages:

1. Poetry: "the most innocent of all crafts" (III, 377).²
2. "Therefore, man was given language, the perilous of all blessings ... that he bear witness to what he is..." (IV, 246).
3. "There is much that men have experienced.
They have called the many of the heavenly by name
Since we are an exchange of words
And one can hear from another" (IV, 343).³
4. "The poets found what will endure" (IV, 63).
5. "With merit, and yet poetically, man dwells on this earth" (VI, 25).

Why is it that Hölderlin has been chosen to explore the essence of poetry? Why not Homer or Sophocles, why not Virgil or Dante, why not Shakespeare or Goethe? Is not the essence of poetry contained in the work of these poets

1. Heidegger's essay "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" dates from 1936. It is now most easily available in M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1951). The different forms derived from the verb "to be" (*sein*) are essential to Heidegger's thought; only three of these forms occur in this essay and they are rendered as follows: the noun "das Sein" is translated as "Being," "das Seinde" is translated as "being" or as "(that) which is," "Wesen" is translated as "essence" following the practise of Heidegger's French translators. All notes are the translator's.

2. All references are to *Hölderlins Sämtliche Werke*, critical edition begun by Norbert von Hellingrath, continued by F. Seebass and L. von Pigenot (Berlin, 1922). The most recent and authoritative edition of Hölderlin is the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, published under the direction of F. Beissner. Publication of this edition is still in progress and was begun well after the present Heidegger essay.

3. English versions of poems by Hölderlin are based on Michael Hamburger's edition of *Hölderlin Poems* (New York: Pantheon, 1952). Some changes are made when Heidegger's commentary requires a completely literal version.

even more fully than in Hölderlin's, whose creative period was suddenly and early interrupted?

This may well be the case. Yet, it is Hölderlin and Hölderlin alone who has been chosen. Is it possible, then, to read the general essence of poetry out of the work of one single poet? Generality – the one rule which is valid for many instances – can only be won by comparative study; it requires as large and varied a selection of poetry as can be gathered together. In this sense, Hölderlin's poetry is merely one sample of poetry among many. In no manner can it be said that it is sufficient to set the norm for defining the essence of poetry. Is not our approach therefore altogether wrong? These objections are justified as long as we understand by "essence of poetry" what can be summarized in a general concept and then indifferently applied to all poetry. But such generality, applicable to all particular instances alike, can indeed only name what is "indifferent," an "essence" that can never become essential. And we are inquiring into the essential, into what forces us to decide whether we will henceforth take poetry seriously, whether we accept our being placed within the sphere where poetry can affect us.

Hölderlin's work is not chosen because it embodies, beside the work of others, the general essence of poetry. It is chosen because Hölderlin is concerned in his poetry solely with the essence of poetry. He is for us emphatically the *poet of poetry*. Therefore, he forces a decision about poetry upon us.

However, to write poetry about the poet, is that not a symptom of mis-directed self-contemplation and, by the same token, the unmistakable sign that the poet lacks the strength to take in the world outside of himself? Is it not the sign of desperate exaggeration, of a late and exhausted imagination?

The answer is contained in the following pages. The way, however, by means of which we will reach this answer is dictated by expediency. We cannot do what we should do and interpret Hölderlin's poems in closed sequence. Instead, we will merely consider the poet's five key-passages on the subject of poetry. The order in which these five key-passages appear as well as the inner coherence that links them together will reveal the essence of poetry.

1

In a letter to his late mother of January, 1799, Hölderlin refers to poetry as "the most innocent of all crafts" (III,377). How can poetry be called innocent? It appears in the humble guise of a *game*. It invents freely its own world of images and dwells dreamily in a world of fantasy. This game is spared the hard necessity of making decisions, of taking sides, of an earnestness which is bound sooner or later to lead to guilt. Therefore, poetry is altogether

harmless, and poetry by the same token is ineffectual; for it is mere saying and talking. It has no direct effect on reality and cannot change it in any way. Poetry is like a dream, a game of words free from the serious commitments of action. Poetry is harmless and powerless. What could be more harmless than mere language? Still, by calling poetry “the most innocent of all crafts” we have not yet begun to understand its essence. We have however been given a hint where to look. Poetry creates works out of the realm and the “matter” of language. What does Hölderlin tell us about language? We must turn to the second key-passage for an answer.

2

In a fragmentary sketch dating from the same period as the letter to his mother, Hölderlin says:

But it is in huts that man lives; shamefaced he clothes himself with garments; for his mind is more aware, more capable also of inwardness that it stands guard over the spirit as the priestess stands guard over the holy flame. And therefore arbitrary will and higher powers to order and to achieve were given him, who resembles the gods, and therefore language was given to man, the most perilous of all blessings: that he may create, destroy, fall and return to the presence of the ever-living mother and mistress of all things; that he may bear witness to what he is: one who has inherited and learned from her all-sustaining love, her most divine gift.... (IV, 246)

Language, “the most innocent of all crafts,” is “the most perilous of all blessings.” How can these two statements be reconciled? Let us put aside this question for the moment and turn instead to three preliminary questions: (1) Who possesses language as a blessing? (2) In what sense is it the most perilous of all blessings? (3) In what is it at all a blessing?

We must first observe at what particular point this statement about language occurs: in the projected outline for a poem that will say who man is as distinct from other creatures in nature: Hölderlin mentions the rose, the swan, the deer in the forest (IV,300 and 385).⁴ Thus, after juxtaposing the plants to the animals, this fragment begins with: “But it is in huts that man lives....”

Who is man? He is the one who has to bear witness to what he is. To bear witness means to give evidence, but it also means to answer for the evidence that is being given. Man is *who* he is, precisely in the testimony he gives of his own existence. This testimony does not refer to an incidental expression of

4. The projected poem was to be a continuation of a famous short poem “Hälfte des Lebens.”

human nature; it is a determining part of the human way of being. What is it that man has to bear witness to? To his belonging to the Earth.⁵ Man belongs to the Earth, because he inherits and learns from her in all things. Things, however, stand in opposition to each other; what keeps them apart and thus, by the same token, links them together is what Hölderlin calls inwardness (*Innigkeit*). Man bears witness that he too belongs to this inwardness by his creation of a world; the rise of worlds as well as their decline and destruction is the sign of human existence on earth. This act, by means of which man truly fulfills himself as man, arises out of his own free decision. In this decision he takes hold of necessity and answers the summons of his highest calling: to bear witness that he belongs among all that is. This comes to pass in the form of history. Language has been given to man to make history possible. Language is man's possession and a blessing to man.

In what sense, then, is this blessing dangerous and even the most dangerous of all blessings? It is the peril of perils because it creates the very possibility of danger. Danger is the threat to Being by that which is.⁶ Only by virtue of language is man exposed to a disclosure which, insofar as it reveals to him things that are, inspires and urges him on in his existence and, insofar as it reveals things that are not, deceives and disappoints him. Only language creates the realm where Being can be threatened by that which is, where therefore error can occur and the possibility of a loss of Being; where, in other words, danger can come to pass. But language is not only the peril of perils; it contains also a permanent threat to its own existence. It is the task of language to disclose "that which is" through works and to preserve it in them. Language gives all things a hearing, the confused and the vulgar no less than the pure and untouched. Indeed, in order to be understood and to have a common meaning for all, the true word must grow common. Thus in another fragment Hölderlin says: "You spoke to the Deity, but you all forgot that the first-born do not belong to mortals but to the gods. The fruit must become coarser, more common, before it can belong to mortals" (IV, 238). In the same way the pure and the common are put into words. The word by itself, therefore, never can vouchsafe truth or deceit. A true word, in its simplicity, often appears irrelevant, while a word that seems to glow with essential truth can easily be spoken merely by rote. Language always occurs within a range of deceptive appearances which it created itself; for that reason, it always endangers its own innermost being, that is, the authentic act of saying.

5. The Earth is referred to in the passage under discussion as "the ever-living mother."

6. "Bedrohung des Seins durch Seiendes." On the fundamental distinction in Heidegger between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, and the tension between both, see, for instance, *Was ist Metaphysik?* (Frankfurt a.M., 1949), p. 17 ff., or "Des Spruch des Anaximander" in *Holswege* (Frankfurt a.M., 1952), pp. 310 and 317 ff.

How, then, can it be said that this most dangerous of all things is a “possession” of man? Language is man’s property and he disposes of it to communicate experiences, decisions and moods; he uses it to make himself understood. As a tool fit for these purposes, it is a human possession. However, the essence of language is not exhausted by its function as a means of communication. The ability to communicate is a consequence of the true essence of language, not that essence itself. Language is not merely one among the many tools man has at his disposal; it is what enables man to come into the realm where Being opens up to him, to stand within the opening, the disclosure of Being.⁷ Only when there is language can there be a world, an ever-changing succession of decisions and works, of acts and responsibilities, but also of arbitrariness and clamor, of confusion and decay. Only where there is a world can there be history. Language is a blessing in the sense that it guarantees that man can *be* historical (and not merely make history). Language in this sense is not a tool at man’s disposal but rather what disposes of and rules man’s highest possibility. Before we can understand poetry in its proper domain, we will have to consider this aspect of the essence of language. How does language occur? In order to find an answer to this question, we consider a third passage from Hölderlin.

3

This statement is found in large and complex plan for an unfinished poem,⁸ beginning “Versöhnender, der du nimmergeglaubt...” (IV 162 ff. and 339 ff.):

There is much that men have experienced.
They have called many of the heavenly by name
Since we are an exchange of words
And one can hear from another.

(IV, 343)

The line that relates directly to our purpose is the third: “Since we are an exchange of words....” We – human beings – are an exchange of words.

7. “Inmitten der Offenheit von Seiendes zu stehen.” “Offenheit” is one of Heidegger’s paraphrases for the Greek *aletheia*, which can be translated as disclosure, in which the negative prefix *dis-* corresponds to the Greek *a-*.

8. The complete hymn from which the fragment “Versöhnender, der du nimmergeglaubt...” is a partial version was discovered in 1954. Its title is “Friedensfeier” and it has become the object of a lively controversy among interpreters of Hölderlin. The line quoted by Heidegger occurs in a somewhat different context in the finished poem (1. 92): “Viel hat von Morgen an,/Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander/Erfahren der Mensch; baid sind wir aber Gesang”.

Human existence is founded on language, but language truly occurs only in the exchange of conversation. This is not just one aspect that language can adopt; it is only in the exchange of conversation that language truly occurs. What we ordinarily call language, a set of words and rules that connect these words, is merely a surface phenomenon as to its essence. But what is meant by “exchange of words,” what is a “conversation”? Obviously, it consists of talking with one another about something. Thereby, it is speech that provides the medium in which men come together. Hölderlin says, however, “Since we are an exchange of words and one can hear from another.” The ability to hear from one another is not a mere consequence of talking with one another but, on the contrary, hearing is the condition that enables us to talk. However, the ability to hear presupposes the existence of words; therefore, we may say that the ability to hear and the ability to speak occur simultaneously, they are of the same origin. To say that we are a conversation is the same as to say that one can hear from another. But Hölderlin’s sentence has a further meaning: the sentence “we are an exchange of words” means also that we are *one* exchange of conversation. And the unity of a conversation consists in this: the essential word discloses the one and the same upon which we agree, on the basis of which we then *are* agreed and thus are ourselves. The exchange of conversation and its unity carry our existence.

But Hölderlin does not simply say: we are an exchange of conversation, but “*since* we are an exchange of words,” in the temporal sense. Conversation, the essential occurrence of language, does not always come to pass where men use their ability to speak. Since when are we a conversation? If there is to be *one* conversation, essential words must refer to one and the same entity, otherwise no conversation and certainly no controversy could take place. But one-ness and same-ness can come to light only within the framework of stability and endurance, and stability and endurance come into existence only when persistence and presence flash up. This occurs when time opens up its dimensions. Since man has established himself in the presence of something enduring, he can expose himself to change, to the coming and going of events and occurrences; for only where there is endurance can there be change. Only since “the torrent of time” has been torn up, as it were, into present, past and future, has it become possible to agree upon something which persists through all change in time. We have become *one* conversation ever since the time that “time is.” Ever since time has arisen and its flow has been stayed, we have become historical. To be a conversation and to be historical is one and the same; both belong together and are in fact the selfsame thing.

Ever since they have become an exchange of words, men have experienced much and called many gods by name. Since language has occurred as conversation, the gods have spoken up and a world has appeared. But again it must

be stressed that the presence of the gods and the appearance of a world are not consequences of language, but simultaneous with it. The conversation (which we are) consists actually in the naming of the gods and in the world becoming language.

But the gods can come into the realm of the word only when they themselves address us and place their claim on us. The word that names them is always a reply to their claim. This reply comes into being wherever man assumes responsibility for his fate. Only when the gods have transferred our existence into the realm of language do we enter a region where we may decide whether we accept or reject their presence.

Now, finally, we can understand fully the meaning of the passage “since we are an exchange of words....” Since, through the gods, we have come up for conversation, since then there has been a time in which “time is” and since then our existence has been founded on an exchange of conversation. The thought that language is the greatest occurrence in human existence thus receives its full meaning and justification.

However, here the question arises at once: how does this conversation (that we are) begin? Who performs the naming of the gods? Who seizes upon something enduring in the stream of time tearing by and holds it fast in language? Hölderlin answers our questions with the assured simplicity of the poet.

4

We turn to the fourth key-passage, which is the last line of the poem “Andenken.” It says: “The poets found what will endure” (IV, 63). This throws light on our inquiry into the essence of poetry. Poetry “finds” into words by means of words. What is thus being founded? That which will endure. But how can that which is everlasting be founded? Has it not always been there and within our reach? The answer is no. Precisely that which lasts forever must be rescued from the torrent of time; simplicity must be achieved out of confusion, measure must be opposed to excess. Thus does come into the open what carries and permeates everything that is. Being must be disclosed so that all beings may appear. And yet this everlasting Being is not always there; it comes and passes away: “Everything heavenly is rapidly passing; though not in vain” (IV, 163f.). The task to make it remain “is entrusted to the care and concern of the poets” (IV, 145). The poet names the gods and names all things for what they are. The naming is not as if something which had always been known was now suddenly labeled with a name. The poet speaks the essential word and thereby the thing that is named is being appointed to be what it is. It now becomes known insofar as it *is*. Poetry is the founding of Being in language. Thus what endures is never merely sorted out from the

perishable, just as simplicity can never be derived from confusion or measure be contained in excess. The ground can never be found in the abyss and Being is something different from everything that is. Since Being and the essence of things can never be derived from what is in existence and at our disposal, they must be created freely; they must be posited and, as it were, given. To found is to make such a free gift.

When this happens, when the gods are named anew and authentically and the essence of things finds its word, so that the things themselves may shine in their true being, man's existence becomes firmly related to them and is grounded in its authentic realm. The word of the poets is not only a free gift, but also the firm grounding of human existence in its proper realm. If we understand the essence of poetry to be the founding of Being in words, then we may gain some insight into the truth of Hölderlin's last key-passage, spoken when the night of insanity had already closed upon him.

5

The fifth key-passage is found in the great and awe-inspiring poem that begins: "In lieblicher Bläue blühet mit dem/Metallenen Dache der Kirchturm" (VI, 24ff.). Here Hölderlin says: "With Merit, and yet poetically, man dwells on this earth" (line 32f.).

Whatever man does and achieves is acquired and earned through his own efforts. Yet, says Hölderlin, in sharp opposition to this idea of merit, this does not touch the essential meaning of his dwelling on earth, nor does it reach the foundations of human existence. These foundations are "poetic." We now understand "poetic" to mean the naming of the gods and of the essence of things. "To dwell poetically" then means: to stand in the presence of the gods and to be exposed to and concerned with the essential proximity of things. Human existence is fundamentally "poetic," which means: it is something founded, not something earned, it is a free gift and not a merit. Poetry is not merely an embellishment of life, a passing enthusiasm, excitement or distraction. Poetry is the carrying foundation of all history and not just a manifestation of culture and certainly not the "expression" of a given culture's "soul."

If our existence is poetic in its very foundation, then poetry can hardly be a harmless game. But did not Hölderlin himself, in the first key-passage, call it "the most innocent of all crafts"? How can this be reconciled with the essence of poetry as we now understand it? This takes us back to the question which we had momentarily put aside. By answering this question, we will try to summarize our argument in order to bring the essence of poetry and the existence of the poet to our attention.

We began by noting that poetry “works” within the realm of language. Therefore, the essence of poetry depended on the essence of language. We later clarified: poetry is the founding and naming of Being and of the essence of all things, that is, it is not an arbitrary way of saying things but the language which dis-closes whatever we discuss and talk about in our everyday speech. Poetry never uses language as though it were a tool or material at our disposal, but it is poetry itself which makes language possible. Poetry is the original language of an historical people. Therefore, the essence of language must be understood on the basis of the essence of poetry, and not the other way round.

Conversation, the true event of language, is the foundation of human existence. But the primeval language is poetry in which Being is founded. Language, however, is “the perilous of all blessings”; hence, poetry is the most dangerous of all works – and yet “the most innocent of all crafts.”

Indeed, only if we can understand these two definitions together can we fully understand the essence of poetry.

But is it true that poetry is the most dangerous of all works? In a letter to a friend, written just before he took, for the last time, the road to France, Hölderlin says: “My friend! The world stretches before me, brighter and more earnest than before. I like what goes on around me, I like it when in Summer ‘the old holy Father, with even hand, casts the blessings of lightning out of reddish clouds.’ For among all the signs I can behold of God, this has become the dearest to me. I used to be able to rejoice in a new truth, in a clearer insight into what is above and around us. Now I fear lest I share the fate of Tantalus, who received more from the gods than he could cope with” (V, 321).

The poet is exposed to the lightning of the god. This is stated in the poem which we consider as the purest expression of the essence of poetry, the poem that begins:

Wie wenn am Feiertage, das Feld zu sehen
Ein Landmann geht, des Morgens, ...

(IV, 151 ff.)

In its last stanza, Hölderlin says:

Yet it behooves us, O poets
To stand bare-headed beneath God’s thunderstorms,
To seize the Father’s ray itself
With our own hands and, wrapped in song,
To offer the heavenly gift to the people.

One year later, after Hölderlin, struck by insanity, had returned to his mother’s house, he wrote to the same friend, referring to his stay in France: “The mighty element, the fire of heaven, and the stillness of the people, their restricted and satisfied life in nature, have seized me permanently and,

as is told of heroes, I may say that Apollo's shaft has struck me" (V, 327). An excess of light has thrown the poet into darkness. Do we need further proof of the utter danger of his "craft"? The particular destiny of the poet is revealing enough. As a foreboding we hear it said in Hölderlin's tragedy *Empedokles*: "It must leave, in time, the voice through which the spirit spoke" (III, 154). And yet poetry is "the most innocent of all crafts." Hölderlin says so in his letter, not only to reassure his mother, but because he knows that this harmless appearance belongs to the essence of poetry as the valley belongs to the mountain. For how else could this most perilous of all works be done and preserved, if the poet were not "thrown" (*Empedokles*, III, 191) out of the ordinary life and, at the same time, protected from it by the harmless appearance of his business?

Poetry looks like a game, but it is not a game. Games, it is true, bring men together, but in such a manner that each of them forgets himself. Poetry, however, gathers each man on the foundation of his existence. There man becomes quiet, and this stillness is not the illusory peace of inaction and emptiness, it is the infinite quiet in which all inner powers and outward ties are quickened. (See Hölderlin's letter to his brother of January 1, 1799. III, 368 f.)

Poetry creates an illusion of dreamlike unreality as distinguished from the tangible, clamorous reality in which we believe we are at home. And yet essential reality lies in what the poet says and has taken upon himself to be. Thus Panthea, speaking of Empedocles and enlightened friendship, admits: "To be him, that is/Life, and all of us are the dream thereof" (III, 78). Thus, the essence of poetry seems to vacillate in the illusory light created by that poetry, and yet the essence rests firmly behind its own foreground. This firmness poetry owes to its ability to found. This founding remains a free gift and Hölderlin reports: "Free as swallows poets are supposed to be" (IV, 168). But this freedom is not arbitrary and it does not follow stubbornly where desire might lead it. It is highest necessity. As the founding of Being, poetry is *doubly* bound, and this twofold bondage, its innermost law, finally allows us to understand its essence completely.

Poetry is primarily the naming of the gods, but the poetic word acquires this power only when the gods have provoked us into speech. How do the gods speak? Hölderlin says: "... and hints have forever been the language of the gods" (IV, 135). The speech of the poet captures these hints and sends them on to the people. The poet receives and gives as well; for in the "first sign," he perceives what is to be consummated and boldly puts into words what has not yet come to pass. Thus

... the bold spirit
Like eagles meeting the thunderstorm
Flies to meet the coming gods.

(IV, 135)

The foundation of Being is bound to the hints of the gods. And, at the same time, the poetic word is merely an interpretation of “the voice of the people.” This is what Hölderlin calls the legends in which a people has recorded the ties that link it to the totality of all beings. But often it happens that this voice falls silent and is exhausted. Moreover, by itself, this voice is never able to state and say the essential; it always stands in need of those who can interpret and expound. The poem entitled “Voice of the People” exists in two versions; the concluding stanzas are altogether different but in such a way that they complement each other. In the first version, the conclusion is as follows: “To please the heavenly and because it is full of piety I honor the voice of the people, the quiet one; but for the sake of gods and men, let it not always prefer to be quiet” (IV, 141). We add the second version: “... and legends are indeed good, for they are remembrance devoted to the highest; yet there is need for some expound the holy tales” (IV, 144).

The essence of poetry thus is fitted into two sets of laws, which strive to unite, but also to separate: the hints of the gods and the voice of the people. The poet himself stands between both, the gods and the people. He is thrown into an in-between, the realm that lies between men and gods. Who man is and where he chooses to dwell, this is decided primarily and even exclusively in this realm. “Poetically man dwells on this earth.”

Speaking with always growing assurance and simplicity, out of the wealth of images which crowded upon him, Hölderlin has consecrated his poetical word to this realm between gods and men. This is why we must say that he is the poet of the poet. Can we still maintain that he was caught in empty and excessive self-contemplation, that he lacked the ability to perceive the world around him? Or do we understand that the voice of this poet thinks poetically into the ground and the center of Being and sounds out of a superabundance of inspiration? We can apply to Hölderlin himself what he said about Oedipus in a late poem (“In libelicher Bläue...”): “King Oedipus has perhaps one eye too many” (IV, 26).

Hölderlin’s poetry is about the essence of poetry if we do not understand by this essence a concept that is universally valid, but admit that it belongs to a specific time. Not as though it adjusted to a given situation, but rather in the sense that Hölderlin, by founding the essence of poetry anew, determines and defines the new era. The era is the time of the departing gods *and* the coming God. It is the time of *dearth* because it stands under the token of a twofold absence: it is defined by the no-longer of the departed gods and the not-yet of the coming one.

The essence of poetry, as Hölderlin founded it, is historical in the highest degree, since it anticipates a historical period. As essentially historical, it is the only essential essence.

The time is barren, and therefore its poet overrich – so rich that he often desires to escape from this superabundance, from the crowding memories of what has been and the anticipation of what is to come, as though he wanted to fall asleep in the seeming emptiness of his time. Against this temptation, the poet holds out in the void of darkness, and by thus remaining true to the law of his own being, he brings about truth as a representative of his people and therefore can bring truth truly home to it. This is the subject of the seventh stanza of the Elegy “Bread and Wine,” in which Hölderlin says poetically what we could say only in the medium of thought.

But, my friend, we have come too late. True, the gods are living
 But over our heads, above in a different world.
 Endlessly there they act and see how the heavenly spare us!
 Care very little, it seems, whether or not we exist.
 For not always, indeed, a feeble vessel can hold them,
 Only at times can mankind bear the full weight of the gods.
 Only a dream about them is life henceforth. But to wander bewildered
 Helps, like slumber, and need and night make us strong,
 Till in the cradle of brass heroes enough have been fostered,
 Hearts in might as of old resemble the heavenly host.
 Thundering then they come. But meanwhile it seems to me often
 Better to sleep than like this to be companionless here,
 Thus to wait, and what is to be done or said in the meantime
 I do not know, and what are poets for in a period of dearth?
 But they are, you say, like the holy priests of the wine-god
 Who on holy night from the country to country move on.

Essay on the Origin of Language: Melody and Musical Imitation Are Being Considered

*Paul and Patricia de Man's translation of
Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

Chapter I. Of the Various Means of Conveying One's Thoughts

Speech sets man apart among animals, language distinguishes between nations: one knows where a man comes from only after he has spoken. Usage and need make that everyone learns the language of his country; but what is it that makes this language the language of his country and not of another? In order to tell, one must go back to an explanation that belongs specifically to the place and that predates even the local customs: speech, the first institution of society, owes its shape only to natural causes.

As soon as man was recognized by another similar to himself, as a being capable of feeling and of thought, the desire or the need to convey his feelings and his thoughts put him in search of the means to do so. These means could only stem from the senses, the only instruments through which a man can act upon another man. Hence the institution of sensory signs in order to express thought. The inventors of language did not reason this way, but instinct suggested this conclusion to them.

The general means by which we can act upon someone's senses are limited to two, namely motion and voice. The effect of motion is immediate in the case of touch or mediate in the case of gesture. Since the first is restricted by the length of one's arm it cannot communicate at a distance, but the other can reach as far as a lightning ray can travel. Thus sight and hearing remain as the only passive organs of language among men scattered over the earth.

Although the language of gesture and the language of voice are equally natural, the first is easier to use and less dependent on convention. More objects strike our eyes than our ears and visual shapes or figures have more variety than sounds; they are also more expressive and say more in less time.

Love, they say, invented drawing; it may also have invented speech, but less successfully. Dissatisfied with its creation, love disdains speech: it has livelier ways to express itself. How eloquent she is who took such pleasure in tracing the shadow of her lover on the sand! What sounds could she have used to convey the motions of her wand?

Most of the time, our gestures reveal only our natural restlessness, but these are not the gestures that concern me here. Only Europeans gesticulate while speaking. One could think that all the power of their language resides in their arms; they add to it the strength of their lungs, and all in vain. When a Frenchman has tired himself out, tormented his body and uttered countless words, a Turk, for a moment, takes his pipe out of his mouth, mutters two words, and crushes him with a single maxim.

Ever since we learned to gesticulate we have forgotten the art of pantomime, just as with the accumulation of elaborate grammars we no longer understand Egyptian symbols. The ancients spoke their liveliest speech by signs and not by words; they would show what they had to say, not tell it.

Consult ancient history: you will find many instances of ocular persuasion which never fail to be more effective than all the discourses one could have used instead. The object shown prior to speech awakens the imagination, incites curiosity and keeps the mind suspended in the expectation of what one is about to say. I have observed that Italians and Provençals, who tend to use gesture before they use speech, succeed better than others in capturing their listener's attention and are listened to with more pleasure. But the most forceful language is the one in which the sign says all even before one has begun to speak. Tarquinus, Thrasybulus beheading poppies, Alexander applying his seal to the mouth of his favorite companion, Diogenes parading before Zeno – did they not speak better than with words? What chain of words would have expressed the same ideas as well? Darius, heading his army into Scythia, receives from the king a frog, a bird, and five arrows: the herald hands over this offering without uttering a word and leaves. This terrifying harangue was clearly understood and Darius returned home as soon as he could. Substitute a letter for these signs: the more threatening it sounds, the less it will frighten; it would be the words of a braggart and cause derision rather than terror.

When the Levite of Ephraim wanted to avenge his wife's death, he did not write a letter to the tribes of Israel. He cut the body in twelve pieces and sent each tribe a piece. At this horrible sight, they all seize their arms and exclaim with one voice: no, never did such a thing happen before in Israel, never since our fathers left Egypt until the present day. And the tribe of Benjamin was exterminated.¹ If the same thing happened today, the case would have led

1. Leaving only 600 men alive, without women or children.

to endless pleas and litigations, perhaps to pleasantries, and the worst of crimes would finally have remained unpunished. King Saul, returning from the fields, similarly dismembered the oxen of his plough, and used the same sign to arouse the Israelites to come to the rescue of the city of Jabis. Hebraic prophets and Greek legislators often showed material objects to the people and conveyed more by these objects than by long speeches; Atheneum reports that the orator Hyperides had the courtesan Phryne absolved from guilt without uttering a single word in her defense; another instance of the silent eloquence that can be so effective at all times.

Thus it is clear that one speaks better to the eyes than to the ears. Everyone will agree with Horace on that point. The most eloquent speeches are those with the largest amount of images, and sounds never have more power than when they act upon us as if they were colors.

Everything changes, however, when one wishes to stir the heart and to kindle the passions. The successive impact of discourse striking blow upon blow, raises much stronger emotions than the presence of the object itself which is seen in its entirety at one single glance. Suppose a situation in which someone experiences a familiar distress; just seeing the afflicted person will rarely move one to tears. But give the person time to tell you all he or she feels and you will soon be weeping. This is also the way, and the only way, in which scenes from tragedy affect us.² Mute pantomime will leave one almost unperturbed but speech without gesture will draw tears. Passions have their gestures but they also have their tones and accents, and it is these accents, which we cannot fail to hear, that move us. From the ear they penetrate to the depths of the heart and carry there, in spite of ourselves, the emotions that provoked them. What we heard thus becomes what we feel. We may conclude that visible signs make for more precise imitation but that sounds are more effective at arousing sympathy.

This makes me think that, if our needs were to be only physical we could very well have dispensed with speech forever; the mere language of gesture would have sufficed to make ourselves perfectly understood. We would possibly have established societies not so different from our own, perhaps even more effective ones. We could have promulgated laws, selected leaders, invented the arts, established trade, in one word, achieved nearly as much as we have achieved with the assistance of words. The epistolary language of the salaams circulates the secrets of oriental intrigue through the best guarded harems, circumventing jealousy and suspicion. The mutes of the great Vizir understand each other and understand whatever is told them by

2. I have said elsewhere why fictional distress moves us more than actual misfortune. People who never felt pity for anyone weep hot tears in the theater. Theater is a marvelous invention that flatters our self-esteem with all the virtues that we do not possess.

signs just as well as by spoken words. Mr. Pereire and those who, like him, teach the deaf-mute to talk as well as to understand what they are saying, are forced to teach them first a no less complex language by means of which they then learn to understand their own.

Chardin reports that, in India, traders touch hands and that, by changing their grip in a manner that no one can observe, they conduct their business in public, without pronouncing a single word or giving away any secrets. Suppose them to be blind, deaf and mute and they will communicate just as well – which proves that of the two senses involved in our actions one suffices to constitute a language.

It also follows from these observations that the invention of the art to communicate our ideas depends less on the sense organs by means of which the communication occurs than on a faculty proper to man which makes him use these organs to this particular end. If the organs were missing, he would use others in their stead. Suppose a man as rudimentary in his organization as you may wish to imagine: he will no doubt have fewer ideas, but as long as some means of communicating between himself and his fellow-men, some means by which the one can act and the other feel, remain in existence, they will finally be able to communicate as many ideas as they are able to conceive.

Animals are more than adequately provided with the organs necessary for communication yet none has ever used them to that purpose. This, it seems to me, is a very characteristic difference. Animals that live and work in common such as beavers, ants or bees have some natural language by which they communicate; I don't doubt it for a moment. We even have reasons to believe that the language of the beavers and of the ants proceeds by gesture and speaks only to the eyes. Whatever the case may be, the fact that these languages are natural languages proves that they are not acquired. The animals that have language have it from birth and all have it to the same degree, nor does it ever change or make any progress. Conventional languages belong only to men. This is why men make progress, for better or for worse, and why animals don't. This single distinction seems to be far-reaching. I am told it is explained by a difference in the structure of the sense organs; I'd be very curious indeed to see such an explanation.

Chapter II. That the First Invention of Speech Did Not Stem from Needs but from the Passions

We may thus assume that the first gestures were dictated by needs, whereas the first vocal utterances were provoked by passions. Following the trace of the facts with the help of this distinction, it appears that one should

perhaps speculate on the origin of languages in a very different manner than has heretofore been done. The spirit of oriental languages, the oldest ones known to us, entirely contradicts the didactic progression which is assumed to determine their development. These languages are by no means methodical or rational; they are spontaneous, full of live images and figures. We are told that the first language of men was the language of mathematicians when it was in fact the language of poets.

It had to be this way. We first had to feel before we were able to reason. Some assert that men invented language to express their needs: I find this thesis unconvincing. The material effect of our first needs was to scatter people, not to group them together, otherwise the human species would never have populated the entire globe. They would have piled up in some corner of the earth and the rest would have remained a desert.

It follows from this alone that the origin of languages manifestly cannot be due to the first human needs; it would be absurd for the cause of men's separation to produce the agent of their union. Where then can language come from? Only from non-material needs, from the passions. The passions bring together what the need for survival tears asunder. The first voices did not originate from hunger or thirst but from love, hatred, pity and anger. The fruit on the trees does not recoil from the hand that reaches out for it; one can pick it without saying a word. The hunter pursues in silence the prey on which he feeds. But nature dictates accents, cries and moans in order to move a youthful heart or to repel an unjust aggressor. Such are the most ancient words invented by man. This explains why the first languages were melodious and passionate before becoming simple and methodical. All this is not true without qualifications and I will have to return to it later on.

Chapter III. That the First Language Had To Be Figural Language

Just as passions were the first motive of man's speech, his first statements were tropes. Figural language was first to be born, the proper meaning came last. Things were called by their real names only when one saw them as they actually are. The first speech was poetic speech; only much later did one begin to reason.

At this point, I feel that the reader must object and ask how it is conceivable for a statement to have a figural prior to a proper meaning, since the figure comes into being only as the transference of a proper meaning. Granted; but in order to understand what I am saying one must substitute for the word that we transpose the idea that the passion evokes in us, for we transpose words only because we also transpose ideas. If this were not

the case, figural language would signify nothing. Therefore, I reply to the objection with an example.

A primitive savage, on meeting one of his own kind, will first of all experience fear. His fear will cause him to see these human beings as taller and stronger than he is; he will give them the name *giants*. After repeated experiences, he will come to the conclusion that, since these assumed giants are neither taller nor stronger than he is himself, their actual height does not correspond to the idea originally linked to the word “giant.” He will therefore invent another name, common to both, such as for instance the name *man* and leave *giant* for the aberrant object that impressed him as long as he was in a state of delusion. This is how the figure is born prior to the proper word, when passion fascinates our eyes and the first order suggested by this passion is not that of truth. What I have said here about words and names can easily be extended to turns of phrase. Since the delusive image caused by the passion is first to appear, the language that corresponds to this image is the first to be invented. Later on, it became metaphorical, when the enlightened mind, recognizing its original error, will use the figure only in relation to the passions that produced it in the first place.

Chapter IV. Of the Distinctive Characteristics of the First Language, and the Changes It Had To Undergo

Simple sounds issue spontaneously from the throat and the mouth is naturally more or less open, but in order to articulate sound, the tongue and the palate must make motions that require attention and practice. One can do this only deliberately; all children have to learn these motions, often with considerable effort. In all languages, spontaneous outcries are not articulated. Outcries and moans are mere sounds. The mute, that is to say, the deaf, utter only inarticulate sounds. Father Lamy cannot conceive how men could ever have imagined any others, unless God himself taught them how to speak. The varieties of articulation are small in number, whereas sounds exist in infinite quantity, as do accents. Every note of the scale can be an accent. It is true that we only use three or four tones in our speech, but the Chinese have a great deal more – on the other hand, they have less consonants. If you add rhythm and number to this principle of combination, you will not only produce more words but more diversified syllables than are needed in even the richest of languages.

I have no doubt that, vocabulary and syntax aside, the first language, if it still existed, would have preserved original characteristics that distinguish it from all others. All the distinctive turns of this language would have to proceed by images, feelings and figures. Even in its mechanical aspect, it

should correspond to its original purpose and present to the senses, as well as to understanding, the almost inevitable manifestations of passion trying to express itself.

Since natural voices are not articulated, the words of the first language would be sparse in articulation: a few consonants interposed to erase the hiatus between vowels would suffice to make them fluent and easy to pronounce. There would, on the other hand, have to be a great variety of sounds, while the diversity of tones and accents would multiply the single voices. Quantity and rhythm would create new sources of combinations, thus letting voice, sound, tone, accent and number (all of which are natural) do most of the work rather than articulation (which is conventional). The language would be sung rather than spoken. Most of the root words would imitate in sound either the accent of the passions or the effects of material objects on the sources. There would be a great deal of onomatopoeia.

This language would have many synonyms to designate the same entity from different perspectives³ but few adverbs or abstract words to express these relationships. It would have many amplifiers and diminutives, many composite words and expletives to give cadence to periodic sentences or to round off turns of phrase. It would have many irregularities and anomalies. Grammatical analogy would be replaced by the euphony, the number, the harmony and the beauty of the sounds. Instead of arguments it would make use of aphorisms and maxims; it would persuade rather than convince, and it would show images rather than reason. In some respects, this first language would resemble Chinese, in others, it would be more like Greek, or like Arabic. If you follow these ideas in all their implications you will come to the conclusion that Plato's *Cratylus* is not as silly as it seems to be.

Chapter V. On Writing

The study of the history and the development of the various languages teaches us that as the voices become less varied in tones, consonants increase in number, and as intonation disappears and quantities become uniform, grammatical combinations and new articulations are made to supplement these lapses. Such changes, however, take place over long periods of time. As our needs multiply and human affairs become more complex, as our knowledge increases, language changes in character. It becomes more precise but less passionate, it substitutes ideas for feelings and speaks no longer to the heart but to the rational mind. As a result, tonal accentuation diminishes

3. It is reported that, in Arabic, there are more than 1000 different words to say *camel* and more than 100 to say *sword*, etc.

and articulation expands: the language becomes more accurate and clearer, but more monotonous, less melodious and colder. This progression seems entirely natural to me.

Another way to compare languages and to determine their age is to study writing. The act of writing stands in reverse ratio to the age of the language. The cruder the writing, the older the language. The first writing device was not to represent sounds but to paint the object itself, either directly, as in Mexico, or by allegorical figures as used to be the practise of the Egyptians. This state of evolution corresponds to the language of passion; it supposes a measure of social organization as well as needs born from the passions.

The other method represents words and propositions by conventional signs. This can only occur when the language is fully structured and when an entire people are united by common laws, for it supposes at least a double convention. This is the case for the Chinese language, of which it can truly be said that it paints sound and speaks to the eyes.

A third way the breaks down the speaking voice in a given number of elementary parts, vocal or articulated, by means of which all imaginable words and syllables then can be formed. This is our own way of writing. It must have been invented by people involved in trade. Having to travel in several countries and having to speak several languages, they had to invent signs that everyone could share. We do not exactly paint or represent speech, we analyze it.

The three methods of writing correspond rather exactly to the three states under which one can consider men as they assemble into nations. Primitive societies or savages paint the objects; barbarians use signs for words and propositions and the civilized nations use the alphabet.

It would therefore be a mistake to assume that the invention of the alphabet proves the high antiquity of the nation that uses it. The opposite may be the case: the people who invented it probably did so in order to communicate more easily with other people who spoke other languages; these people had to be at least their contemporaries and could well have been older. The same cannot be said of the two other methods. I must grant that, if one considers only history and known facts, alphabetic writing seems to be as old as the other kinds. But then, it is not surprising that we lack monuments from the days in which writing did not exist.

It is not likely that the first people who thought of subdividing speech in its elementary parts began by making exact divisions. Later on, upon discovering the inadequacy of their analysis, they either, like the Greeks, multiplied the number of letters in their alphabet, or otherwise varied the sound or the meaning by different positions or combinations. This is how the inscriptions on the ruins of Tchelminar, of which Chardin has made copies, seem to have been written. One can distinguish only two characters

or figures,⁴ but they differ in size or in position. This unknown language, almost frightening in its antiquity, must have been fully formed, to judge by the perfection of the arts foreshadowed in the beauty of the characters⁵ and by the admirable monuments on which these inscriptions were discovered. I don't know why we hear so little about these astonishing ruins. When I read their description in Chardin I feel transported into a different world and discover an endless source of meditation.

The act of writing exists independently of the act of speech. It stems from different needs that may arise earlier or later, according to circumstances unrelated to the age of nations and which may never have occurred in very ancient people. It is not known during how many centuries the art of hieroglyphs may have been the Egyptians' only script; that such a way of writing can be adequate for a politically developed nation is proven by the example of the Mexicans, whose script is even less convenient.

Comparing the Coptic with the Syrian or Phoenician alphabet convincingly shows that they descend from each other. Indeed, the latter one may well have been the first to come into being and it is possible that the most modern nation may, in this respect, have been the teacher of the more ancient one. The Greek alphabet clearly derives from the Phoenician; it could not be otherwise. Maybe Cadmus or someone else imported it from Phoenicia; whatever the case may be, the Greeks did not go to search for it but the Phoenicians brought it with them, since they were the first and almost the only among the people of Asia and Africa⁶ to engage in trade with the Europeans. They were much more likely to travel to Greece than for the Greeks to

4. "People are surprised," says Chardin, "that so many letters can be combined out of two basic figures. But there is no reason to be surprised, since the letters of our alphabet, which are twenty-three in number, are based on no more than two lines: the straight line and the circle. With C and I one can shape all the letters which make up our words.

5. "The characters seem very beautiful, in no way unclear or barbaric. They must have been gilded, for traces of gold appear on several, especially on the capital letters; it is admirable, almost miraculous, that the air was unable to erase the gold after so many centuries. After all, it is not surprising that no scholar was ever able to understand these writings, since it in no way resembles any of the modes of writing with which we are acquainted. Except for Chinese, the various ways of writing known today all resemble each other very closely and seem to stem from a common source. The most amazing thing is that the Guebres, who are the descendants of the ancient Persians and who have preserved their religion, don't know this writing any better than we do and use a script that has nothing in common with that of their ancestors. It follows, either that this is a hermetic, cabalist script – which is unlikely, since it appears consistently over the entire building and since no other can be found – or that it is so ancient that we can hardly dare to guess how old it can be." Chardin indeed continues by speculating that, at the time of Cyrus and of the magi, this script was already forgotten and known as little as it is today.

6. I consider the Carthaginians as Phoenicians, since they were a colony of Tyre.

come to them – which by no means disproves that the Greeks may be as old as the people of Phoenicia.

The Greeks began by adopting not only the Phoenician script but also their habit of writing from right to left. Later on, they preferred to write as the peasant plows his field, first from left to right, then from right to left.⁷ Finally, they wrote, as we do today, by starting each line again at the left side of the blank space. This development is entirely natural: to write plow-wise is without doubt the easiest to read. I am even surprised that the custom was not re-established with the invention of the printing press; but it is not easy to write in this fashion and the habit must have disappeared as the number of manuscripts grew.

However, the fact that the Greek alphabet stems from Phoenician script does not imply that Greek, as a language, comes from the Phoenician. The two propositions are not causally related. It seems that the Greek language is very ancient but that the art of writing in Greek was late and rudimentary. Up to the siege of Troy, they only had sixteen letters, if they had that many. Palamedes is said to have added four more, and Simonides the last four. All this is conjecture. Latin however, a more modern language, had its alphabet almost from birth, although the first Romans did not use it: they started to record their history at a very late date and marked off their lustrums, or half decades, with nail heads.

The quantity of letters or elements of speech is not definite in number: some languages have more, others less, according to the different modifications given to vowels and to consonants. It is a mistake to think of vowels as five in number: the Greeks counted seven, the first Romans six,⁸ the *Messieurs* of Port-Royal ten, Mr. Duclos seventeen. I don't doubt one could detect many more, if only our ears and mouth had been trained to perceive the various shades of sound they can utter. The more delicate the sense-organ, the more varieties one will be able to detect between the acute *a* and the grave *o*, between the open *i* and *e*, etc. Anyone can test this for himself by letting his voice glide from one vowel to another without interruption; once trained, by force of habit, to become aware of these nuances, a notation could be found for each shade of sound that would describe its characteristics. Such awareness depends on the sounds used in the language and to which our sense organs have imperceptibly adjusted. The same thing can be said, more or less, for the articulated letters or consonants. But this is not what most nations have done: they borrowed their alphabets from each other and used

7. See Pausanius, *Arcadia*. The Romans also wrote this way at first; according to Marius Victorinus, this is the origin of the word *versus* (against).

8. "The Greek language counts seven vowels, the language of Romulus six and later usage indicates five, *y* being a throwback to Greek." Martianus Capella, *Satyricon*, book III.

the same signs to represent very different vowel sounds and consonants. This is why it is so difficult to read a foreign language without making a fool of oneself, even if one spells it correctly; it takes a great deal of practise to overcome this difficulty.

Writing should stabilize the language, but, in fact, it causes it to change. It does not change the letter but, by substituting precision for expressiveness, it changes the spirit. When we speak, we state our feelings; when we write, our ideas. One is forced, in writing, to use words in their commonly accepted meaning, but in speaking, we can vary the sense by intonation and control it at will; less concerned with clarity, we can be more forceful. A written language cannot remain as alive as a language that is only spoken. One writes down voices, not sounds – and, in an accented language, sounds, intonations, inflections of all kinds are the main source of expressive energy: they can make the most banal of phrases uniquely appropriate. Devices used in writing to compensate for the loss of sound burden and lengthen the written text and as they pass back from books into discourse, they contaminate speech itself.⁹ If everything we said were as if it were written, all we would do in speaking would be: to read.

Chapter VI. Whether It Is Probable That Homer Could Write

Regardless of the claims made for the antiquity of the Greek alphabet, I believe it to be more modern than it is said to be. I base this opinion on the character of the language. I have often doubted whether Homer could write or even whether writing existed during his lifetime: I greatly regret that this hypothesis is categorically excluded by the story of Bellopheron in the *Iliad*. Since I have the misfortune of being just as stubborn in my paradoxes as Father Hardouin is in his, I would be very tempted, if only I were more learned, to extend my doubts to this story itself and to accuse Homer's compilers of having interpolated it without using much judgment. Very few traces of the art of writing can be found in the other parts of the *Iliad* and I will have the boldness to assert that the entire *Odyssey* is but a bundle of nonsense that a couple of letters would have reduced to naught, unless one postulates that the heroes of the poem were unable to write. Once this is

9. The best available such device, which would not have this drawback, is punctuation, if it had not remained so sketchy. Why, for example, don't we have a vocative mark? The question mark, which is available to us, is much less useful, for, at least in our language, we can tell from the syntax whether or not we are asking a question. "May I" or "I May" don't have the same meaning. But how are we to distinguish in writing between a person named or a person addressed? The ambiguity could be resolved by a vocative mark. The same ambivalence occurs with irony, when it is not made perceptible by intonation.

assumed, the poem becomes entirely rational and even rather well composed. If the *Iliad* had been written, it would not have been so frequently sung; rhapsodies would have been less in demand and less numerous. No other poet has been sung as much as Homer was, with the possible exception of Tasso in Venice; but he is sung by gondoliers, hardly the best-read people in the world. The diversity of dialects used by Homer is another argument in favor of my thesis. Speech maintains the differences between dialects whereas writing makes them disappear by reducing everything to a common model. The more a nation is educated and the more it reads, the more its dialects are being erased. All that remains of them is the slang spoken by a populace which reads little and writes even less.

Since the two poems are necessarily posterior to the siege of Troy, it is not at all certain that the Greeks taking part in this campaign were able to write, or that the poem which celebrates their deeds was written down. For centuries, these poems survived only in human memory; only later were they painstakingly written down and assembled. When Greece began to have an extensive written literature, the art of Homer, by contrast, began to be appreciated. The other poets could write, but only Homer could sing. His divine songs lost their appeal when barbarians invaded Europe and claimed to judge what they were no longer able to feel.

Chapter VII. On Modern Prosody

We have lost all conception of a melodious and harmonious language that would speak by sound as well as by voice. It would be a mistake to believe that the original intonations could be supplied by grammatical accents: these marks appear only when the intonations are already lost.¹⁰ More still:

10. Some scholars, against general opinion and against the evidence of all ancient manuscripts, pretend that Greek writing made use of grammatical accent marks. They base this assertion on two passages which I will quote in full in order to give the reader the opportunity to judge of their true meaning.

The first is from Cicero and appears in his treatise on the orator *De Oratore*, book III, 44 (Latin text).

The second is taken from Isidorus' *Origins*, bk I, ch. 20 (Latin text). What these texts prove to me is that, in Cicero's time, competent copyists could divide up words in parts and use signs similar to our marks of punctuation. They also demonstrate the invention of number and of emphasis in prose discourse, an invention attributed to Isocrates. But I find no evidence of the existence of tone marks. Even if they were mentioned, this would only prove that, when the Romans began to study Greek, the copyists invented marks for accents, for aspiration and for prosody in order to convey its correct pronunciation: I don't deny this for a moment, since it confirms my own theory. But it does not follow that the Greeks used these signs; they had no need for them.

we think that, in French, we have accents when in fact we don't: what we call accents are distinctive vowels or signs of quantity but they designate no variations of tone or of pitch. The evidence for this is that these accents are rendered by changes in length or by changes in the positions of the lips, the tongue or the palate, which express differences between articulated voices. None require a change in the position of the glottis, which is where differences of sound originate. So when our *accent circonflexe* is not simply used as a voice, it indicates a lengthening of the sound or it has no function at all. Let us now see what it would be for the Greeks.

“Denis of Halycarnassus says that the rise in tone in the acute accent (´) and the drop in the *grave* (˘) are equal to a fifth, thus showing that the prosodic accent was also a vocal accent, especially in the case of the *circonflexe* (^), where the voice, after having risen one-fifth, is subsequently lowered by the same amount, on the same syllable.¹¹ It is clear from this passage that M. Duclos finds no musical accent in our language, only the prosodic or vocal accent. One may also use an accent that is purely a convention of spelling and has no relation whatever to voice, sound or quantity. It sometimes indicates the elision of a letter (as in the case of the *circonflexe*) or prevents confusion in the case of a monosyllable that has different meanings; such is the case for the so-called *grave* accent that distinguishes between “où” as adverb (where) and “ou” as disjunctive particle (or), or “à” used as preposition (to) and “a” used as verb (has). These accents have nothing to do with pronunciation but have to be read only by the eye.¹² The definition of *accent* that most of the French have been taught to accept has nothing to do with the accentuation of their language.

I fully expect that many French grammarians, convinced that the accents designate a rising or lowering of tone, will accuse me of being paradoxical. They will try to prove that these accents require motions of the glottis when they are in fact produced by changes in the opening of the mouth or in the position of the tongue. The following experiment will conclusively prove my point.

Pitch your voice at the precise height of any musical instrument you choose. Without changing pitch, pronounce successively the most diversely accented French words you can assemble. Since we are only concerned with grammatical and not with semantic accentuation, it is not even necessary for this sequence of words to have a definite meaning. Observe whether, while thus speaking in a monotone, you don't mark your accents just as perceptibly

11. M. Duclos, *Rem[arques] sur la gram[maire] générale et raisonnée*, p. 30.

12. One could think the same applies to the distinction, in Italian, between *e* as conjunction and *è* as verb. In this case, however, the first *e* differs from the other by stronger and more insistent accentuation. The accent acquires a vocal function, something that Buonmattei should have pointed out.

and clearly as if you were free to vary your tone of voice at will. This being granted (and I maintain it cannot be denied), I assert that, since all the accents are expressed at the same pitch, they imply no variation of sound. Nothing can refute this conclusion.

No language in which distinct musical melodies can be written to the same words can be said to have a specific musical accent. If the accent were determined, the melody would also have to be. The fact that the tune can vary means the accent is of no account.

Modern European languages are all like French in this respect. I don't even make an exception for Italian. Italian is not by itself a musical language. The only difference between Italian and French is that Italian lends itself more easily to being set to music.

All this confirms the natural process by which all alphabetic languages must change in character and lose strength as they gain in clarity. As grammar and logic gain in perfection, this evolution accelerates. The best way to make a language cold and monotonous is to create academies in the nations where it is spoken.

Derivative languages can be identified by the considerable difference between their spelling and their pronunciation. The pronunciation of ancient and original languages is much less arbitrary, consequently there is much less need for complicated signs and symbols. "All the prosodic signs of the ancients," says M. Duclos, "even assuming that they were consistently codified, did not come close to actual usage." I'll go further than that: they became a substitute for it. The ancient Hebrews never had punctuation or accent marks, they did not even have vowels. When other nations made a pretense to speak Hebrew, and the Jews began to speak other non-Hebraic languages, Hebrew lost its distinctive intonation. Stop marks and other signs were needed to regulate the language, thus recapturing the meaning of the words rather than the pronunciation of the language. Modern Jews speaking Hebrew would not be comprehensible to their ancestors.

To know English, one has to learn the language twice: first to learn how to write and a second time to learn how to speak. If an Englishman reads out loud and a non-English speaker tries to follow the written text, he will perceive no relationship between what he reads and what he hears. How did this come about? England was successively conquered by various people; the spelling of words always remained the same but their pronunciation often changed. The rules of pronunciation and the rules of spelling differ widely. One could conceive of a language exclusively made up of consonants which would be entirely readable but which no one could speak; algebra bears some resemblance to such a language. When a language is clearer in its spelling than in its pronunciation, this indicates that it is written rather than spoken. This may have been the case for the scholarly language of the Egyptians and,

for us, it certainly applies to the dead languages. In languages overburdened with useless consonants, writing seems to have preceded speech. One would think of Polish as a case in point; if this were so, then Polish would be the least passionate, the coldest of all languages.

Chapter VIII. General and Local Difference in the Origin of Languages

All I have said up till now applies to primitive languages in general and to their development in time, but it explains neither their origin, nor the differences between them. The main cause for their variety is local and stems from the climate in which they come into being and from the circumstances that attend upon their development. We have to go back to this cause in order to account for the general and characteristic difference that can be observed between languages of the North and those of the South. The recurrent error of Europeans is to philosophize on the origins of things in terms of their own situation. They never fail to represent early humans as living on a barren and rugged soil, dying of cold and of hunger, preoccupied with finding shelter and clothing. They imagine the snow and the ice that covers Europe to be everywhere, without realizing that the human species, like all others, originated in warm regions and that, over two-thirds of the globe, no one has ever heard of winter. If one wants to study particular men one has to start close to home but if one studies mankind in general, one must learn to look into the distance. In order to discover common properties one must first observe differences.

The human species, born in warm regions, has spread from there to the colder countries where they have first multiplied, then moved back to warmer climes. Global revolutions and the continuous comings and goings of its inhabitants result from these cycles of action and reaction. Let us try, in our studies, to follow the order of nature. I embark here on a long digression on a topic discussed so often that it has become trite, but to which we always have to return, whether one wants to or not, in order to discover the origin of human institutions.

Chapter IX. Constitution of the Languages of the South

In the first ages of man¹³ men lived scattered over the surface of the earth. Their only society was the family, their laws those of nature, their language

13. I call "first ages" the period when men lived dispersed, regardless of the date one wishes to assign to this period.

gesture and a few inarticulate sounds.¹⁴ They were united by no ties of community or brotherhood. Since their conflicts were decided by sheer force, they considered each other enemies; their weakness and their ignorance led them to this conclusion. Knowing nothing, they feared everything and their only defense was to attack. A human being abandoned in solitude on the face of the earth, at the mercy of other humans, had to be a wild animal, ready to inflict on others the pain they expect to receive from them. Fear and weakness are the sources of cruelty.

We develop social feelings only as we grow more enlightened. Pity, although it is natural to the human heart, would remain eternally inactive but for the imagination that sets it in motion. How are we moved by pity? By moving outside ourselves, by identifying ourselves with the one who suffers. We suffer only to the extent that we consider him to suffer; it is not in our own selves but in him that we suffer. Think how much acquired knowledge this transfer of feeling presupposes. How could I imagine sufferings I have never known myself? How can the suffering of another make me suffer if I don't even know that he suffers, if I don't even know what he and I have in common? Without reflection one cannot be tolerant, or just or sympathetic, neither can one be vicious or vindictive. Without imagination one feels only one's own self and one is alone in the midst of mankind.

Reflection implies comparison and therefore requires a plurality of ideas. If one remains centered on a single object one will have no ideas to compare. A human being who encounters few objects, and always the same since childhood, will be so accustomed to their sight that his attention will not be aroused; the urge to examine and to compare will not yet be awakened. But as we become conscious of new objects we will want to know them, and find relations between them and the objects already familiar to us. Thus we learn to consider what is close to us and to examine the familiar by ways of the unusual.

Applied to the first human beings, these ideas explain their primitive condition. Never having seen anything but their own surroundings, they never would have become aware of what was closest to them, least of all themselves. They could conceive of a father, a son or a brother, but not of man. Their hut contained all they could relate to; an outsider, an animal, a monster – they were all the same to them. The entire outside world, aside from themselves and their relatives, was nothing in their eyes.

14. Actual languages don't originate in a domestic environment. A more general and stabler convention is needed to establish them. The American savage speaks only when he is away from home. Within his hut silence reigns and he addresses his relatives only by means of signs. These signs are small in number, for the savage is less nervous and less impatient than the European. His needs are sparser and he depends only on himself to satisfy them.

Hence the contradictions we can observe in the founders of nations: they are so natural, yet so inhuman; their customs are so fierce and their hearts so tender; they have such affection for their family yet such aversion for their species. Their feelings, concentrated on their next of kin, acquire a boundless energy. What they knew was dear to them, but they considered the rest of the world their enemy. Blind and ignorant, they hated only what they could not know.

These barbarous times were a golden age, not because men were united but because they were separated. Each of them is said to have considered himself master of everything; this may well be so, but no one knew or desired anything remote. Far from bringing him closer to his fellow men, his needs drove him away from their presence. One could say that the encounter between human beings was always an attack, but such encounters were few and far between. The state of war was universal but the entire earth was in peace.

The first men were hunters or shepherds, not farmers; the first wealth consisted of herds, not of fields. Before the earth was divided by property, no one thought of farming. Agriculture requires tools, sowing in order to reap requires foresight. A man living in society wants to acquire more land, but solitary man wants as little as possible. He knows neither law nor property beyond the reach of his eye or of his arm. Once the cyclops has closed off the entrance to his cave, he feels himself and his herd in safety. But who would guard the harvest of someone who is not protected by law?

The reader will object that Cain was a farmer and that Noah planted vineyards. Why wouldn't they? They were alone; what did they have to fear? The objection carries no weight; I have already said what I mean by the "early ages." Become an outlaw, Cain was forced to give up farming; the nomadic life of Noah's descendants certainly made them forget their past. Earth had to be populated before it could be tilled; it is difficult to do these two things at the same time. In the first stages of the human diaspora, before the family was stabilized and man had a fixed abode, there was no agriculture. Migrant populations could never be farmers. This used to be true of the Nomads, of the Arabs living in tents, of the Scythes in their carriages; it is still true today of the Tartars and of the American Indians.

In general, in the case of all people whose origins are known to us, the first, barbarous ancestors are found to be meat-eaters and hunters rather than grain-eaters and farmers. The Greeks designate by name the first man who taught them to plow the earth, and it seems that they learned this art only at a very late date. They add that, prior to Triptolemus, they ate only acorns – but this is hard to believe and contradicted by their own history. The fact that Triptolemus had to forbid them to eat meat proves that they did. Anyway, they don't seem to have taken this interdict very seriously.

In Homer's feasts, an entire ox is slaughtered for the benefit of the guests, just as nowadays one would kill a suckling pig. When we read that Abraham served up an entire calf to three people, that Eumaeus roasted two young goats for Ulysses's dinner and Rebecca did the same for her husband's, we get some idea of the horrendous quantities of meat devoured by the men of that era. In order to imagine the meals of the ancients all one has to do is look at today's savages, I was about to say at today's Englishmen.

The communion of humanity came about with the baking of the first bread. When men began to live a somewhat less nomadic existence, they cleared some of the land around their huts and made a garden rather than a field. The little grain they harvested was ground fine between two stones and baked on charcoal, in the ashes of the fire or on a hot stone. It was eaten only on festive occasions. This ancient custom, preserved as ritual in the Jewish Passover, still prevails today among the Persians and in the Indies. All these nations eat unleavened thin-layered bread with every meal. Raised bread was discovered later, when larger quantities were needed, for it is difficult to use leavening on a small amount of dough.

I know that agriculture always existed on a large scale in the days of the patriarchs. It must have developed early in Palestine, by ways of the neighboring Egypt. The book of Job, perhaps the oldest book in existence, speaks of agriculture and mentions 500 pairs of oxen among Job's possessions. The word "pairs" implies the use of teams of oxen for work in the fields. When the Shebans took them away, the text states that they were plowing the fields. One can imagine how large these fields must have been to require as much as 500 pairs of animals.

This is all true enough, but we should not confuse the ages. The age of the patriarchs of which we have knowledge is very distant from primitive times. Scripture tells of ten generations between the two ages, at a time when men were long-lived. How they lived during these ten generations we don't know. Scattered about and isolated, they hardly spoke at all. How could they have written? And what events would they have had to report, since their lonely lives were uniform and changeless?

Adam spoke, Noah spoke, I don't deny it. Adam was taught to speak by God. Noah's children were dispersed over the earth and gave up agriculture. Their common language perished with the first social order. This would have happened even if there never had been a tower of Babel. We know that men isolated on desert islands forget their mother tongue. It is very rare for people who live away from their native country to preserve their first language after several generations, even if they live and work together.

Disseminated over the vast desert of the world, men soon returned to the torpid state of stupidity which would have been theirs if they had been born from the earth. By following this natural train of ideas, one can easily

reconcile the authority of Scripture with the monuments of Antiquity, and one is not reduced to considering as fables traditions as ancient as the people who have transmitted them to us.

Even in this condition of near-idiocy, man had to live. The most active, robust and enterprising among them could not for long remain satisfied to live only on fruit and hunting. They first became violent and bloodthirsty hunters; later, they turned into warriors, conquerors, usurpers. The monuments of history have been despoiled by the crimes of the earliest kings; wars and conquests are nothing but extended manhunts. After having conquered their opponents, all that was left was to devour them – which their successors learned to do.

The majority of humanity, being less active and more peaceful, settled down as soon as they had the opportunity, gathered cattle and, to provide nourishment for themselves, tamed it and made it obey the human voice. They learned to keep and to breed their herds; thus pastoral life came into being.

Human industry expands with the needs that created it. Of the three ways of life accessible to man – hunting, cattle-raising and agriculture – the first makes the body strong and swift, the soul brave and cunning. It hardens man, and makes him fierce. In the land of the hunters the hunt does not remain hunt for long.¹⁵ Game has to be pursued far afield; hence the growth of horsemanship. One must learn to hit the animals on the run; hence the development of light arms, the slingshot, the arrow and the spear. The arts of pastoral life, father of tranquil and peaceful passions, are more self-sufficient. It provides man, almost effortlessly, with sustenance, clothing and even with shelter. The tents of the earliest shepherds were made of animal skins and so was the roof of Moses' arch and of his tabernacle. As for agriculture, which is slower to develop, it touches on all the arts: it leads to property, government, law-making, and gradually to misery and to crime, which are inseparable, for our species, of the science of good and evil. This is why the Greeks did not consider Triptolemus only as the inventor of a useful skill but as a founder of nations and a sage who gave them their earliest political order and their first laws. Moses, on the other hand, seems to judge agriculture with severity, claiming that its inventor was a villain and that God rejected its fruits. It appears that the first farmer prefigured in his

15. The profession of hunter is not favorable to the expansion of the population. This observation was first made when the isles of Santo Domingo and Tortega were inhabited by buccaneers and it is confirmed by the conditions in North America. It is not the case that the fathers of large nations were hunters: they were farmers or shepherds. We must therefore consider the hunt as an accessory to the pastoral life rather than as a means of subsistence.

character the evil consequences of his industry.¹⁶ The author of Genesis was more perspicacious than Herodotus.

The three stages in man's social development correspond to the same subdivisions. Primitive man is a hunter, the barbarians are shepherds and civilized man is a farmer.

It appears that in the search for the origin of the arts as well as in the study of the early customs, the determining consideration is the manner in which men provided for their subsistence. As for which of these means bring them closer together, this depends on the climate and on the nature of the soil. The same can therefore explain the diversity of languages and the contrasts between their characteristic features. The gentle climates, the rich and fertile lands where men were least dependent upon each other, were the first to be populated and the last to become nations. The needs leading to the creation of a social order are felt there only as a later date.

Imagine perpetual spring on earth; imagine, water, cattle and pastures everywhere; imagine men, fresh from the hands of nature dispersed in the midst of all this. I cannot conceive how they would ever have forsaken their native freedom and abandoned the pastoral and isolated life that suited their natural indolence so well,¹⁷ to submit needlessly to the serfdom, the labor and the hardships that cannot be eliminated from the conditions of life in society.

He who willed man to be a social being had his finger touch the axis of the globe and bent it on the axis of the universe. With this slight motion, I see the face of the earth changed, the vocation of humanity decided: I hear in the distance a senseless crowd shouting with joy; I see the palaces and cities being built, arts, laws and trade being born; I see nations form, expand, dissolve and follow each other as wave follows wave; I see men crowded together on a few chosen points of their habitat in order to devour each other while the rest of the world becomes a desolate desert, a worthy monument to the unity of society and the usefulness of the arts.

Men feed upon the earth, but after their first needs have driven them apart other needs bring them together; only then do they speak and are they spoken of. Before accusing me of self-contradiction, I should be given the time to explain myself.

16. Cain, as opposed to Abel, a shepherd. (Footnote by Morau)

17. It is unbelievable to what degree man is naturally lazy. He seems to live only in order to sleep, vegetate and stay quiet; it is almost too much to ask him to move about enough not to die of starvation. This delicious indolence, more than anything else, keeps savages satisfied with their condition. Passions that make men restless, worried and active originate only in society. After self-preservation, the urge to do nothing at all is the first and foremost human passion. Close study would confirm that, even among us, people work only in the hope of finding rest: it is still laziness that makes us diligent.

If one searches for the place where the fathers of mankind were born, where the first settlements were established, where the first migrations occurred, one will not point to the happy climes of Asia Minor, nor of Sicily, Africa or even Egypt, but to the sands of Chaldea or the rocks of Phoenicia. The same will be found to be true at all times. China is not being peopled only by the Chinese but by the Tartars as well; the Scythes have overrun Europe and Asia; from the mountains of Switzerland a perpetual migration which is not about to stop, descends into the fertile plains.

It is natural enough, one will say, for the inhabitants of a barren land to leave it for a better one. Granted; but why does this more fertile country have room for them to enter instead of being overcrowded with its own inhabitants? In order to leave a barren country one first has to be in it; why are so many men born there by their own choice? One tends to believe that the population of poor countries could come only from the overflow of the rich ones, yet the opposite is the case. The majority of the Latin countries called themselves aboriginal¹⁸ whereas greater Greece, a much more fertile land, was peopled only by strangers. All the Greek people admit that they stem from various foreign colonies, except for the attic Greeks, whose soil is the worst but who claim to be autochthonous or self-born. And without having to go back into the night of time, the modern era provides the most decisive evidence, for what climate could be worse than that of the so-called workshop of humanity?

Human concentrations are in large part the result of natural accidents: local deluges, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fires caused by lightning which devour entire forests. Whatever frightened and dispersed the primitive inhabitants of the earth later brought them back together in a joint effort to repair the shared damage: the traditional tales of the earth's catastrophes, so frequent in older times, reveal the instruments Providence used to force men to come together. Now that social order has been established, those calamities have ceased or become much less frequent; such seems to be the law of necessity. The same misfortune that brought dispersed individuals together would disperse those who are now united.

The cycle of the seasons is another, more general and more persistent cause, which produced similar effects in the climates subject to these variations. Populations who have to store reserves for the winter are forced to assist each other and to set up some kind of covenant. When cold and ice make it impossible to move around, they are united by boredom as well as by need: the Laps, buried in their ice, the Eskimos, the most primitive of

18. Names such as autochthon or aborigine mean only that the first inhabitants of the country were primitives, without law, tradition or society and that they settled there before they spoke.

all people, flock together during winter in their caves and don't even know each other when summer comes. If they were to be only one notch more enlightened and civilized, they would be united forever.

Man's digestive tract is not fit to handle raw meat; in most instances, our taste rebels at the thought. Except for the aforementioned Eskimos even primitives roast their meat. They need fire for that purpose; fire is pleasing to the eyes and its heat is pleasing to the body. The sight of flames scares animals away but attracts human beings.¹⁹ One gathers for dances and celebrates around the fireplace; the gentle bonds of habit irresistibly draw man closer to his fellow-beings. On these rustic hearthstones burns the sacred fire that carries the first feeling of common humanity deep into our hearts.

In the warmer countries, the unevenly distributed springs and rivers also serve as rallying points, all the more useful since men can survive even less without water than without fire. Nomadic people especially, whose life depends on herds, are in need of common watering holes; ancient history teaches us that this is indeed the place where their disputes and their treatises originated.²⁰ The easy availability of water can delay the formation of communities in water-rich areas whereas, in arid climates, one is forced to have recourse to dry wells and to canals in order to water the cattle. In these countries, men have lived in association since times immemorial; the only available choice was to have the land deserted or to make it habitable by human labor. Our tendency to interpret everything in the light of our own customs is so strong that I feel compelled to reflect somewhat more extensively on these matters.

The first condition of earth was very different from what we know today, now that it is embellished or disfigured by the hand of man. Chaos, which poets pretend to find in the elements, prevailed among the products of the earth. In these distant times, when everything was in constant turmoil, when thousands of accidents constantly changed the nature and the shape of the soil, everything – trees, shrubs, vegetables, pastures – grew at random. None

19. Fire pleases animals as well as men, once they have grown accustomed to the sight and have felt its gentle warmth. It could often be as useful for them as it is for us, especially in keeping their young warm. Yet no one has ever heard of an animal, wild or domesticated, that was able to discover the skill of firemaking, or even to imitate our example. What are we to think of these rational beings who are said to exhibit a degree, however fleeting, of social organization but whose intelligence is unable to extract and collect sparks from a piece of stone or even to preserve fires that have been abandoned by men. It is clear from their writings that they take us to be even dumber than animals. Philosophers who claim the opposite must be trying to fool us. Their writings clearly show that they take us for beasts.

20. For an example of each (disputes and treatises) see chapter XXI, 3 of Genesis, on Abraham, Abimelech, and the well of the Oath.

of the various species had the time to hold on to the type of soil that suited its needs, and to eliminate other species from its domain. Things would slowly begin to sort themselves out and then some unexpected calamity would again confuse everything.

The needs of men and the products of the earth are so clearly intertwined that, as long as the land is inhabited, everything will subsist. But before the communal labors of mankind established a balance between the earth's products, nature itself had to watch over the equilibrium needed for the preservation of the species and now attended to by man. Nature maintained or restored this equilibrium by sudden change, just as we now maintain or restore it by our inconstancy. There were as yet no wars among people, but battles seemed to rage among the elements. Instead of men burning cities, digging mines and felling trees, it was nature that lit up volcanoes and provoked earthquakes, it was the light of heaven that burned down entire forests. A flash of lightning, a flood, an eruption then accomplished in a few hours what it now takes hundred thousand arms of men to do in a century. I fail to see how the system could have subsisted and the balance maintained in any other way. In the two main realms, the animal and the vegetal, large species would in the long run have absorbed the smaller ones.²¹ The entire earth would soon have been covered with trees and ferocious beasts and, all too quickly, everything would have perished.

The circulation of waters, which keeps the earth alive, would have subsided. Mountains erode and lose height, rivers carry off the silt, the oceans fill up and expand and everything tends to level off. The hand of man curbs this tendency and slows down its progress; without his intervention, things would have moved much faster and the earth would perhaps already be under water. Before man intervened the sources of water were poorly distributed over the globe; they would flow unevenly, fail to fertilize the land and to sustain its inhabitants. Rivers were often unreachable, bordered by steep ravines or by swamps; human skills did not confine them to their beds. They could frequently overflow, flood their banks, change directions and alter their course, subdivide in branches. At times, they would be dry, at other

21. According to some, the various animal species are automatically kept in a state of constant flux that maintains their equilibrium. When the devouring species will have over-expanded at the expense of the devoured, they say, they will no longer be able to find nourishment and will have to diminish in number until the second, weaker species will have repopulated; thereupon, with the second species again abundantly available, the first one will in turn repopulate itself at the expense of the other. But such fluctuations seem implausible, for the system depends on a period during which the preyed-upon species augments while the preying species diminishes – which seems to go against the laws of reason.

times quick-sands made it impossible to come near them. They might just as well not have existed at all, and people died of thirst amidst the waters.

How many of the dry countries have become habitable only because man designed canals and thus drained water from the rivers! The whole of Persia subsists only by this artifice, numerous canals are responsible for the vast population of China, the Netherlands would be constantly flooded by its rivers, as it would be by the sea, if it were not for its canals and dikes. Egypt, the most fertile country in the world, is made habitable only by human labor. In the wide plains where there are no rivers because the soil is too flat, the only source of water has to come from wells. Therefore, if the first people mentioned in history were not living in fertile lands or on pleasant riverbanks, this does not mean that those happy climes were left deserted. Their numerous inhabitants did not require each other's assistance; they lived longer in isolation within their families, without feeling the need to contact each other. But in barren regions, where water could only come from wells, one had no choice but to come together in order to dig for water, or, at the very least, to organize its distribution. This must have been how the social order and language originated in the warmer regions.

This is where the first family bonds were tied, where the two sexes first met. Young girls came to fetch water for the household, young men came to water their herds. This is where eyes, accustomed to see the same sights since childhood, began to detect gentler features. These new objects touched the heart and tamed it by an unknown attraction; it felt pleasure at no longer being alone. Water had a way of becoming more needed and the herds grew thirsty more often. One arrived at the well in a hurry and one was reluctant to depart. In these happy days when nothing recorded time there was no need to count the hours; the passage of time was felt in terms of joy or boredom. Under secular oak trees, time's conquerors, passionate youths gradually forgot their fierceness and grew less shy with each other. In trying to make one's wishes understood one learned to explain them. This is where the first celebrations took place; feet moved in joyous rhythms, voices added their passionate accents to gestures grown inadequate; pleasure and desire, intertwined, were felt together. There at last we find the true cradle of nations, and the first fires of love arose from the pure crystal of the fountains.

But what am I saying? Were men born from the soil prior to this time? Did generations follow each other without any encounter between the sexes and without any communication between them? Of course not; there were families but no nations; there was a domestic, family language but no language of the people; there were marriages, but no love. Each family was self-sufficient and produced its own offspring; born from the same blood, children grew up together and slowly discovered ways to communicate with each other. As they grew older, they learned to tell the sexes apart. Their

natural inclinations were strong enough to bring them together; instinct substituted for passion, habit for choice or preference. One became husband and wife without ceasing to be brother and sister.²²

But the stakes were not sufficient to untie the tongue, to arouse passionate accents frequently enough to turn them into institutions. The same can be said of the sparse and not too urgent needs which could have united humanity in common labors. Someone would begin to dig a well, another would finish the job, often without any need for argument between them or without even having laid eyes upon each other. In short, in the temperate and fertile regions, it took all the vivacity of the pleasing passions to induce the inhabitants to speech: the first languages are the daughters of pleasure rather than of needs and they carried for a long time the imprint of their ancestor. Their seductive accent was erased only with the feelings that caused them, when new needs had been introduced which forced everyone into selfishness and compelled him to draw his heart back into his own self.

Chapter X. The Formation of Northern Languages

All men become the same in the long run but they travel along different paths. In southern climes, where nature is generous, needs are born from the passions; in the cold regions, where it is parsimonious, the passions are born from needs, and languages, the sad daughters of scarcity, bear the trace of their originary hardship.

Although mankind adjusts to atmospheric extremes, to cold, discomfort or even hunger, there still is a point beyond which their nature will not survive. Exposed to such cruel ordeals, the fragile perish but the strong flourish. There is no middle term between vigor and death. This explains the robustness of the northern people: they have not been conditioned by the climate but, rather, the climate has tolerated only those strong enough to cope, and it is not surprising that the children should preserve the healthy constitution of their forebears.

22. The earliest men unavoidably must have married their sisters. In the simplicity of the earliest customs, this practise continued without difficulty as long as the families remained apart, or even after the formation of the most archaic of peoples. The law that abrogated it is no less sacred for being a human institution. Those who consider it only from the point of view of the bonds between families fail to see its most important aspect. In the intimacy that home-life necessarily creates between the sexes, all morality would cease as soon as so sacred a law would no longer speak to the heart of mankind and control their senses. The most repulsive of practises would soon cause the downfall and the destruction of the species.

One can understand that men, being the stronger, must have less delicate organs and louder, rougher voices. What a difference there is between the gentle and moving intonations produced by the emotions of the soul and the outcries of physical need! In these dreadful regions, where death reigns during nine months of the year, where the sun warms the air for only a few weeks, just long enough to make the inhabitants realize their deprivation and prolong their misery, in these places where the earth yields nothing without hard labor and where the source of life seems to be in one's arms rather than in one's heart, men are forever at work providing for their subsistence. The thoughts of gentler ties hardly occurred to them; physical impulse was their only incentive, they followed chance rather than choice and their preferences were determined by the easiest opportunities. Leisure, which feeds the passions, was replaced by work which represses them; before thinking of living in happiness, one had to think of staying alive. Since shared needs are a much stronger uniting force than sentiment could have been, society was shaped by labor. The continual threat to life made it impossible to remain confined to the language of gesture and their first word, instead of "love me," was "help me."

These two statements, close in sound as they are,²³ are pronounced with a very different intonation. One was not trying to seduce but to be understood and therefore did not have to convey energy but clarity. For intonations that the heart had no reason to provide were substituted strong and striking articulations. If any natural impulse remained instrumental in shaping the language, this impulse would tend to make it sound even harsher.

Northern men are not passionless, but their passions differ in kind. The passions of the warm countries are voluptuous; they are associated with love and with indolence. Nature is so generous that the inhabitants have almost nothing to do; as long as he has women and is left in peace, Asiatic man is satisfied. But in the north, where people consume a great deal and live on a barren soil, they are subject to so many needs that they become irritable. Everything worries them; because they have such difficulty subsisting, the poorer they are, the more they are attached to the little they have – just to come in their vicinity is to put their life in jeopardy. Hence their irascible temper is prompt to turn to anger at the slightest menace. Their most natural tone of voice is gruff and threatening, always accompanied by strong articulations that make their speech harsh and loud.

23. In French, love me (*aimez-moi*) and help me (*aidez-moi*) almost sound alike.

Chapter XI. Reflections on These Differences

These are, in my opinion, the most general physical causes for the characteristic differences between the primitive languages. The southern ones had to be animated, sonorous, accented, eloquent and often made obscure by excess of energy; the northern ones had to be dull, harsh, articulated, whining, monotonous and clear – clear by dint of words rather than syntax. Our modern languages, although they have been intermixed and recast a hundred times, still preserve some traces of this difference: French, English, German are private languages shared by people who labor at a common task, who are capable of rational discussion when they are in peace but speak in anger when they lose self-control. But when the representatives of God announce sacred mysteries, when sages dictate laws to the people or when leaders sway the multitudes, they have to speak Arabic or Persian.²⁴ Our languages function better in writing than when they are spoken and it is more pleasing to read us than to hear us. Oriental languages, on the other hand, lose their warmth and their vigor when they are written down; the meaning is only partly conveyed by the words and all the power comes from the intonation. To judge orientals by their books is like painting a man's portrait when he is a corpse.

In order to evaluate human actions correctly one has to consider them within the full compass of their relationships – something we are never taught to do. When we put ourselves in the place of others, we always do so self-consciously, by seeing how the situation would influence us, and not how it had to influence them; and when we think we judge them rationally, we only compare our prejudices with theirs. Just because someone is able to read a little Arabic, he allows himself to smile when leafing through the Koran; but if he had heard Mohamed proclaim it in person, in his eloquent and rhythmical language, with a clear-sounding and persuasive voice that seduces the ear before it seduces the heart and that constantly enlivens its pronouncements with the accents of enthusiasm, he would have fallen on his knees and cried out: Great Prophet, messenger of God, lead us to glory and to martyrdom, we are ready to do battle and to die for you. We always find fanaticism ridiculous, because there is no voice among us that speaks in its name. Our fanatics are not really fanatic: they are mere scoundrels or madmen. Instead of divinely inspired intonations, our languages allow only for the cries of those who are possessed by the devil.

24. Turkish is a northern language.

Chapter XII. The Origin of Music and Its Relations

The first articulations and the first sounds were uttered by the earliest voices and varied with the passions that dictated them. The cries of anger are articulated by the tongue and the roof of the mouth, but the voice of tenderness is more gentle: it is shaped by the glottis which turns voice into sounds, more or less accentuated, pitched higher or lower according to the feeling that accompanies it. Cadence and sound originate with syllables: passion makes all the organs speak and powerfully enhances the voice. Verse, song and speech thus have a common origin. Around the fountains that I mentioned before, the first speech was also the first song: the periodical repetitions and the regular measure of the rhythm, together with the melodious inflections of accentuation created poetry and music as it created language. In these happy times and climates, where the only pressing needs requiring the assistance of others were those of the heart, poetry and music were the language spoken by all.

The first chronicles, the first orations, the first laws were in verse. Poetry was invented before prose; it could not have been otherwise, since passions speak earlier than reason. The same is the case with music: the earliest music is pure melody, and the earliest melody is the varied sound of speech: accent creates song, number creates measure, and one spoke as much by sound and rhythm as by articulation and voice. Strabo asserts that saying and singing used to be one and the same and he adds that this proves that poetry is the source of eloquence.²⁵ It would have been better to say that both have a common source and that originally no distinction could be made between them. Considering how the earliest communities came into being, why should one be surprised that the first chronicles were written in verse and that the first laws were sung? Why wonder that the first grammarians considered their art subservient to music and taught music as well as grammar?²⁶

A language which has only articulations and voices uses only half of the resources available to it. It may be good at rendering ideas, but in order to express feelings or images, it needs rhythm and sound, that is to say melody, as well. Such is the superiority of Greek over our languages.

We are constantly amazed by the prodigious impact of oratory, poetry and music in Greece. We cannot conceive of it because we experience nothing

25. *Geography*, book I.

26. Quintilian, I, chapter X: "Archytas and Aristoxenes considered grammar to be included under music, and the same masters taught both.... Then Eupolus also had Prodamus teach both music and letters. And Marius, who is Hyperbolus, confesses that he knows nothing of music except letters."

similar; we can only pretend to believe the documentary evidence out of consideration for the scholars who unearthed it.²⁷

Burette translated as well as he could certain pieces of Greek music and transcribed them in our system of notation; he was naive enough to have it performed before our Academy of Letters and the members of the Academy were patient enough to listen. I admire the spirit of this experiment in a nation whose own music is impenetrable abroad. If you give a monologue from a French opera to perform to any foreign musician of your choice, I'll defy you to recognize what he will produce. And still, these very same Frenchmen claim to sit in judgment on the melody of an ode by Pindar, put to music 2000 years ago!

I remember reading that American Indians, baffled at the sight of the power of firearms, would pick up bullets and throw them at their enemies while making a loud explosive noise with their mouths. They would then be quite amazed that no one was killed. Our orators, our scholars and our musicians are just like these Indians. What is amazing is not that our music fails to do what Greek music did; it would be much more surprising if two such different instruments were to produce the same effect.

Chapter XIII. On Melody

No one doubts that man is affected by sense perceptions, but because we fail to discriminate between the effects, we also confuse the causes. We emphasize the power of sensations both too much and not enough, we forget that they often act upon us not only as sensations but as signs or images, and that their intellectual consequences also have intellectual causes. Just as our reactions to painting are not determined by the colors, the impact of music on our souls is not the work of sound. Beautiful, well-matched colors please the eye, but this pleasure is purely of the senses. It is the drawing, the imitation which

27. One should of course make allowance for exaggeration in the Greek texts, but without going as far as some of our contemporaries who seem to discount all differences between the Greeks and us. "When Greek music," writes the abbé Terrasson, "in the days of Amphion and of Orpheus, had reached the state it has now achieved in our provinces, it could suspend the flow of the rivers and make the forests and the rocks move. Now that it has reached a high degree of perfection, one certainly loves to listen to it and one fully understands its beauties – but it causes no more miracles. The same is true of Homer's verse. He was born in times which, compared to those that followed, were still close to the infancy of mankind. His poems drove men to ecstasy, whereas nowadays we are content to appreciate and respect the work of competent poets." The abbé Terrasson showed good judgment at times, but certainly not in this passage.

gives these colors life and soul. Our passions are stimulated by the passions they express, our emotions kindled by the objects they represent. Our interest and our feelings do not depend on the colors; the outline of a painting that moves us will still move us in a print, but if the design is removed, the colors will no longer have any effect.

Melody does for music exactly what drawing does for painting: it delineates the lines and the figures of which chords and sounds are only the colors. One will object that melody is a mere sequence of sounds. This is so, but it is equally true that drawing is a mere disposition of colors. An orator writes down his speeches in ink; are we to conclude that ink is a particularly eloquent substance?

Imagine a country in which people don't have any sense of drawing or design but where people who spend their lives combining, mixing and harmonizing colors, think that they excel at painting. Those people would react to our art just as we react to the music of the Greeks. On hearing of the feelings provoked by a beautiful painting or of the charm that emanates from a touching scene, their experts would begin by analyzing the medium, compare our colors to theirs, determine if the green we use is more delicate than theirs or our red more flamboyant. They would speculate on questions such as these: why does a certain combination of colors make one weep, while another makes one angry? Their Burrettes would assemble on rags some disfigured shreds of our paintings and would then wonder in surprise why these color combinations are thought to be so marvelous.

If then, in some neighboring nation, someone began to shape as much as an outline, a sketch of a design or of a human form, it would be dismissed as mere blots and blurs, as eccentric and baroque art. One would feel called upon to present good taste in the guise of a pure beauty which, in truth, expresses nothing at all but produces brilliant color combinations, bright surfaces, elaborate shadings devoid of outline.

Maybe, at long last, enough progress would be made to come upon the experiment of the prism. Some famous artist would at once build an entire system upon this discovery. Gentlemen, he would say, a sound philosophy should always go back to the material causes. Consider the decomposition of light, the primitive colors, their interrelation and their ratio and you will have discovered the true principles on which the pleasure of painting rests. All this jargon of design, representation, figure and form are pure mystifications, the inventions of French painters who hope to touch the soul by imitation when everyone knows that sensation is all that counts. People speak wonders of their pictures; why don't they look at my colors instead?

The French painters, he would continue, may perchance have observed rainbows; nature must have given them some sense of color and some instinct for harmony and nuance. But I have shown you the great and the

true principles of painting. What am I saying? Not just of painting – of all the arts, gentlemen, and of all the sciences as well. The analysis of colors, the computation of the prismatic refractions will give you the only accurate ratios that exist in nature and provide you with the rules that underlie all systems of relationship. Moreover, everything in the universe exists only as such a system. It follows that the painter knows everything worth knowing; knowing how to match colors, one knows all there is to know.

What are we to say of a painter thus deprived of taste and of feeling? How could he reason that way and stupidly restrict the pleasure we receive from art to mere physical sensation? What would we say of a musician who would share the same aberrations and see harmony as the sole source of music's greatest pleasures? We would send the first to paint the woodwork and the second to compose French operas.

Just as painting does not consist of combining colors in a manner pleasing to the eye, music is not the art of combining sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear. If this were their only object, they would belong to the natural sciences and not to the arts. Imitation is what makes painting and music art. And what element is it, in painting, that makes it into an art of imitation? – it is design. And in music? – it is melody.

Chapter XIV. Of Harmony

Sounds have natural beauty. Their effect is purely physical: it stems from the combined sound of air particles, put in motion by a sonorous body and by a perhaps infinite number of its subdivisions or aliquots: the total effect produces a pleasing sensation. Everyone will take pleasure in listening to beautiful sound, but this pleasure will become a delight, will become voluptuous only if the sounds are inflected by melodious variations that are familiar to us. The melodies we consider the most beautiful will only poorly impress an ear that is not prepared for them; melody is a language accessible only to those who know its dictionary.

Harmony, taken by itself, is even worse off. Since all its beauties are conventional, it has no attraction for uneducated ears; one must have a great deal of practise to learn to feel and to appreciate its effects. Our consonances are mere noise to rustic ears. Not surprisingly, when natural proportions are displaced there can no longer be natural pleasure either.

A given sound produces all its corresponding harmonies, in the proportions of power and of interval required to harmonize most perfectly with it. If you augment it by a third or a fifth or any other consonant interval you do not in fact add anything, you merely redouble: you leave the system of harmonic relationships and intervals unchanged and modify only the force.

By intensifying one consonancy and not the others the original proportion is disrupted; trying to improve on nature, one does the opposite. Your ears and your taste will be spoiled by such a misdirected artistic invention. The only truly natural harmony is that of unison.

Mr. Rameau claims that the treble of a simple sound by nature suggests the corresponding base and that a man born with perfect pitch will spontaneously hum the correct base to any harmony. This assertion is the prejudice of a professional musician and goes against all practical experience. Not only will someone who has never heard of harmony or base not discover by himself the right harmony or the right base, but he will dislike it when he hears it and prefer, by far, simple unison.

One could spend thousands of years computing the relationships between sounds and the laws of harmony without ever succeeding in making harmony into an art of imitation. What could be the principle of this assumed imitation? Of what could harmony be the sign? What do musical chords and our passions have in common?

The same questions addressed to melody elicit immediate answers; these answers exist beforehand in the mind of the readers. By imitating the intonations of the voice, melody expresses joy and sorrow, complaints, threats and moans: it draws on all the vocal signs of the passions. It imitates the accents of language as well as the particular turns that each idiom associates with certain emotions. Melody not only imitates, it speaks. Its speech is inarticulate but lively, eager and passionate; it surpasses the power of speech hundredfold. This explains the power of musical imitation, the empire of song over sensitive hearts and souls. Harmony and its systems can contribute to melody: the laws of its modulations bind sequential sounds together, it gives the intonations a correct musical pitch and carries to the ear the confirmation of this correctness, it transforms and stabilizes inaudible inflections in consonant intervals. Yet by thus disciplining melody, it takes away from its strength of expression; it erases the passionate accent and replaces it by a harmonic interval; it restricts songs which should have as many intonations as the speaking voice to two single modes; it erases and destroys a multitude of sorrows and intervals that cannot be accommodated within its system – in short, it separates song so completely from speech that these two modes of discourse become antagonistic and contradictory, corrupt each other's claim to truth and can no longer combine without absurdity in one subject for pathetic effect. This is why people consider it ridiculous to express powerful and serious passions in song; they know that, in our languages, these passions find no musical intonations and that men of the north, no more than swans, do not die singing.

Mere harmony is not even adequate to express the sounds of which it appears to be the sole cause. Thunder, the murmur of running brooks,

wind, storms are not adequately rendered by mere chords. Try as one may, mere noise conveys nothing to the mind. Things must speak if they are to be understood; in all forms of imitation, a certain kind of discourse has to replace and to supplement the voice of nature. The musician who wants to render noise by noise makes a mistake; he fails to acknowledge the strength and the limitations of his art, he reflects on it without taste or insight. Teach him to render noise by song, to make croaking frogs sing. For to imitate is not enough: he should also touch and please. Without feeling, his bland imitation is nothing at all; it interests no one and makes no impression whatsoever.

Chapter XV. That Our Most Vivid Sensations Are Often Linked to Non-Physical Impressions

As long as sounds are considered merely as vibrations communicated to our nervous system, the principles of music and its power over our hearts remain a mystery. Sounds, in melody, do not only affect us as sounds, but as the signs of our affections and feelings. It is as such that they provoke in us the emotions they express and that we recognize in them the image of our own passions. Something of this effect can be noticed even in animals. A dog's barking attracts other dogs. If I imitate the meowing of a cat, my own cat will at once become tense and agitated. As soon as it notices that it is I who imitate the sound made by his fellow cats, he relaxes and goes back to sleep. What accounts for such a reaction since the physical event, the vibration of the nerve fibers, is so similar that the cat itself mistook the imitation for the original?

If the impact of our sensations were not due to non-physical, mental or spiritual causes, why then would we react so strongly to sensations that have not the slightest effect on primitive people? Why is our most moving music a mere noise to the ear of an inhabitant of the Caribbean? Are his nerves made of different fibers than ours? Why are they affected differently or why do these same vibrations have so much effect on some and none at all on others?

One mentions the power of sounds to heal tarantula bites as proof of their physical power. This example rather proves the opposite. Victims of this insect's bite don't need absolute sounds or a particular tune to cure themselves: instead they need a melody that is familiar to them and speech that they can understand. An Italian requires Italian songs, for a Turk they would have to be Turkish. The patient is affected only by accents that are familiar to him; his nerves react only to what his mind has prepared. He must understand the language spoken to him if it has to have any effect. A French musician is said to have been cured from a fever by the cantatas of Bernier; they would have given one to any non-Frenchman.

The same differences can be observed in the other senses, even the crudest ones. Suppose a man's hand resting and his eye focused on the same object, but imagining it, as the case may be, to be either alive or inanimate; what a difference in his impressions! An object that seemed so round and white, so softly warm, so firm and elastic, so pleasantly yielding as it swells and falls, when one knows that a live heart is beating and palpitating underneath, becomes something soft but insipid to the touch if it is inanimate.

I know of only one of the senses that remains unaffected by the mind, namely our sense of taste. This is why the vice of gluttony dominates only in people who have no feelings.

Those who reflect on the power of our sensations would do well to separate purely physical sensations from the intellectual and moral impressions we receive by way of the senses but only as their occasional causes. He should avoid the error of endowing the senses with a power they do not possess or which they derive from the inner emotions they represent. As representations and as signs, colors and sounds have considerable power but as mere sensory objects, they have very little. A sequence of tones or of chords may catch my attention for a moment, but if they are to charm or to move me, they must offer something that is neither sound nor chord and that will move me in spite of myself. Even songs that are merely pleasant but that don't say anything will soon enough bore us, for it is not so much the ear that carries feelings to the heart as it is the heart that carries them to the ear. We would have been spared many foolish theories about ancient music if these ideas had been allowed to develop. But in this century, when it is fashionable to reduce the soul to material sensations and to remove all trace of morality from human feelings, I would be surprised if the new philosophy did not become as harmful to good taste as it is to virtue.

Chapter XVI. False Analogy Between Colors and Sounds

There seems to be no limit to the absurdities that can be derived from the use of physical observation in the study of the fine arts. The analysis of sound has revealed that the relationships between sounds is similar to the relationship between colors. This analogy was at once taken for granted, regardless of reason and experience. The urge to systematize confuses everything and, since it appears impossible to paint for the ears some have tried to sing for the eyes. I have seen the famous clavichord on which one pretends to make music by means of colors. One must have a poor knowledge indeed of the laws of nature in order not to notice that the impact of color depends on their stability, but that of sounds on their sequence.

The full wealth of all colors is simultaneously displayed on the face of the earth; everything is seen at once, in one single glance. The more one looks, the more one is delighted. All that is left to do is to admire and to contemplate without end.

The same is not true for sound. Nature does not analyze sounds and does not break them down into their harmonic components: it hides them instead under the appearance of unison or, if it separates them at times, as in the modulated song of men or in the call of some species of birds, it does so successively, by putting one tone after another. Nature inspires song, not chords; it dictates melody, not harmony. Colors are the ornament of inanimate beings. All matter is colored but sounds imply motion as voice implies a being endowed with feeling; only animate bodies sing. The automatic flutist is not the one who plays the flute but the engineer who makes his fingers move and measures the air he blows.

Every sense organ acts in its own, exclusive area. The field of music is time, that of painting space. To multiply sounds that are heard synchronically or to develop colors in sequence is to modify the economy of their function. It is equivalent to substituting the eye for the ear or the ear for the eye.

Those who disagree with me will retort: just as each color is determined by the angle of refraction of the light-ray that causes it, each sound is determined by the number of times the sound-producing body vibrates per unit of time. And since the ratio of these angles and of these numbers is the same, the analogy between sound and color is self-evident. Granted; the analogy, however, is a fact of reason, not of sensory experience and therefore irrelevant in this case. In the first place, the angle of refraction can be observed and measured by the senses, which is not the case for the number of vibrations. Sound-producing bodies, subjected to the effect of air in motion, change constantly in intensity and in pitch. Colors remain but sounds faint away and we can never be certain that the sounds reborn are the same as the sounds that vanished. Every color, moreover, is absolute and autonomous whereas every sound is, for us, a relative entity determinable only by comparison. No sound by itself possesses absolute attributes that allow us to recognize it: it is high or low, loud or soft only with respect to another sound. By itself, it has none of these properties. In the harmonic system, a given sound is nothing by natural right; it is neither tonic, nor dominant, harmonic or fundamental. All these characteristics exist only as relationships and since the entire system can vary from base to treble, every sound changes in rank and place as the system changes in degree. But the properties of color are not thus dependent on relationships. The color yellow is yellow, independently of what happens to red and to blue; it is universally identifiable and observable. As soon as the angle of refraction that produces it has been determined, one knows that the same yellow will result regardless of time and place.

Colors are not the properties of bodies but of light. For an object to be visible, it has to be illuminated. Sounds, too, are dependent on a mover and for them to occur, a sound-producing body has to be put in motion. Here, too, the sense of sight is at an advantage, for it depends on a single natural instrument, the perpetual emanation of light from the stars. Few sounds, however, emanate from nature. Unless one believes in the harmony of the spheres, one depends on the existence of live beings in order to produce sound.

It follows that painting is closer to nature, music closer to human art. It also follows that the latter interests more than the former, since it brings man closer to man and always conveys to us some idea of our fellow beings. Painting is often dead and empty; it can take one into the depths of the desert, but as soon as vocal signs reach the ear, one senses the presence of someone akin to ourselves. Sounds are, so to speak, the sense organs of the soul and when, at times, they can paint even solitude they also tell us that we are not the only ones to be alone. Birds whistle but only man sings; as soon as one hears a song or a symphony one has to say: another sensitive being is at hand.

It is one of the main privileges of the musician to be able to paint things that one cannot hear, whereas the painter cannot represent those one cannot see. An art that operates entirely by means of motion can accomplish the amazing feat of conveying the very image of repose. Sleep, the quiet of night, solitude and even silence can enter into the picture of music. It is well known that noise can produce the effect of silence, silence the effect of noise, as when one is lulled to sleep by a monotonous, even voice but awakens with a start as soon as it stops. But music affects us in a more intimate way: by ways of one of our senses, it stirs up feelings similar to those associated with another, and since the analogy, to be perceptible, depends on the strength of the original impression, painting, which does not possess this strength, cannot return to music the representation that music takes from it. Even when all nature is asleep, the one who contemplates it is not; the art of the musician substitutes for the imperceptible image of the object the emotions which the music provokes in the heart of the onlooker. Not only will music stir the oceans, fan the flame, make the brooks flow, the rain fall and the rivers rise, but it will paint the horrors of a dreadful desert, darken the walls of a dungeon, quieten a tempest, restore serenity to the atmosphere and with a ripple in the orchestra spread renewed coolness over the groves. Music does not represent these things directly but evokes in the soul the same feelings one would experience on seeing them.

Chapter XVII. Musicians in error at the detriment of their art

One sees that we are constantly brought back to the moral and intellectual impact of the arts. Musicians who measure the power of sounds only in terms of air pressure and particle vibrations remain a far cry from understanding the strength of their art. The closer they come to purely physical actions, the further they travel from the origin of music and take away from the energy or its source. By replacing vocal accentuation by the conventions of harmony, music becomes noisier to the ear and less gentle to the heart. In our time, it has already ceased to speak; soon, it will cease to sing. When this happens, all its chords and all its harmonies will leave us cold.

Chapter XVIII. That the Greek Musical System Bore No Relationship to Ours

How did changes in musical systems come about? By a natural change in the character of languages. Our harmony is an invention of the middle ages and those who claim to find traces of Hellenic music in ours cannot be taken seriously. The only harmonic element, in our sense of the term, in Greek music, is restricted to what is needed to tune instruments to a perfect consonance. The people who make use of string instruments are obliged to tune them by tonal consonance, but those who don't have them make use, in their songs, of inflections which we call off-key because they are not part of our system and because we have no notations by which they can be recorded. This is clearly the case for the songs of American primitive populations; the same discovery would have been made with regard to the music of the Greeks, if only this music had been studied without prejudging its dependence on our own.

The Greeks divided their scale by fourths, as we divide our keyboards by octaves. They repeated the same divisions with each tetrachord, as we repeat them with each octave. In the unity of the harmonic mode, such repetitions could not have been maintained or even imagined. But since the intervals are smaller in speech than in song, it is natural that they would have considered the repetition of fourths in their oral melody as we consider the repetition of octaves in our harmonic melody.

The only consonances they know is what we call perfect consonances; they discarded thirds and sixths. Why? Because their system did not include minor tonalities or, at least, prohibited their use. Their consonances were not tempered, all their major thirds were too strong by one comma and their minor thirds too weak by the same amount. Consequently, their major and minor sixths were similarly altered. Now, try to imagine what kind of

harmony one would produce and what harmonic modes one could institute by eliminating thirds and sixths from the number of our consonances. If the consonances they tolerated had been known to them by a true natural sense of harmony, they would at least have been implicitly present as the underlying base of their song. The tacit consonances of the fundamental progression would have given its name to the diatonic scales they suggested to them. Far from having less consonances than we have, they would have had more. They would, for example, have called the second interval between C and D a consonance in relation to the base voice C-G.

But why, will one ask, do we have diatonic scales? By the same instinct that, in an accentuated and melodious language, prompts us to select the inflections that come easiest to the voice. Between the overextensive effort one must inflict on the glottis to reach the large intervals of the consonances and the difficulty of controlling the intonation in the tightness of the small intervals, the voice found a median solution and naturally selected intervals shorter than the consonances and simpler than commas, without however previewing the one of smaller intervals in the pathetic or tragic genres.

Chapter XIX. How Music Degenerated

As language grew in perfection, melody, subjected to more and more new rules, gradually lost some of its original power; the computations of intervals replaced the delicacy of voice inflections. The practice of unharmonic modes tended to disappear. As the forms of drama became fixed in regular patterns, one sang only according to prescribed modes. As the rules of imitation grew in number the language of imitation lost in power.

The study of philosophy and the progress of reason led to the perfecting of grammar and eliminated from our speech the passionate and animate tonality that made it so similar to song. From the times of Menalippidus and Philoxenos on, the musicians who, up till then, had been entirely subservient to the poets and who performed only, as it were, under their dictation became independent. In a comedy by Pherecrotus, of which a passage is preserved in Plutarch, Music loudly complains of its newly acquired license. No longer closely tied to discourse, melody gradually acquired life of its own and music freely moved away from the spoken word. At the same time, the prodigies it was able to accomplish by being the harmony and the accent of poetry, ceased. It lost its empire over the passions whereas language could exercise its power only over reason. As soon as Greece was crowded with sophists and philosophers, it lost its famous poets and musicians. Cultivating the arts of persuasion, it lost the arts of emotion. Plato himself, jealous of Homer and of Euripides, denounced the former and was unable to equal the latter.

Servitude soon added its influence to that of philosophy. Greece in chains lost the fire that burns only in the souls of the free and could not, in praise of its tyrants, recover the voice in which it sang the glory of its heroes. The Roman influx further impaired whatever harmony and accents the language had preserved. Latin is a less sonorous and musical language than Greek and music suffered in adopting it. The musical style of song used in the capital influenced that of the provinces; the theaters of Rome did harm to those of Athens. When Nero began to win awards, Greece no longer deserved them; the same melody, shared between two languages, suited neither of them.

At last, catastrophe befell the world of Antiquity and destroyed human progress without removing the vices it has produced. Invaded by barbarians and oppressed by ignorant rulers, Europe forsook the arts and the sciences, as well as the universal instrument that made the arts and the sciences possible – a harmoniously perfected language. Crude populations born in northern wastelands gradually accustomed everyone to the roughness of their voices; they spoke in harsh monotones that were noisy without being musical. The emperor Julian compares the speech of the Gauls to the croaking of frogs. Their articulations were as harsh as their voices were nasal and flat. The only way in which they could make their song carry was by reinforcing the vowel sounds sufficiently to cover up the multiplicity and the harshness of the consonants.

This loud song, combined with the lack of flexibility of their voices, compelled these newcomers, as well as the conquered nations that imitated their speech, to slow down all sounds in order to make them audible. The clumsy articulation and excessive sounds combined in eliminating all remaining sense of meter and of rhythm from melody. Since the passage from one sound to another remains the principal obstacle to pronunciation, the only solution was to linger as long as possible over each sound, expanding and stressing it as much as they could. Soon enough, song became a slow and boring succession of lingering shouts, devoid of beauty, measure or grace. Some scholars maintain that Latin song had quantitative accents, but it is certain that verse was sung as if it were prose. All trace of prosody, rhythm and meter vanished from vocal music.

Thus stripped of melody, all that remained of song was volume and duration. Not surprisingly, it had to discover the harmonic consonances as a way to gain even more in volume. Several combined voices, sustaining in unison sounds of unlimited duration, must have hit perchance on chords which still increased their volume while appearing pleasant to the ear. This was the beginning of *discant*²⁸ and of counterpoint.

28. Two-part singing in which there is a fixed, known melody and a subordinate melody added above.

I don't know for how many centuries composers discussed vain questions that resulted from the predictable consequences of an overlooked principle. The most resilient of readers could not cope with the eight or ten wordy chapters in which Jean de Murio discusses whether in the interval of an octave, subdivided in two consonant chords, is it the fifth or the fourth that must be at the base. Four hundred years later, one still finds in Bontempi equally boring enumerations of all the bases which must carry the sixth rather than the fifth. Meanwhile, harmony gradually took the road prescribed by analysis until the invention of the minor mode and of dissonance gave it the dimension of arbitrariness that was always part of it and that only prejudice prevents us from noticing.²⁹

With melody forgotten and the musician's attention entirely concentrated on harmony, everything soon turned in the same direction. Genres, modes, tonalities, all put on new aspects and the progression of tones became determined by the sequences of harmony. Since this sequence usurped the name of melody, it became impossible not to recognize in this new melody the traits of its mother. Our musical system has become, by degrees, purely harmonic. No wonder that oral accentuation suffered and that music, for us, has lost most of its power.

This is how song gradually became an art entirely separated from the spoken word from which it stems, how the harmonies of the chords made one forget the inflections of the voice and how, finally, by restricting music to the purely physical consequences of concurring vibrations, it became deprived of the spiritual impact it produced when it was doubly the voice of nature.

29. Reducing the whole of harmony to the simple principle of the reverberation of strings in their whole subdivisions or aliquots,* Mr. Rameau bases the minor mode and the dissonances on the pretended experimental fact that a sound-producing and vibrating string extends its vibrations to longer strings to its twelfth and seventeenth major in the base. He claims that these strings then vibrate and quiver over their full length but do not reverberate. This seems like very odd physics to me, like saying that the sun shines but that things remain invisible.

These longer strings render only the sound of the treble. They divide, vibrate and resound in unison with it; both are fused together so closely that the longer strings seem to remain silent. One mistakenly believes that they vibrate over their full length; the error is not to have observed the knots correctly. Two sound-producing strings tuned to a harmonic interval can make their fundamental tone audible in the base, even in a third string; the experiments of Mr. Tartini have established this. But a single string has no other fundamental tone than its own. It does not propagate its vibrations to its higher multiples, but only to its aliquots or to strings that are in unison. Since the cause of sound is the vibration of the sound-producing body, and since effect always follows a freely acting cause, it is absurd to separate vibration from reverberation.

*Part of a number that divides it without leaving a remainder. The opposite of an aliquot is an aliquant: 8 is an aliquot of 24, an aliquant of 25.

Chapter XX. Relationships Between Language and Political Government

This gradual progression is not random or arbitrary; it depends on the vicissitudes of things. Languages naturally conform to the needs of men; they change with the changes in these needs. In ancient times, when persuasion replaced what is now the police, eloquence was a necessity. What good would it do nowadays when public force supplants persuasion? It takes neither art nor figures of speech to say: *such is my pleasure*. What kind of discourses remain to be addressed to the assembly of the people? – sermons will suffice. And what incentive do the authors of these sermons have to persuade their audiences since it is not the people who decide on their privileges? The language of the people has become as useless to us as that of eloquence. Societies have evolved to their final stage; any new change can only be achieved by guns or by money and since the only thing one has to say to the multitude is: *hand over your money*, one says it with posters in the streets or with soldiers in the houses. No need to assemble crowds for this purpose – better, in fact, to keep people as far apart as possible; this is the first maxim of modern politics.

Some languages that are musical, metrical, harmonious and that can be heard at a great distance favor liberty. Ours are made for the gossip of the boudoir. Our preachers gesticulate in the temples till they are in a sweat but no one hears a word they say. After shouting for an hour they are as good as dead with exhaustion. It was certainly not worth their while to take that much trouble.

In the market place of the cities of Antiquity it was easy enough to speak to the people; orators spoke for a day on end without having to drive themselves to exhaustion. Modern historians who try to put harangues in their books are treated as fools. Imagine a man trying to address, in French, the people of Paris on the place Vendôme. He may yell his head off without a single word reaching his audience. Herodotus would read his histories to the citizens of Greece assembled in open air and they would applaud him over and again. Nowadays, the academician who delivers a learned paper on a day of public gathering will hardly be heard at the far end of the room. If there are fewer hawkers at fairs in France than in Italy, it is not because the French are less gullible but only because they cannot make themselves heard. Mr. d'Alembert believes that a French recitative could be delivered in the Italian manner; the only way to do so would be to speak directly in the audience's ear, otherwise they would not hear a thing. I assert that any language unable to be understood by the assembly of the people is a language of slaves; it is impossible for those who speak such a language to remain free.

I will conclude these superficial observations which could however lead to more profound reflections by quoting the passage that suggested them in the first place:

*It would be matter for a fairly philosophical examination to observe in facts and to illustrate by examples how the character, the customs and the interests of a people influence the language it speaks.*³⁰

30. Remarques sur la grammaire générale et raisonnée by Mr. Duclos, p. 2.

Part III: Teaching

Introduction

Martin McQuillan

If the term 'the Yale School' continues to have currency it is less the result of a programme of published research by its members and more to do with the pedagogical programme established at Yale during de Man's time there. In this sense de Man operated on the sound academic principle of attempting to transform an institution by running that institution: he served as Chair of the French Department at Yale from 1974 to 1977 and as Chair of the Comparative Literature Department from 1978 to his death in 1983. The legacy of Paul de Man is closely tied to the training and subsequent academic diaspora of a generation of exceptional graduate students: from Gayatri Spivak and Sam Weber at Cornell to Barbara Johnson and Cathy Caruth at Yale. There are far too many to name, to do justice to their achievements and influence on their disciplines. It might be noted that the best of a generation sought out de Man and he and his colleagues enabled those students to flourish as scholars. De Man and his Yale colleagues also placed great emphasis on teaching undergraduate students, establishing a route through the Literature Major that provided a comprehensive training in rhetorical reading. The material included in Part III is intended to give a flavour of de Man's pedagogical practice, based on papers held in the UCI Critical Theory Archive. The 1967 **Field of Comparative Literature: Analysis of Needs**, written while de Man was at Cornell University, was a commission by the United States Department of Education. It provides an authoritative institutional voice rather than a critical or theoretical account of the discipline. The report on **The Comparative Literature Program at Rutgers University** is one of several such reviews de Man undertook for other institutions as part of his contribution to the developing field of Comparative Literature in the United States. Here, the fact that de Man was asked to conduct the peer review indicates the esteem in which the Yale programme was held and de Man's influence over the discipline during his time there. The **Reading List and Schedule for Comparative Literature 816a**, 'Hegel and English Romanticism', from academic year 1980–81 (a course taught with Geoffrey Hartman) and the reading assignment for **Comparative Literature 817a**:

Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Hegel, from academic year 1982–83, are samples of the sort of work de Man undertook with the graduate cohort at Yale. The **Curriculum for Lit Z proposal** is an internal document intended for discussion within the faculty teaching on the Yale Literature Major. The programme had been established in 1972 by Peter Brooks, Alvin Kernan and Michael Holquist as an undergraduate version of comparative literature at Yale. It originally had two core courses, for first-year students: 'Lit X', on narrative and structuralism, and 'Lit Y', a survey of twentieth-century literary theory. 'Lit Z' was proposed as a third core course, in rhetorical reading, to be co-taught by de Man and Hartman. Lit Z ran for the first time in spring 1977 (**Exercise II** of that year's course is reproduced here). The following year, after a general reclassification of courses, it was renamed Lit 130 and ran until its final cancellation in 1989. The course outlived de Man by six years, having provided a training ground in deconstructive reading for both Yale freshmen and the many graduate students who taught with de Man and maintained the course after his death. The text **Rhetorical Readings** (1980) describes a seminar that de Man taught in 1981 as part of a successful bid for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The seminar allowed graduate students and early-career scholars from across the United States to attend a programme of study determined by de Man and arranged according to his research interests. The **Director's Report on Rhetorical Reading**, written a year after the seminar concluded, provides de Man's reflections on the benefits and challenges of running such a national seminar at Yale. Part III concludes with a unique compilation of seminar notes (not held in the UCI archive) by Roger Blood, Cathy Caruth and Suzanne Roos, who took de Man's final seminar at Yale, **Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Hegel**. These notes should be read alongside the published essays that now make up the *Aesthetic Ideology* volume. They provide great insight into de Man's final unfinished project.

Field of Comparative Literature: Analysis of Needs (1967)

Note: The report follows the general outline proposed by the Department of Education with the addition of one section (Section C, entitled Special Programs). Numbered sections under the headings D and E correspond to the numbered subdivisions of sections C and D in the outline.

A. Definition and Areas of Priority

Comparative literature has been an established field of study in European and American universities since the end of the nineteenth century: American departments such as Harvard and Columbia trace back their origins to the 1890s. The main expansion, however, took place after the Second World War, prompted by a renewed concern for the international aspects of our culture. By 1952, nine major graduate departments, a professional journal, a yearbook etc. has been established. A second wave of development occurred around 1960, under the impetus of NDEA-financed graduate programs [i.e. under the 1958 National Defense Education Act]. Thirty-seven comparative literature programs and departments are listed in 1963 and the figure has probably doubled since then; at least two new journals have been launched and more than 100 PhDs could potentially be produced every year.

This quantitative growth has been accompanied, on the whole, by a parallel qualitative development. In terms of student quality, graduate programs in comparative literature generally compare favorably with the neighboring programs in modern or classical literatures; many graduates have gone on to successful careers in teaching and research, and several important publications have put American comparative literature studies definitely in the forefront of the international field.

Despite this development – and partly, no doubt, because of it – the field continues to be characterized by problems of self-definition, which have

always been part of its history. There is no agreement among its practitioners, here and abroad, about the exact function and limits of comparative literature; even the name of the discipline is under dispute. For some, it is simply an auxiliary branch of general literary history that describes the manner in which literature is transferred from country to country by means of intermediaries, translators, travelers, influences, and interpretive patterns. For others, it transcends these empirical limits and becomes a theoretical reflection on literature as such: hence the emphasis on the study of literary movement that occurs more or less simultaneously in various countries, on synchronic stylistic and thematic aspects of literary language, on literary criticism and literary theory, on methods of literary interpretation. But even in this wider area, there is no agreement as to what the boundary lines of the discipline should be: some would confine the area of investigation to Western literature as defined by its Judeo-Christian and Hellenic heritage; others would extend it to cover all literatures, including those of the Far East, as well as certain forms of oral literature and folklore.

The first conception of comparative literature is clearly defined as part of literary history, bordering at times on general cultural history. The second is much looser in its definition and can overlap with such varied disciplines as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology. In both forms, comparative literature is an important auxiliary to the history of ideas, with obvious relevance for international studies.

The variety resulting from these differences in the conception of the field has, on the whole, been a positive factor in its growth. The experimental and heuristic aspect of comparative literature has proven attractive to several outstanding students and has established it as an alternative or a corrective to the more rigid structure of the departments of modern and classical literatures. Comparative literature reflects the changes and innovations that occur in literary studies regardless of national boundaries and, in this capacity, it fulfills a liberalizing and enlightening function. But, especially with the present proliferation of programs, the looseness inherent in the nature of the field creates a rising danger that it might become almost chaotic in its all-inclusiveness. The remedy to this is not a more rigid delimitation of areas of priority in research or a greater uniformity of the general curriculum. This would rob the field of the flexibility and the individualism that have been its major assets. The problem instead is strictly one of standards. The relative freedom of the field becomes a real danger when standards are lowered, for then comparative literature degenerates easily into a short-cut to a superficial literary education that does away with the linguistic, stylistic, and historical rigor that prevails in other literary departments. Top priority in this field belongs therefore to the problem of standards. Rather than orienting students in larger numbers toward certain areas of concentration,

they should be taught to approach comparative problems with standards equivalent to those of specialists in the corresponding national literatures.

A special committee of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) has laid down clear guidelines that govern standards in the field. But these decisions can only be carried out by the practice of actual teachers of comparative literature in the various departments; the priority, therefore, falls on teacher training on the doctoral and postdoctoral level. Rather than for further departmental proliferation, there is a need for consolidation and for closer contact between the existing leading graduate programs.

B. Curriculum

The preceding considerations have made it clear that the field is oriented toward graduate studies on the PhD level. In most of the leading universities, comparative literature is primarily a graduate department without a corresponding undergraduate major. The possibility of establishing an undergraduate major is being periodically reviewed, often with a negative outcome. The staff of the comparative literature departments frequently make a contribution to undergraduate education by teaching in the general humanities programs; it is, in fact, an important function of the field to prepare teachers for this task. But this is a general service comparative literature performs for the college curriculum and not a departmental specialization.

Several successful undergraduate programs in comparative literature are nevertheless in existence. A small percentage of undergraduates with strong literary interests and with an unusually good preparation in foreign languages can benefit from such a major, provided, again, the proper linguistic and critical standards are maintained. Programs of this type, combining various literatures, or combining history and literature, are often administered by interdepartmental committees rather than by comparative literature departments. Whether they should or should not be brought under the heading of comparative literature depends entirely on local conditions.

Graduate studies in comparative literature require a strong undergraduate preparation in three or four languages, in at least two and preferably three national literatures, in a classical language, and in general humanities and history. This extensive preparation can generally be obtained in the existing undergraduate honor programs and does not necessarily require a special major. Especially in institutions where a graduate program in comparative literature is in operation and where some of the middle-level graduate courses are open to qualified juniors and seniors, the transition from undergraduate to graduate studies is easily made. Graduate schools in comparative

literature will just as readily admit an English, French or classics major who knows other languages, than a major of an undergraduate program in comparative literature, as distinct of the preparation for this training, is carried out almost entirely under the auspices of the graduate programs [*sic*].

Personnel in this field are almost exclusively oriented toward academic careers. As outlined under A, the need for special programs is primarily aimed at the creation of a nucleus of highly qualified teachers capable of setting and enforcing standards.

C. Special Programs

1. Graduate Programs Abroad

It is an inherent characteristic of this field that students need exposure to a wider range of methods and approaches than any graduate department can be expected to offer. This is often best accomplished by a stay abroad of at least two semesters. The purpose of this stay is no longer to improve the knowledge of a foreign language or to gain acquaintance with another culture; the level of specialization is much more advanced. The purpose is, rather, to engage the student in the critical comparison of approaches to the specific set of problems on which he has chosen to concentrate. There always comes a moment, in the course of a graduate student's career, when he can profit greatly by pursuing his investigations beyond the point to which his institution, outstanding as it may be, can take him. It is not primarily a matter of gaining access to certain sources of documentation; this kind of need, frequent enough on the level of the PhD, can be handled by individual scholarship assistance and requires no common initiatives or programs. Advanced graduate study abroad is most fruitful on a level somewhat prior to the actual writing of the dissertation, around the third year of graduate study, when the student already has a firm notion of his more narrow area of specialization.

Foreign contacts of this sort are especially needed at a period like the present one, when the methodology of literary studies is in a state of relative turmoil, when long-established norms are being questioned and new ideas, new combinations of fields are being steadily tested. This represents a challenge as well as a risk, for it may well happen that, in the legitimate desire for renewal, certain valid and established disciplines become neglected and have to be relearned elsewhere; the relationship between modern linguistics and classical philology is a case in point. Because of its international scope, it is natural that comparative literature programs will frequently have to look abroad to complete and diversify local instruction. The experience gained in

some of the experimental programs already in existence indicates that the practical problems involved in setting up graduate residence abroad are by no means difficult to solve.

2. Postdoctoral Programs and Centers

The increased development of postgraduate centers financed by various foundations could be highly beneficial to the sound growth of studies in comparative literature. As a highly specialized, interdepartmental and international field, comparative literature stands in need of postdoctoral resources; on the other hand, it is well qualified to play an important part in the existing centers. These centers often function as meeting places for American and foreign scholars and constitute a natural extension of the graduate programs abroad. They are precisely the places from which the nucleus of teachers committed to high standards can exercise their influence and help the existing departments to maintain or improve their level of instruction.

The proliferation of centers is bound to create some overlapping and waste, and some informal division of labor between them will certainly become necessary. In the case of comparative literature, it would be very desirable if two or three of these centers could become more explicitly identified with the field.

D. Organization and Facilities

1. The normal pattern, in the recent development of the field, has been to start out as an interdisciplinary program and then, when the program has established itself, to turn into a disciplinary department. A relatively strong departmental structure, with independent budget and at least one or two professorial appointments fully in the field (next to other appointments that can be interdepartmental), is needed to maintain the autonomous character of comparative literature and prevent it from becoming a mere adjunct of one of the national literature departments. Broader initiatives, such as a foreign graduate program or a postdoctoral center, are best handled by a small interdisciplinary group in close cooperation with the existing departments.

2. Library needs in this field are so considerable that it is a grievous mistake to start a comparative literature program in an institution that does not have strong library holdings in foreign language and literatures. The library problem by itself suffices to justify centralization of comparative studies in a limited number of universities with established facilities for graduate work. It is impossible, for instance, to start a successful program in

comparative literature in the absence of strong departments in classical and modern languages. The needs are of such magnitude that they can hardly be met by makeshift support or by local arrangements between universities.

3. The creation of graduate programs abroad requires informal arrangements with foreign institutions. Such arrangements are not confined, in this field, to the foreign departments of comparative literature; students often stand to gain more from seminars in a national literature than from comparative courses. Neither should the institutional arrangement tie down the student to one particular place or university; the needs of students in this field are so diversified that a wide range of possibilities should be made available.

What is very necessary, however, is guidance abroad by someone who has direct access, through personal contact, to the main seminars and professors of the foreign university. These institutions still can be bewildering, to the point of total uselessness to the American student, even at an advanced stage of his education, and he cannot begin to take full advantage of their resources unless inside information is available. With a properly introduced representative, however, it is relatively easy for qualified students to find admittance to the specialized, sometimes extracurricular courses and seminars that are often the most interesting places for advanced work. The best organization therefore is for the American department to have an informal arrangement with an institution abroad that the student can use as a base and where he can receive guidance. Such arrangements can be made reciprocal; exchanges of graduate students and of visiting faculty are some of the obvious possibilities. Some such programs have sprung up on an experimental basis and are functioning well. In his field, Europe remains the most important center for the majority of students, though more far-flung possibilities are certainly conceivable.

An obvious advantage is gained by combining some of the resources of the existing programs, especially in regard to housing, advising, etc. Comparative literature programs can easily be combined with similar programs in related fields of the social sciences. It is essential, however, that such arrangements retain a considerable measure of flexibility and should not interfere with the autonomy of the various departmental programs.

4. (a) NDEA Title IV and the existing foundations (Woodrow Wilson, Ford, Danforth, etc.) provide graduate support from which this field has benefited. Fellowship funds for the creation of new programs or for the extension of existing ones are needed but should be confined to institutions with adequate library facilities, a strong faculty in the national literatures and at least one faculty member of senior rank who is an established specialist in the field of comparative literature.

(b) Funding of special programs of the type described under C can occur in the form of student or postdoctoral fellowships, or of funds for general

operational expenses. Preference should go to programs that allow for some combined organization with other American institutions and that are in a position to offer some reciprocal services to foreign institutions.

5. The American Comparative Literature Association has set up a committee to deal with the problem of standards and should certainly be used for consultative purposes. The practical initiatives for special programs and for the enforcements of standards can only stem, however, from the various departments.

E. Manpower Considerations

1. The field is bound to remain limited in size, since it is necessarily restricted to students with exceptional preparation in languages and willing to embark on a program of intense literary specialization. Manpower needs, with very rare exceptions, are limited to the academic sector. Within the universities, however, the influence of comparatists is likely to be considerably larger than their relatively small number would lead one to suppose, mainly because of the international character of their interests.

2. Quantitatively, these needs are met by the graduate programs presently in existence, but qualitatively not enough competent specialists are available to staff even the top programs. It has been emphasized throughout this report that the need is therefore not for further proliferation but for the improvement of the established programs and departments.

The Comparative Literature Program at Rutgers University: A Report

Our report is based on extensive interviews with most of the faculty members involved in the Comparative Literature Program at Rutgers, as well as with numerous graduate and undergraduate students. We consulted the printed material put at our disposal and had conversations with several administrative officers of the University. We also spoke with Professor Guarino, Chairman of the Department of Literatures and Languages, and with Associate Provost Jean Parrish, who is herself closely associated with the program. We were able to get a good overview of the state of the discipline and we are satisfied that none of the strengths or weaknesses of the program remained hidden from us.

The document prepared by the internal faculty and entitled "A Report on the History and Activities of the New Brunswick Discipline" (no date) has proven to be very informative in the preparation of this report. It describes the history and the objectives of the department in clear and objective terms and tells how the faculty tried to meet the recommendations of the earlier Greene report (1975). We find ourselves in substantial agreement with most of the conclusions reached in section 4 (Resources and Needs of the Discipline) of this document. We have been primarily concerned with the implementation of the statement of intent formulated at that time and with evaluating the activities that have developed since it was submitted.

The report is divided into two main parts. The second part follows the outline provided in our instructions but, since this outline leaves some important aspects uncovered, we thought it useful to preface it by some considerations, both more general with regard to the field of comparative literature and more specific with regard to the particular situation at Rutgers.

A. General Considerations and Recommendations

The field of comparative literature has never been so rigorously defined as not to leave room for initiatives in the discussion of its objectives. In later years, this discussion has been further enriched by the development of methodological trends which open up new interdepartmental possibilities but also threaten to dilute the identity of comparative literature programs as a clearly circumscribed historical discipline. Departments have adjusted to these pressures with greater or lesser flexibility and have, in general, constituted their faculties in such a way as to respond to the needs for canonical historical coverage as well as for the representation of at least some of the more recent theoretical developments. At Rutgers, staffing is no longer a problem or an opportunity; since the department is 100% tenured, its main objective must be to make the best possible use of the varied talents and specializations it has succeeded in assembling. Our suggestions are all directed toward this practical goal, rather than toward a general philosophical discussion of the aims and methods of the field.

Comparative Literature at Rutgers has to cope with two difficulties with which the field is not usually burdened. The first is purely geographical and has to do with the recent transfer of the program from Livingston College to the New Brunswick Campus. On the whole, this relocation, after a period of adjustment, should benefit the program, since it puts it in close contact with the other literary fields. The second difficulty is harder to overcome: comparative literature is always unavoidably dependent on a close cooperation with other departments of literature, either with the various modern and classical languages or, perhaps more frequently, with the department of English. For reasons that are partly historical and partly institutional, such a cooperation is not sufficiently developed at Rutgers. The built-in competition for student numbers, which reaches down even to the teaching assignments of graduate students, is particularly pernicious; it prevents the comparative literature faculty from rendering services it is uniquely qualified to perform, and compels it to disperse its energies by setting up competitive rather than complementary or cooperative programs. The question obviously falls beyond the purview of our report, but any gesture in the direction of a closer association (such as joint appointments, courses taught in conjunction with other literary departments, cross listings, availability of teaching assistantships in English or modern language courses with student count credited to Comparative Literature) would be constructively helpful.

We are very positively impressed by the faculty and by the results they have achieved with both graduate and undergraduate students. All those faculty members we had a chance to consult – and we saw most of them – are actively engaged in publication and research, have expertise in a wide variety of

interesting fields and are enthusiastically involved in their teaching. Cooperation between the members of the group should be improved; the exclusion of fully tenured members from graduate school affiliation, for instance, is unusual and should certainly be avoided. The department is above average in terms of historical coverage, but other directions available to it (such as East–West literary relations or the structural study of literary forms in a linguistic or anthropological context) have not been so well developed.

The Rutgers program has the potential to establish itself as a strong autonomous unit and to render considerable service to the community of literary studies on the New Brunswick campus. In order to achieve this it will have to harmonize and consolidate its own internal organization. It will also need the continued support of the administration and, if possible, the cooperative support of the departments of English and modern languages.

B.

I. Undergraduate Program

The undergraduate program is the weakest part of the discipline. It does not yet draw a sufficient amount of majors or participating students. However, we found the students we interviewed, including a recent graduated major, to be quite enthusiastic and satisfied with the advising and supervision that were made available to them. The organization rather than the quality of the courses seems to be the problem.

The list of topics is lengthy but almost bewildering in its proliferation. It is therefore not entirely surprising that registration is poor and that so few of the announced courses can actually be given. There is little or no sequential organization, no core courses, no courses offered in the familiar segments of periods of Western literary history. One passes from very broadly defined introductory courses (such as Introduction to World Literature or The European Literary Imagination) to specialized topics, with very little in between. If the introductory courses are actually in competition with similar courses offered by the English department, then there is little need for two of them. The department should consider planning a more cohesively structured curriculum consisting, for example, of one collectively taught full-year introductory course, two one-semester core courses, possibly team taught and reflecting the particular interests of the department, and two or three more specialized courses that build sequentially on the topics of the core courses. The introductory and intermediate courses should be open to all students, with readings available in translation, but with the provision made for reading in the original languages as well. The expectation is to make

introductory and intermediate courses attractive and stimulating enough to attract a larger number of majors to comparative studies; they should therefore make room for problems and controversies as well as historical coverage.

II. Graduate Program

The graduate program is the most successful part of the operation. The impression conveyed by the students, whom we saw at length, is entirely positive. Their morale is high, higher indeed than at many other institutions. The students are fully aware of their uncertain professional prospects, but they find the program intellectually stimulating enough to be self-rewarding and, unlike many of our own students, spend more time learning in the present than worrying about the future. Several are semi-professional people, who already hold part-time jobs in the vicinity and who have a pleasantly mature approach to the enterprise of graduate study. The program provides them with satisfactory intellectual nourishment and with proper advising. The dissertation topics are remarkably varied and interesting, the thesis direction competent and attentive, and the placement record, under present circumstances, is above average.

This does not mean that there are no problems. Financial support is woefully inadequate and there is a lack of teaching assistantships. It is imperative to protect the two T.A.'s [teaching assistants] presently available in English and, if possible, to obtain more.

In contrast to the undergraduate offerings, the program is perhaps somewhat excessively oriented toward general topics and toward coverage, rather than keyed (as is desirable on the graduate level) to the special interests of the faculty. It seems at times as if some of the graduate courses offered would fit better in the undergraduate program and vice versa. This may well be due to the considerable importance given to the reading lists included in the syllabus. The syllabus is an excellent work of literary scholarship in its own right and it is appreciated by students as useful bibliographical guidance in the reading of primary texts. If it is used, however, to determine the subject matter of courses and to exclude different approaches or texts, it could have a negative effect. No such document is in use, to the best of our knowledge, in the leading national departments, except in a remedial, rather than a normative, capacity. It also seems to us that the contents of the syllabus do not correspond to the interests and the competence of the faculty as it is presently constituted; entries under secondary literature are out of date and literary theory is underrepresented. The way to remedy this is not by expanding the existing syllabus but by redefining the use made of it in the graduate program.

Language requirements and the organization of the MA are in line with the best standards of the profession and the administrative organization of the program is entirely adequate.

III. Faculty

As already stated, we are favorably impressed with the scholarly achievements, the professional activities, and the scope of the faculty. The distribution of language competence (which includes Chinese and Japanese next to all the main European and classical languages) is excellent, as is, generally speaking, the distribution of historical specializations. The older periods are represented (which is no longer a matter of course in several of the existing departments), with more strength in the Middle Ages than in the Renaissance. Critical Theory, which has been one of the main thrusts of comparative studies in the USA, is underrepresented, all the more so since the field has been so active over the last ten or fifteen years. A body of literary theory is now available, technical rather than ideological in nature, that can and should be made available to students. This may involve a broadening of the field to include contacts with linguistics, anthropology, history, philosophy, and psychology, but this methodological expansion is precisely the function which comparative literature is best prepared to fulfill. Practically all of the Rutgers faculty members have something to contribute in this area and this competence should be reflected in the graduate curriculum, not necessarily only in the form of a general course in the history of criticism but [also in] the formulation of imaginative and challenging seminar topics.

With faculty completely tenured, no new tenured appointments are to be contemplated in the near future. The presence of one or two new assistant professors would add a great deal to the program and would have a salutary effect on faculty morale. Such appointment should be joint with other departments, for example with French and English.

Transformations of present appointments into joint appointments with English or other departments are, in principle, to be encouraged, since they extend the interdepartmental basis that is now lacking in the program at Rutgers. Such arrangements are at their most effective when the person also has an administrative function, as chairman or director of graduate studies, in the comparative literature program. Conversely, several of the faculty members in other literary departments at Rutgers would have a great deal to contribute to the comparative literature program and could well be affiliated with it, as adjunct members or as joint appointments. Such crossings of the existing departmental boundaries would be of benefit to all concerned.

IV. Comprehensive

At present, the Rutgers Comparative Literature Program rates among the twenty best departments in the country, but not quite among the top ten. It rates among the top ten state university departments but not quite among the top five. If relations with other literary departments could be strengthened, the potential exists to improve these ratings over the next five years. Faculty salaries, leave policies, library facilities (with the assistance of neighboring libraries) and office space are all satisfactory; the only legitimate complaint we heard is that no office space whatever is available for teaching assistants to meet their students. The main impediment to the success of the program have been the competitiveness of its relationship with numerically stronger departments of literature and some lack of internal cohesion in the planning of courses and the renewal of methodologies. Yet, the optimism that is expressed in the earlier internal report is justified. The relocation on the Rutgers College campus puts the program in its right environment and the talents of its faculty, if properly combined, can meet the challenges the field has to confront everywhere. Strong departments or programs in comparative literature actually have brighter prospects for the future than most departments of modern languages. The Rutgers program is well under way to achieve such strengths.

Comparative Literature 816a: Hegel and English Romanticism

De Man/Hartman

Readings

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| M. H. Abrams | “The Correspondent Breeze,” in <i>Natural Supernaturalism</i> |
| H. Bloom | “Internationalization of Quest Romance,” in <i>Romanticism and Consciousness</i> , Harold Bloom, ed. |
| Jacques Lacan, trans. A. Bass | Ecrits, “The Mirror Stage,” and pp. 77–87, 104–7 |
| P. de Man | “Intentional Structure,” in <i>Romanticism and Consciousness</i>
“Autobiograph as Defacement,” in <i>MLN</i> 94, pp. 919–30 |
| J. Derrida | <i>Positions</i> , pp. 53–65
<i>De la grammatologie</i> , ch. 1 |
| Theodor Reik | “Le Puits et la pyramide,” in <i>Marges</i>
“Der Schreckenn,” in volume of that title (1929) |
| G. Hartman | <i>Wordsworth’s Poetry</i>
“Inscription,” etc., in <i>Beyond Formalism</i>
“A touching Compulsion,” in <i>Georgia Review</i> , 1977 |
| Lionel Trilling | “Essay on the Immortality Ode,” in <i>The Liberal Imagination</i> |
| Helen Vendeler | “On Trilling and the Immortality Ode,” in <i>Salmagundi</i> , spring 1978 |

Comparative Literature 816a: Hegel and English Romanticism

De Man/Hartman

Sessions 1 and 2:

1. (9/17) Internationalization, Memory, Negativity
Wordsworth, "There was a Boy," *Prelude* 5; originally *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)
Drowned Man episode, *Prelude* 5
Tintern Abbey

Additional Readings: Essays on Epitaphs

- Hegel: *Phenomenology*, paras 11–21, 31–3 (Preface)
748–53 (Revealed Religion)
803–8 (Absolute knowing)
Philosophy of History, "Classification of Historic Data"
(see Xerox)
Hölderlin: *Der gefesselte Strom*

2. (9/24) Time, Nature, Immediacy
Wordsworth, *Prelude* XII, the "Spots of Time," esp. Death of Father
Prelude XIV, Ascent of Snowden

Additional Readings: Continue in Hegel, to complete excerpted sections.

- Add: "Sense Certainty" and "Perception" in *Phenomenology*, paras 90–131

Note: For the sake of convenience, paragraph number indications are to A. V. Miller's translation of the *Phenomenology*, available on course shelf in Coop.

Readings in modern criticism should wait till after first session. Suggestions will be made on 9/17 or later.

Comparative Literature 817a: Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Hegel

*Mr de Man. Wednesdays, 3:30–5:20 p.m.
Comparative Literature Library.*

Reading Assignment for the Term

Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1970), vol. X

Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764),
vol. II

Schiller, Über Anmut und Würde

Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung

(Briefe) über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen

Vom Erhabenen

Über das Pathetische

Über das Erhabene

Über Matthissons Gedichte

Preferred (but not compulsory) edition

for Kant: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Werkausgabe

(complete works in 12 vols)

Vols II and X

For Schiller: *Sämtliche Werke* (München: Winkler-Verlag),

Vol. V (Philosophische Schriften)

The titles of editions in English will be made available later.

Assignment for the first three weeks:

- Hegel, *Aesthetik* (Suhrkamp Werkausgabe, in 20 volumes, vol. 13; vol. 1
Of the *Aesthetik*)
“Die Symbolik der Erhabenheit,” pp. 466 ff.
Especially “Die Kunst der Erhabenheit,” pp. 478 ff.

(cont’d)

NEXT SESSION: Wednesday, October 6, at 3:30 p.m.

Assignment for the first three weeks (cont’d)

- Also “Die bewusste Symbolik der vergleichenden Kunstform,”
pp. 486–546
- Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*
“Analytik des Erhabenen, pp. 23–9
“Betrachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen”
- Schiller, Vom Erhabenen
Über das Pathetische
Über das Erhabene
Über Matthissons Gedichte

Schiller

- Hki *Works* (New York, 188?)
160 Vol. IV poems and essays
- Hki *Works*, trans. Hempel (1861)
016 Vol. 2 essays
- WC *Works* (London, 1901)
3143 Vol. 8 essays and letters
- Hki *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry/On the Sublime*
717 Trans. Elias (New York: Ungar, 1966)
(Available in paperback)

246 Teaching

Hki *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical* (London, 1916)
170/6

K8.Sch3 *Aesthetic Letters, Essays and Philosophical Letters*
Bg845 Trans. Weiss (Boston, 1845)

PT2473 *Friedrich Schiller: An Anthology for our Time*
A13 v53 Trans. Greene, et al. (New York, 1959)
(Cross Campus)

Palmer *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, trans. Wilkinson and Willoughby
Schreiber (New York: Oxford, 1967)
(English and German facing)

Kant

B2783 Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J.H. Bernard
E5 B57 (New York: Hafner, 1964)
(Phil. (Available in paperback)
library)

K8.K13 Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, trans. Meredith
J9 911 (New York: Oxford, 1978)
(Available in paperback)

QJ68 *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime*
B45E trans. Goldwaith (Berkeley, 1960)
(Divinity
School)

Curriculum for Lit Z Proposal (1975)

This document is for internal use only. It is not written for presentation to a foundation but as a preliminary position paper for discussion toward such a presentation.

I

The curriculum for the teaching of literature, at Yale and elsewhere, has undergone very little change over the last two or three decades. The main organization of the program remains the same: a sharp distinction, without overlap, into national literatures and, within each national literature, a tripartite division into (1) introductory survey courses (English 25 and 29, French 41, Literature I, etc.), (2) a sequence of period courses diachronically ordered, and (3) more advanced courses reflecting the particular interests of available instructors. The underlying conception is genetic, seeing literature as a succession of periods and movements that can be articulated as an historical narrative. With regard to individual works, the conception is essentially paraphrastic and thematic, the assumption being that literature can be reduced to a set of statements which, taken together, lead to a better understanding of human existence. Literary studies then become, on the one hand, a branch of the history of culture and, on the other hand, a branch of existential and anthropological philosophy in its individual as well as its more collective aspects.

While remaining highly useful and entirely legitimate, this program does not sufficiently reflect the concerns of literary studies as they have developed, here and abroad, over the last fifty years. The emphasis has increasingly moved toward literature as a language about language, or a metalinguistic discipline best understood as a response to the specific complexities and resources of language. From this perspective, the anthropological function of literature

cannot be examined with any rigor before its epistemological and verbal status has been understood. This emphasis on the metalinguistic aspects of literature is a characteristic of all the major theoretical trends in literary studies of the twentieth century, regardless of whether they are historical (as in Curtius, Auerbach or Gadamer, for example) or synchronic (as in Russian formalism, American New Criticism, structuralism or semiology).¹ This fact is widely acknowledged, but it has had little effect on the actual teaching curriculum, despite its considerable impact on the research of teachers themselves, as well as on an expanding canon of literary texts.

The result is a widening gap between the literary instructions and literary research, detrimental to the professional training of the prospective student of literature as well as to the formative influence that the study of literature can have on students whose main interests are elsewhere. The growing discontinuity between undergraduate and graduate curricula in literature is also symptomatic of this evolution, as is the decline of foreign language study in that the cultural knowledge of *national* literatures is no longer a sufficient incentive for the demanding task of learning a foreign tongue: as long as a truly literary and intellectual motivation is missing, the important link with other nations and mentalities which foreign study helps to promote will continue to atrophy.

At Yale, the relative one-sidedness of the present literary curriculum has been acknowledged and it has been corrected by the proliferation of alternative programs (HAL, Directed Studies, the Combined Major and, most recently, the Literature Major). It has also led to methodological tensions within new introductory courses and occasionally to a wasteful redundancy of courses. The present proposal attempts to give a firmer direction to these corrective efforts by bringing them closely in touch with recent critical and methodological trends and, correctively, by stressing the increased importance for literary education of such auxiliary fields as linguistics, psychology, philosophy of language, and others.

Next to the existing track, as exemplified in the course program of the major departments, the option of a consistently organized second track should be made available to students. And the obvious place for the organization of such a course sequence is the literature major, which has already come into being as a result of very similar considerations.

1. This orientation of literary studies toward language, far from being something new-fangled, represents in fact a return to an age-long tradition which rooted the study of literature in philology, poetics, rhetoric, and grammar.

II

We propose the creation of one new introductory course in Literature (Literature Z) and of a series of follow-up courses, to be integrated, if possible, within the Literature Major. All these courses, however, should be available to students of any major, in the Humanities or the Sciences.

1. Literature Z

Literature Z is an introductory course in the reading and the interpretation of primary and secondary texts. It is quite different from Literature X, which deals with the relationship between literary fictions and society, and from Literature Y, which deals with the history of contemporary critical theory rather than with exegesis, or the practical application of critical theories. In Literature Z, students will read a series of increasingly difficult texts (poetic, narrative, dramatic, as well as historical, philosophical, and critical) and are initiated at the same time into the bewildering variety of ways in which such texts can be read. Through this emphasis on exegesis and interpretation they are also introduced to the linguistic and rhetorical models that may explain this semantic complexity. The purpose of the course is practical: it sets out to refine the process of reading and writing by drawing attention to some of its intrinsic complications. It can also help students to decide how gifted they in fact are for literary study. It should therefore be taken early in the student's career, preferably in the sophomore or junior year. Though the course has no language requirement, it makes use of some foreign language material, and one of its functions is to demonstrate the necessity of the knowledge of a second language for competent literary interpretation.

The course should be taught to a group of approximately sixty students, divided in sections of about twelve each. One weekly lecture for the entire group is envisaged, given by the directors and some of the staff members, and one two-hour section meeting per week. Directed written exercises are frequently assigned (at least one every two weeks) and one of the main functions of the staff is the elaboration and correction of these exercises; the sections, also, deal at least half of the time with the critical discussion of the written work. The course should start out as a one-semester course. Its relationship to such courses as English 15, Literature X, Literature I and possible others is a subject for later discussions.

The course would be started under the joint direction of Professors Hartman and de Man for the fall of 1976 or latest the spring of 1977. It would be staffed by three Teaching Fellows or Assistant Professors (for an enrolment of sixty students) with each of the Directors taking on a section.

It is assumed that, after a period of two or three years, other directors will become available.

2. Follow-Up Courses or Seminars

We suggest the creation of a series of courses in which the various problems of interpretation empirically revealed in Literature X and theoretically surveyed in Literature Y would be taken systematically. These courses should be open to juniors and seniors as well as to graduate students. The listing of some tentative topics makes clear the function and the orientation of these courses:

- (a) History and Taxonomy of Rhetoric
- (b) Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism
- (c) Theories of Grammar and their Application to Literary Studies
- (d) Introduction to Literary Semiology
- (e) Prosody and Narratology
- (f) Problems of Literary Historiography; History and Literature
- (g) History of the Study of Literature
- (h) Sociology of Literary Scholarship

III

The cost of such an extension and reinforcement of Literary Study at Yale consists primarily of instructional time to be purchased from the various departments. These could – and perhaps should – include History, Philosophy, and Linguistics, as well as English, Classics, and the Foreign Languages. A nucleus of people competent to teach the courses proposed here exists at Yale, but this nucleus would have to be expanded over the two or so years following on the inception of the program. It would be best, therefore, to plan now for two incremental appointments: one at the level, perhaps, of a Humanities Divisional Professorship (to help or replace the Directors once the program has been launched), the other at the level of an Associate Professorship. On the junior level, there is no need to foresee appointments specifically within the Literature Major, although joint appointments between it and another department should not be ruled out. The main concern should be, however, that staff members qualified to teach courses of this kind are given significant consideration for their work in this enterprise in the appointment policy of the cooperating department.

Literature Z: Exercise II

“Science” and “Art” in Nietzsche’s *Truth and Falsity* in an Ultramoral Sense

In the second part of the essay *Truth and Falsity* (pp. 512–15), Nietzsche sets up what appears to be a contrast, a polarity, between the man of “science” and the man of “art.” By a close reading of this section, you are invited (1) to discuss the structure of this opposition and (2) to examine its implications with regard to the relative value of both activities, in themselves as well as with regard to history.

Preparation

The following guidelines are given as suggestions to assist you in organizing your thoughts. If you find them cumbersome or obscure feel entirely free to ignore them and to follow your own inclinations.

(1) How does the opposition between “science” and “art” relate to the theory of language as figuration developed in part I of the essay in answer to such questions as “What is a word?” (p. 506) or “What is therefore truth?” (p. 508).

(2) In section II, Nietzsche seems to be using a *valorized* language, as if he were advocating a preference for certain mental activities over others. Note also that many of the metaphors and polarities used in section I recur in section II (consider, for instance, such figures as wake/sleep [dream]; master/slave; falling/rising; building/destroying; play/seriousness; truth/delusion, etc.). How are the value judgments that appear in section II influenced by the use of these figures? Is the influence of the figures on the value statements consistent with the theory of figuration that is propounded in the essay?

(3) Section II also contains sequential and explicitly *historical* language (such as, for example, the reference to Greece on p. 515). How does this historical language in part II relate to the theory of figuration in part I?

(4) Does Nietzsche's own writing, in this essay, classify his text under "art" or under "science"? Does this have consequences for Nietzsche's own historical situation?

Writing

Write a five-page essay on "Science" and "Art" in Nietzsche's *Truth and Falsity*, incorporating answers to some of the questions suggested above, or similar ones that may occur to you.

Due in section on Thursday, February 24th.

Rhetorical Readings

Director: Paul de Man, Yale University

The Seminar deals with a central problem in contemporary literary theory from a pedagogical, rather than from a purely theoretical perspective. It investigates how an awareness of the rhetorical properties of language influences the modalities and expectations of our reading and, consequently, of the way in which the reading of literary works is taught to undergraduates. This pragmatic approach is based on the experience of an experimental course for Yale undergraduates taught for the last four years. The assigned readings consist, for the most part, of literary and philosophical primary texts rather than of contemporary works of literary theory. The tentative list includes (in the order of their appearance) texts by Keats, Baudelaire, Yeats, Pascal, Kleist, Henry James, Hegel, possibly Melville or Goethe or Proust, Derrida, and Ricoeur. Except for one larger novel, none of the assigned texts is more than twenty-five pages long and, in several cases, they consist of only one short poem or available in photocopies. No specialized knowledge of philosophy or of any of the authors selected for discussion is assumed. All foreign texts are made available in English translation and although constant reference will be made to the originals, no knowledge of French and German is required to take part in the seminar; on the other hand, it is of course expected that some of the participants will know French, or German, or both.

The Seminar is structured as a sequence of directed readings and discussions. It meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 to approximately 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. After the first two or three weeks, reports by participants will in principle be scheduled for a third weekly session on Wednesday afternoon. The director will be available for individual conferences one afternoon each week and by appointment.

The Seminar offers a broad framework within which a variety of interests, disagreements, and alternative procedures can be accommodated. It provides ample opportunity for general discussion and for the comparison of diverse pedagogical experiences.

The Seminar will begin on Tuesday, June 16, and continue for eight weeks until August 7.

On-campus housing and meal contracts will be available for participants coming without families (and pets). Those coming with families should look for off-campus housing, as the Yale dormitories are not adequate for family living. Those living off-campus may still take out a meal contract. The on-campus rooms are furnished with basics only – a bed with mattress, a desk, a chair, and a bureau for each resident. It is strictly dormitory living. This office will provide what assistance it can in locating off-campus housing for those who are interested. The cost of an on-campus room is \$44.00 a week for one person. Various meal contracts are available.

Director's Report on Rhetorical Reading (1982)

*Director: Paul de Man*¹

On the NEH Summer Seminar Rhetorical Reading. Taught at Yale in the Summer of 1981

The theoretical and somewhat controversial topic of the seminar, which deliberately mixes literary, critical, and philosophical materials, does not seem to have deterred applicants. More than sixty applications were received. The twelve applicants who were admitted were selected by a board consisting of Assistant Professors Marshall, Warminski, and myself. Criteria for admission were primarily based on (1) declared interest in literary theory, backed up by some publication, also and especially when the applicant's approach did *not* coincide with that of the seminar director and allowed for discussion and controversy; (2) some familiarity with the assigned reading material or with material of a comparable nature, especially where foreign languages are involved; (3) quality of independent project submitted by the applicant, as well as general strength of his dossier (authority of letters of recommendation, especially when they contain more than perfunctory praise, etc.). Criterion (2) proved to be an effective screening device for applicants who had little or no knowledge of foreign languages; in a seminar announced as Comparative Literature, some such knowledge seemed to be a more than legitimate requirement, especially since several of the assigned texts (Baudelaire, Hegel, Goethe, etc.), though they could be read in English, require familiarity with French or German.

This principle of screening did not satisfy some of the applicants who were turned down for lack of linguistic skills. I received some very angry letters, especially from former acquaintances, who could not understand why they had not been admitted. I did my best to explain our reasons by letter and

1. I apologize for the late submission of this report, due to illness during the course of 1982.

hope (but doubt) that I succeeded. The final selection (all those selected accepted) turned out to be excellent. The group had a very wide range. Some participants were very familiar with my work (more so, I suspect, than I am myself) and most articulate about expressing their disagreements. Others came to the seminar for very different reasons, often having to do with fields quite remote from my own (medieval studies, Italian Renaissance), but this diversity turned out to be always stimulating and never an obstacle.

We met regularly twice a week for sessions that often stretched to three or four hours and scheduled several extra sessions for visitors: Professors Harold Bloom, Fredric Jameson, and Barbara Johnson from Yale, Moshe Ron from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and some other passers-by on the Yale Campus. After the first three weeks, the participants scheduled extra sessions, during which they delivered papers, on their own work or on some of the material of the seminar; morale was very high throughout and we could have kept on going for several more weeks. I found the experience thoroughly rewarding and quite exhausting.

I have since received several papers, some of them in course of publication, and have kept in touch with most of the participants; three were up for tenure and I was glad to be able to write informed supporting letters that may have helped. In all cases, I read large selections from their past writings, including dissertations, and tried to help as well as I could in the delicate task of turning these still somewhat pedagogical exercises into publishable manuscripts or papers. All in all, I think the seminar was successful, primarily because of the dynamism and the enthusiasm of the participants. The fact that four of them turned up this summer at Evanston, where I was teaching at the School of Criticism and Theory, seems a good sign. Each of them, in her or his own way, made essential contributions. The interaction between them was not without problems, since the variety of interests, of opinions and of convictions was extreme, but they learned a great deal from each other and never let their disagreements disrupt the decorum of the proceedings or the openness of the debates. Genuine and shared interest in the subject matter always prevailed and kept the discussion from going astray. Socially, the seminar broke up into sub-groups, but whatever resentments there might have been were absorbed in the sustained seriousness of our shared discourse.

The most difficult problem of integration was experienced by the three women, who, at times, seemed to feel estranged, never from the intellectual content of the seminar (all three were highly competent), but from the very visible professional ambition displayed by several of the men. Theoretical questions involving female/male tensions necessarily arose in the course of the seminar and this remains the most delicate terrain of encounter, too delicate in fact to be openly expressed. The fact that women were a clear minority (three out of twelve) may have added to the problem. Nevertheless,

I think that, precisely from this point of view, the theoretical aspects of the seminar were useful; at the beginning, the undertone of opposition or controversy was primarily political, but, as the summer progressed, a shift to wider human problems became manifest.

During 1977–78, I conducted a full-year seminar at Yale under the auspices of the NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities]. I found the summer seminar to be more successful in most respects. The participants were better qualified as well as professionally more successful, even when teaching at very modest institutions. Whatever legitimate resentment there may be on their behalf with regard to the comforts and facilities of an institution like Yale were cancelled out by their truly impressive desire to make the most of the opportunity, to catch up on bibliographical material and to exchange ideas with others. In all cases, I was also most positively impressed with the very high quality of their continuing research, always on a level that is entirely comparable with that of Yale graduates at a comparable point in their careers.

The dominant and very specific problem, for most or all of these teachers, still has to do with the use to make of their PhD dissertations. Several of the participants had written their PhD thesis not more than five years ago. They often had spent years and considerable labors to produce substantial manuscripts but, even in good graduate programs (and the same is true at Harvard and Yale), they received very little critical feedback. After that, they went to teach in a place that is often quite isolated and where their main teaching assignment consists of composition courses that bear no relationship to the specialized work of their doctoral years. They often have literally no one with whom to discuss their interests. For teachers in that situation (and this was the case for at least half in the group), it was a real godsend to get their dissertation read over again and to be able to discuss what to do with it: extract some articles, try to rewrite toward publication or, decide once and for all that they should no longer bother with it and move on to other things. This kind of advising is among the most useful services directors can provide.

The practical logistics of the seminar raised no problems. The existence of a central office in the Yale Summer School to handle questions of housing, classroom assignments, mail, schedules, etc. was a great relief for participants and directors alike. The small but lively Yale Summer School provided activities that helped to alleviate the comparative tedium of New Haven in the summer. I heard some complaints about dormitory living accommodations, but this seemed to remain within tolerable bounds. Participants had no difficulty obtaining books from the various libraries and fully took advantage of the opportunity. A tension I strongly felt during the year-long seminar between NEH participants and regular Yale graduate students (who had their own claims on the director's time) was lacking during the summer.

Their experience can hardly be called a “Yale” experience (whatever that is), since Yale in the summer lacks identity and few faculty members are on campus. But, for all practical purposes, the Yale facilities appeared entirely suitable for the NEH summer seminar (despite the lack of air-conditioned classrooms). If the participants felt different, I’m sure they made a point to let you [the NEH committee] know; from my somewhat sheltered perspective, things seemed to be fine.

In conclusion of these haphazard observations, I would like to repeat my sincere conviction that these seminars are beginning to have a positive and far-reaching effect, not only on individual teachers, but on the often isolated and library-poor institutions in which they teach. From their contacts with colleagues and seminar directors, the participants return to their institutions and, at least in some cases, can exercise some influence on curricula, methodology, and recruitment policies.

One possible advantage of the difficult employment situation in the humanities has often been mentioned: the hope that high-quality graduates from leading universities, by having to take on employment in out-of-the-way places of more modest means, would improve the general level of American higher education and reduce the inequalities among institutions. This has not always come about, partly because some of the smaller schools have at times been timid or defensive in their hiring policies. But I know for a fact that there also have been several success stories, sometimes at very unexpected places. And I also know that this beneficial effect often has been due to the impact of the NEH summer seminars. Added to the considerable benefits these seminars have brought to individuals, this far-reaching effect on higher education more than warrants the efforts invested in this enlightened and democratic program.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul de Man
Sterling Professor of the Humanities
Yale University

Seminar on “Aesthetic Theory from Kant to Hegel”. Yale University, Fall Semester, 1982

Compiled from the lecture notes of Roger Blood, Cathy Caruth, and Suzanne Roos¹

September 8

This course is part of a cycle on aesthetic theory around Hegel. Precursor courses include: “Hegel’s Aesthetics” and “Hegel and English Romanticism.”

We’re concerned with the aesthetic as a philosophical category – a category in the Aristotelian sense. As a category, it is not something that one can be for or against; it is not open to valorization.

And, with the relationship of the category of the aesthetic to questions of epistemology in the existing general philosophical tradition.

And, to the elements of critical philosophy, which involves a testing of a variety of categories against an epistemological truth and falsehood.

Critical philosophy here is thus the testing of the categories in terms of questions of epistemology.

Historically, critical thought opposes the empirical – or more specifically, ideological thought – as, for instance, that of Condillac. There’s an historical opposition of critical philosopher to ideologue. The term “ideology” was already in use in the eighteenth century.

As Foucault sets it up, critical philosophy overtakes the ideologues of the Enlightenment. This is not necessarily correct.

What we have here is an explicit philosophical theme: the relation of the category of the aesthetic to epistemology. The implicit question is the relation of the category of the aesthetic to the theory of language.

“Language” here means consideration of sign, symbol, trope, rhetoric, grammar, etc.

1. *Editor’s note:* This is a partial reconstruction by Roger Blood from his own original notes and those of Cathy Caruth and Suzanne Roos. They are part of a wider archival project to assemble the American seminar of Paul de Man, which will be presented in a future volume in this series.

Therefore, the relation of the category of the aesthetic to the theory of language is implicit but *ungedacht*: the place of the theory of language is unarticulated – it's inscribed in other concerns.

Our object, then, will be a critique of the *Kritik* in terms of linguistic categories. Our interest will be in how Kant uses grammar and trope and see (because I'm giving the course) if there's a tension between the explicit formulation and the usage of tropes, or a tension between the explicit theses and the implicit assumptions about language.

Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* are a summa of the period.

(I know Dutch, which makes for interesting confusions, usually improvements.)

Kant is an indispensable precursor to Hegel: he establishes the problem of the aesthetic as an epistemological problem.

As for Schiller, the passage between Kant and Schiller is paradigmatic for the whole question: a philosophical text is read by someone with a literary sensibility – a non-philosopher.

This leads to an aestheticization: a setting up of the aesthetic as a value instead of as a critical category, and of a positing of authority in this value.

The aesthetic becomes normative and leads to ethical, political, and pedagogical imperatives. (We are all now Schillerized – no one is Kantian anymore.)

There's a fundamental misreading of Kant which has to be found in Schiller, and this needs to be analyzed. My intention is not to use Schiller as some kind of fall-guy – there is not a text written today which is not Schillerized. So, the question is, what happened when Schiller read Kant? Schiller will be the predominate theoretician for both Hölderlin and Hegel. Schlegel would be a counter to Schiller.

There's a parallel development going on in England. Romanticism could be read as a critical reading of Locke and the tradition of empiricism, but the problem is less well articulated than it is in Germany.

It is also present in France, but the question is more difficult to localize. We could look at French Pre-Romanticism and Rousseau, and the relation of Rousseau to Kant: the misreadings of Rousseau go back to Schiller and other Germans.

Rousseau and Diderot are both relevant here. The Rousseau reception is strongly influenced by Neo-Kantians, such as Cassirer.

There will be a continuation of the problematic in the future in the readers of Hegel, for whom the category of the aesthetic will be very important: Kierkegaard and Marx, and on to Nietzsche. (These will be for future courses.)

(History is a pedagogical device; if I say there's an historical line from Hegel

to Nietzsche, don't ask me to show you that line – it's only for teaching. *That's my line.*)

The Kantian canon is divided into two parts: the *Vorkritische* and the *Kritische*.

(assignment:) *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, especially the first part;

Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen (1764), for the problem of *Kopfweh*.

The Third *Kritik* doesn't control itself as a text; it is speculative and tentative. It is not a systematic text, in control of a system, unlike Hegel's systematic *Ästhetik*.

Schelling refers to Kant's fundamental naïveté. Kant knows everything and understands nothing. He didn't have to understand anything – he knew everything. Kant understands nothing of what he is saying: it was like music to Bach, it just came to him.

The result of this is that the reception of the text is very confused; there's no consensus on what Kant was saying. (Kant didn't know either.)

The most familiar form of the reception is that of the American literary scholars Abrams (*The Mirror and the Lamp*) and Wellek (*Immanuel Kant in England*). The prevailing, and wrong, image of Kant can be found in chapter 3 of *The Mirror and the Lamp*: the Third *Kritik*, he says, tries to separate qualities of willing, feeling, and knowing, and that Kant sets up an isolation of epistemology from morality and aesthetic judgment, that Kant claims a disinterest, and a non-representation of utility for the aesthetic, and that Kant denied teleology to the artist.

These are all received ideas in literary circles. See, for instance, Lentricchia on aestheticism. Kant is seen as the initiator of art for art's sake – and hence of Flaubert, etc. Kant comes together with Oscar Wilde, and that's absurd. All art, it is said, aspires to the condition of music.

Schiller tries to take you to your own experience, instead of presenting an argument. So the problem is to stay awake.

Schiller's work divides into pre-Kant and post-Kant periods.

(assignment:) "Über Anmut und Würde" – which echoes Kant's distinction between the Sublime and the Beautiful

"Vom Erhabenen"

"Über das Pathetische"

"Über das Erhabene" (most of Schiller's texts are *über*)

"Über Matthissons Gedichte" (on a late Enlightenment descriptive nature poet)

"Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung"

"Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen"

Don't pity Schiller – Schiller was a happy man. But so was Kant, though no one knows why.

For secondary works on Kant's aesthetics, see Ted Cohen, ed., *Essays on Kant's Aesthetics*. This is the standard line – it's not so literary. This is what philosophers do with him. It has a good critical bibliography.

Also: Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture*. (Derrida is vastly overrated in terms of his difficulty. He's actually rather paraphrastic when commenting on a philosophical text.)

And: "Economimesis," *Diacritics*, summer 1981.

On Schiller: Peter Szondi, "Das Naive ist das Sentimentalische"

Also: Jauß.

The theme of our first reading will be: the Sublime in Kant, Hegel, and Schiller.

By starting here, the approach and the emphasis is predetermined. The Sublime is a category of primary importance for literary interpretation, rather than in the philosophical tradition.

See, for example, the criticism of English Romanticism, where the Sublime is so important. It is a key notion for the American Romanticists Abrams and Wimsatt, where the Sublime is an organizing category of discourse.

It is not a good sign if the interpretation of Romanticism centers on the Sublime.

It also leads to a focus on the relation of Romanticism to theology.

But this is not necessarily the central point – there's an inadequacy of the notion of the sublime as a center – things fall apart.

We shall start with Hegel's *Ästhetik*, Bd. 1, "Die Symbolik der Erhabenheit" (the "symbolicity" or symbolic character of the Sublime).

October 6

The Sublime in Hegel.

There's always an official Hegelian orthodoxy – one that can be followed with respect to the *Ästhetik*.

The treatment of the Sublime is placed very specifically – and in Hegel the place where a certain topic surfaces is important.

The place of the Sublime in the *Ästhetik* occurs at the end of the great subdivision into three historical periods, in the middle of the *Ästhetik*.

The general philosophical abstract: History is presented in terms of the specific forms of art; Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic or Christian art.

Romantic art for Hegel is Christian art.

The Sublime is at the end of the section on symbolic art, just before the transition to the Classical.

The Sublime in Hegel is not treated in the polarity of the Sublime and the Beautiful – which is the normal opposition, as in Kant.

In Hegel, the Sublime is a moment in the "History" of the aesthetic category

in general: a certain moment in the diachronic development of the beautiful (*die Schöne*), unlike Kant and Schiller.

As a term, the Sublime does not appear in the philosophical abstract. The Sublime in Hegel occurs in the historical, rather than in the theoretical section, or in the sections on the particular arts.

One must be very careful about the use one makes of historical subdivisions in Hegel. The historical subdivisions in Hegel are both very helpful and very misleading.

What appears as the successive, historically concrete in Hegel is *not* the History of Art. As a history of art it would be deplorable.

It cannot be taken as the actual historical succession. Yet as historical metaphors they are very powerful – but they are not to be taken as true.

They are moments – they describe moments – *Momente* that will be found in any period or epoch.

The Sublime moment can occur in the Classical or in the Romantic periods, or even in the interpretation of any work. Hegel's is a highly figural presentation of History that gives a fallacious illusion of concreteness.

Classical art is presented as if it were the highest point. But this isn't the point; the terms "classic" and "romantic" are figural terms – all these moments are present in any period.

But interpretations of Hegel have made use of them as if they were concrete. In any synchrony you take you would find all these movements.

What matters is the particular dialectic which is temporalized, leading from one moment to another. What matters is the particularity of the transitional movement from one moment to another.

Hegel's thought is always retrospective and recuperative; this gives the illusion of mastery, of control over one's thought.

At the same time philosophical treatise, history, and explanation of the genres (which is synchronic) – this is an amazing totalization. That he can give a treatise (the *Ästhetik*) on the theory, history, and the synchronic analysis of the interrelationships between the genres is very powerful, and highly misleading.

So: the Sublime is a moment in the movement of diachrony, but is put in the category of symbolic art forms, just before the transition to the Classical period.

The Classic is opposed to the Symbolic. The Classical period coincides with the Hellenic period, and so the Classical can be historically bounded and isolated.

Romantic art, dating from the death of Christ, is also more or less historic as a term.

Greece did historians a great favor by declining. Consider how dull history would be if Greece had continued as it was.

But the Symbolic is not an historical term. The symbol is now a linguistic term, but the *symbolon* is etymologically from law and statecraft, and became a theological term.

This should make one suspicious of “historicity” here.

If the Sublime is a moment in the diachrony of the aesthetic, the aesthetic is a moment in the diachrony of *Geist* (as philosophy, etc.).

Law, religion, and art are all moments in this history of *Geist*.

Where is the aesthetic located in the history of *Geist* in Hegel? It is a silly question, but where do you go to look for it? You go to the *Encyclopedia*, and look at the table of contents.

The *Encyclopedia* is Hegel’s main blueprint for his system. In general, you must read the table of contents in Hegel – in Kant, generally not.

The aesthetic occurs in Hegel in the transition from the Objective Spirit to the Absolute Spirit. The objective spirit is the spirit as it appears in events; the absolute spirit is the spirit as it appears in discourse, be it of philosophy, of theology, etc.

Art makes the transition from the objective spirit to the absolute spirit, the transition from the order of the political – the philosophy of right – to the discourse of philosophy and theology.

The aesthetic is primarily opposite to the political; the aesthetic is what you come to from reflection on the political. A critical reflection or theory of the political will lead to the aesthetic.

This is very much against the normal way of thinking of the aesthetic as escaping the political, or as an isolation from the political.

In Kant, the aesthetic mediation between theoretical and practical reason is inspired by political considerations.

So: the critical examination of the political will lead you to the problems of the *Aesthetics*. And the most astute political concerns and the most effective political thought originates in the aesthetic and its critical frame of mind, and will develop out of these aesthetic considerations in the dialectical process of critical negation.

Often the most insightful comments on politics come from aesthetic minds.

Marx is primarily interested in aesthetic problems; Marx is primarily an aesthetician. Compare the critical apparatus and structure of the *German Ideology* to Kant’s Third *Kritik*.

Other examples would be Adorno or Benjamin. You can learn a lot about Adorno by reading Heidegger – and vice versa.

The way Althusser’s analyses proceed depends upon a way of thought which is essentially aesthetic. See his mode of commentary on texts.

Or Derrida: in such an aesthetics the political potential is considerable.

The frame of mind which allows for a rigorous analysis of aesthetic problems permits the strongest insight into the political.

Political theory is in the hands of the aesthetes.

But in the case of Heidegger, there's an obvious and direct interest in aesthetics. But is Heidegger's thought on aesthetics therefore *critical*? I leave the question hanging, I think.

Heidegger is not, basically speaking, a critical philosopher, but a philosopher of *Gelassenheit*. But that does not mean that there are not powerful critical moments in Heidegger.

That the critical and the aesthetic are so closely related is a result of Kant.

Here the critical is being opposed to an ideological line of thought.

The category of the aesthetic will be critically undone in Hegel.

The link between Hegel's philosophy of right and the *Encyclopedia* will depend on the aesthetic. The possibility of passing from objective spirit to absolute spirit (the discourse of the true) passes through the aesthetic, and the aesthetic is the link which makes that passage possible.

Therefore the investment in the aesthetic is considerable – the whole ability of philosophical discourse to develop as such depends entirely on its ability to develop an adequate aesthetics.

This is why both Kant and Hegel, who had little interest in the arts, had to put it in, to make possible the link between real events and philosophical discourse.

So much depends on this – everything depends on this.

The *Aesthetics* are *Vorlesungen*: his faithful and attentive students wrote it all down.

The reception of the *Aesthetics*: the bibliography isn't large compared with most aspects of Hegel.

Hegel's tone is magisterial and very bland, it's very mechanical and orthodox – a defense of the system, an attempt to keep it running smoothly. It's not hard to see what's going to happen in the next paragraph.

There's an interesting reception in Croce – the commentators are confused about it.

See Croce's *What is Alive and What is Dead in Hegel's Philosophy*. What is alive is dead and what is dead, alive: he got the wrong things for the right reasons.

Heidegger speaks allusively of the *Aesthetics*, but didn't give a course on it.

He's mostly interested (cf. *Wozu Dichter?*) in "art is a thing of the past," "Die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee" and other gnomic passages.

See also Staiger, *Kunst der Interpretation* and the correspondence with Heidegger on a Mörike poem – which Staiger immediately published.

See also Heidegger's *Holzwege* – but again, in the gnomic mode.

Adorno is a fruitful pair with Heidegger. Adorno refers to the *Aesthetics* as the Achilles' heel of the entire Hegelian system, and suggests that the *Aesthetics* is the weak point in the notion of the dialectic and of the moment of the *Aufhebung*.

Adorno suggests that it is by way of the *Aesthetic* that one can progress in one's understanding of the dialectic.

Implicit in Adorno is the inadequacy of the theory of language in Hegel (though Adorno does not put this explicitly). What he says is that Hegel is impossibly obscure.

For Adorno's reading of Hegel, see his "Skoteinos – oder, wie zu lesen sei" in *Drei Studien zu Hegel*.

Also, Peter Szondi in *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie*. Szondi's upset by the platitudes in Hegel's treatment of metaphor and allegory.

Immediately after Hegel's section on the Sublime is the discussion of metaphor that Szondi thinks is "the pits." Szondi: "It is Hegel's inadequate understanding of the essence of poetic language that is responsible for the poverty of his theory of language."

In Hegel, everything depends on language, but very little is said on it.

So: if the weakness is in Hegel's theory of language, this is very serious, and will contaminate that part of the Hegelian corpus and open it up to a certain critique.

And if it is in the *Aesthetics*, on which so much depends, it is a disaster.

If the conception of language is inadequate, then everything that makes use of language is affected: it will contaminate the logic, the phenomenology of cognition, etc.

If you go to the *Aesthetics* directly, you will be confused. I'm not going to de-confuse you. I'm going to give you a more oblique reading.

You cannot take Hegel's *Aesthetics* at face value. You cannot represent the *Aesthetics* by taking quotations from it. You cannot read the *Aesthetics* by itself: you must read it against other texts of Hegel. Yet the tone of the text makes it seem superfluous to consider other texts.

The importance of the aesthetic is a philosophical problem – it is not to be valorized. Staiger, Szondi's teacher, had a stake in the aesthetic as a value – you should not.

Traditional philosophy departments have been against this kind of oblique reading. There's nothing beautiful about the oblique. That things are not as they seem to be has been more available in literature departments.

The *Aesthetics* have to be led obliquely to other texts, which will lead to questions.

Hegel is very important in taking seriously the statement that the Beautiful is the sensory appearance of the Idea.

See Heidegger, who awakes awe before this statement.

The Idea manifests itself sensorially, phenomenally as *Schein*, as a sensory cognitive experience.

Where is it in Hegel's work that the Idea manifests itself phenomenally?

Look for it in the systematic *Encyclopedia*.

The Idea is not something you are likely to encounter; it is not generally available phenomenally. The Aesthetic would be this moment.

Geist is the faculty of the Idea, but where does the Idea manifest itself phenomenally?

The place where things occur in Hegel is so important – you must know when to take Hegel at his word.

Where does it occur in the system? Here, it is not in the table of contents. The Aesthetic doesn't occur in the *Aesthetics*.

Where in terms of the dialectic and its movement is the Idea available? And why does that moment necessarily belong to the past?

If you go to the *Ästhetische Vorlesungen*, it is not very helpful. It gives only a very banal answer: the Aesthetic occurred in Greece.

What is before is *Vorkunst*; after Greece, the function of the aesthetic is taken over by Religion and later by Philosophy.

If you tell them on your orals what I'm going to tell you, you won't pass – unless I'm the examiner.

We have here the fallacy of the concrete: "it's in Greece." Where the hell is Greece?

"Greece" is a totally empty sign; we must ask the question in more philosophical terms.

Where is it? Go to the *Encyclopedia*: the section on the faculties of mind, "Psychology."

(I refer you here to my "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*" in *Critical Inquiry*.)

The Idea would be the product of the faculty of thought – but this is not so clear in Hegel.

There are, for Hegel, three faculties (*Vermögen*): *Anschauung*, *Vorstellung*, *Denken*.

There is a question of the temporal structure of these faculties.

The Idea moves out of the objective; the Idea must emerge out of *Denken*.

The Idea is a result of thought, not of perception or representation.

In temporal terms, both perception and representation enter consciousness as interiorization. *Er-innerung* = interiorization (also, memory as recollection)

That which is inward is recollection, that which is preserved; it is in something, a well, or *un puits*.

Thinking does not occur by means of recollection, but through *Gedächtnis* (memorization, as opposed to *Erinnerung*).

Erinnerung: *Gedächtnis*, recollection: memory, *souvenir*: *mémoire*.

My colleague Harold Bloom has a good *Gedächtnis*; he remembers the whole corpus of English Literature by heart, whether he wants to or not. So beware, beware! According to Hegel, he thinks!

There's a purely empty link between thought and the faculty of memory.

Hegel's separation of [...].

Gedächtnis is purely exterior and mechanical: to remember a text, you must pay no attention to its contents. To remember a text, forget immediately what is in it. Remembering is purely external.

That's where Hegel places the Aesthetic: in the passage from recollection to memory, the moment you forget your recollections and only remember your notations.

This moment can be called the way that the Idea manifests itself sensorially. Memorization cannot be separated from the notation or inscription of the thing that is to be memorized. In order to memorize, some form of notation is unavoidable. In order to forget your recollections, you must write them down.

Notation makes possible the forgetting of recollection, and the transformation of representation into thoughts.

Perception does not alter the exterior world, nor does representation: in both perception and representation, there is no such material trace of the thing represented.

But memorization requires a trace, and it is at that moment that the Idea appears as a sensory object: as the conscious forgetting of *Erinnerung*, by means of a materially actualized notation.

It cannot take place without that material trace, though the trace is not the thing itself.

In the trace, the shopping list, the Idea, accessible to thinking and only to thinking manifests itself, as that which makes memorization possible.

Hegel does not say this directly, only implicitly [...] the example of the composer.

In the Encyclopedia on *Gedächtnis*, the theory of notation is implicitly stressed: a use of material as if it were notation.

The text is considered as pure materiality, pure notation: a text in whose content you have no interest.

The notation of philosophical thought is language considered in a certain way – when considered outside of meaning, as a pure sign.

Memorization is more a semiotic than a semantic process.

We should have read the section on the Sublime first, gotten confused, and then read Hegel this way to figure him out.

Gedächtnis is the moment of the emptiness of the symbol – of the pure sign.

It is only in names that we think.

It would be difficult to recuperate this loss of depth by a dialectical movement – it would be difficult to combine this with any positive synthetic power.

Hegel suffers from memories.

This is the radical limitation to pure semiosis. If there were such a moment

in Hegel's system, how to recuperate this loss of depth? This movement is very distressing.

Is there a moment where there is a break in the symbolic correspondence between sign and meaning? This would be the aesthetic moment *par excellence*.

It would be inconceivable that it would not surface.

So where is the moment corresponding to this in the *Aesthetics*? It is likely that it will surface in one form or another. Is it everywhere? The aesthetic moment can be said to be everywhere, but it will be a little more everywhere in some parts than in others. And if the moment of the phenomenal appearance of the Idea is under the form of *Gedächtnis*, which drops experience into the past (unlike *Erinnerung*, which brings it to the present), then that moment will be in the past.

Memorization forgets experience and leaves it in the past, where it remains, and where it disappears.

If this is the moment, then the moment is always lost.

The section in the *Aesthetics* on the Sublime is a moment where something similar happens, in the passage from the Sublime to the *Bewußte Symbolik der Vergleichenden Kunstform*. (The section on music, in the theory of the separate art forms, is another.)

The Sublime: there's a real bewilderment on this section. There are external reasons for this – there are other exterior movements – as there are, too, in the passage on music.

His treatment of Kant is very brisk and condescending.

p. 467: Hegel alludes to Kant's insight into the nature of the Sublime. "Despite its long-windedness, we are still interested in it."

Hegel approves of Kant's notice that the Sublime is not a property of things. But, *chez* Hegel, Kant is too concerned with interiority, because Hegel must analyze the Sublime from the perspective of the *One* substance.

So, for Hegel, the Sublime can't involve *Erinnerung*: the Sublime is not inward.

If Hegel already sees the Sublime not as *Erinnerung*, he would have to be derogatory of Kant's notion of the Sublime, with its stress on affectivity.

Hegel, of course, does not do justice to Kant's notion of *Gemüt*.

More importantly, in Hegel, the Sublime is the moment when art becomes *verbal*: the plastic arts are no longer valid aesthetic forms.

The Sublime is the appearance on the stage of art of the word. (History too is a stage, with things entering onto it.)

p. 480 of the *Ästhetik*: "*bildende Kunst ... nicht hervortreten kann, sondern nur die Poesie der Vorstellung, die durch das Wort sich äussert.*"

The Sublime is the occurrence of *verbal* art.

Hegel's stress here is on the iconoclastic element: the divine can have no

phenomenal, plastic appearance, except as the word. (p. 480: “*wo von Gott ein irgend zureichendes Bildent zu entwerfen unmöglich ist.*”)

The divine does not appear except as the word, which thus marks the end of representation (as the image).

Language appears in Hegel at the moment of the Sublime.

There’s an obvious relation here to the passage from recollection as image to memorization, which is not accessible to anything but notation.

You’re supposed to be surprised here. The Sublime here differs from everything you’ve ever heard about the Sublime.

The discourse on the Sublime in Romanticism goes back to Longinus, especially as developed here at Yale – Hartman, Bloom, Weiskel.

There is always assumed to be a oneness between text, reader, and author: a good text implies a good author and a good effect on the reader. “The echo of a great soul, etc.”

Hegel refers to Longinus and to a passage that Longinus also quotes from the Bible.

So: what is required is a specific reading of Hegel’s Sublime.

October 20

For the next session, read Schiller’s texts on the Sublime.

Of these, his *Letters* are the most advanced, if that metaphor fits Schiller, though somehow it doesn’t.

We will go to Schiller with an open mind, forgetting, in an Hegelian sense, about Hegel.

The beginning of the section on the Sublime in the *Ästhetik* corresponds to the moment of memory and forgetting in the *Encyclopedia*.

Coming from Kant, you should find this difficult and surprising. Normally you should expect, given Longinian received ideas about the Sublime (or from Boileau or Herder) that under the impact of the Sublime, our soul *erhebt sich* – rises and takes flight, as if she were herself the source of it.

In this Longinian experience of elevation, there are intimations of immortality. The soul rises, *erheben* becomes *aufheben*, in a coming together of poet, text, and soul in a personal greatness.

Neil Hertz, of all people, in his *Poétique* article (“*Lire de Longine*”) ends up the reception of the Sublime in the context of English Romanticism.

(English is always dominating in Comparative Studies, especially here at Yale, because of the emphasis on Romantics.)

Hertz points out contradictions, but there are also recuperations: this is a Longinus similar to the one we’ve had before.

The Sublime in Hegel will sound remarkably flat by comparison with Longinus, though they have quotes in common.

Hegel refers to Kant, then comments that, in the Sublime, "... *verschwindet der eigentlich symbolische Charakter [der Kunst]*" (I, 468). In the Sublime, the symbolic character of the work of art disappears.

The *Symbolik* is the underlying category in which the *Ästhetik* is predicated. The work of art in Hegel is always structured on the model of the symbol.

The symbol is neither semiotic nor genetic, but is a correspondence in the relation of sign and meaning, or a motivated relation between sign and meaning.

In addition to Symbolic art, Classical Art in Hegel also involves such a motivated relation between sign and meaning.

What's left after this disappearance? Is this disappearance part of a dialectic? The disappearance puts into question the structure of art in general. The rest of the section is a commentary on this moment.

The moment when art becomes linguistic is Sublime, but when art becomes linguistic it loses its actual symbolic character. How to interpret this?

The Sublime is the moment of the radical separation of the order of discourse and the order of the sacred.

The experience of God and of the Sacred is no longer compatible with the order of discourse.

Hegel comes to that statement from epistemological considerations.

This is different from Longinus, whose Sublime is compatible with a theological reading of the aesthetic.

Hegel's separation of the sacred and the aesthetic is already hinted at in Kant.

For Hegel, the very possibility of discourse, especially of poetic discourse, is once and for all separated from the sacred.

Is this separation recuperable? Could this separation just be a negation?

This separation suspends the symbolic; this separation suspends the aesthetic.

In Hegel, the symbolic is the aesthetic: if art is the sensory appearance of the Idea, then art is symbolic.

The symbolic is the alignment of the phenomenality of the sign with the phenomenality of the signified.

The sign, as a material specificity, has a phenomenal appearance, a *Scheinung*.

The sign, as a part of discourse, has a meaning, which is also a phenomenal reality. There is both a referent of the sign and a meaning of a sign.

In the symbol, an alignment, affinity, or relation is established between these two phenomenal "contents."

That alignment, as knowledge or experience, constitutes the phenomenalization of the sign: the sign acquires a phenomenal power

At the moment when the sign becomes meaningful – regardless of whether this occurs by natural means (e.g. onomatopoeia) or along conventional lines (normally the difference between symbol and sign is based on a

distinction of natural and conventional) – regardless of whether this occurs along natural or conventional lines, to the extent that that process of signification is accessible – to phenomenalization, hence intuition – the structure of the sign would be symbolic: a cratyism of the sign.

The link between knowledge and beauty, epistemology and aesthetics, which is the basis of the symbolic character of aesthetic, must be there. There is an enormous investment in this link. By the symbolic character of the aesthetic, we mean the possibility of an adequation between knowledge and aesthetic experience, between the experience of the work of art and the knowledge of it.

Intellectual intuition is also a phenomenality; however intellectualized in the inner phenomenality of the spirit, we are still in a phenomenology: *Ph. des Geistes*.

Sensory intuition is built in as a paradigm, but is gotten beyond in Hegel.

The whole coherence of the system depends on this passage from epistemological analysis to aesthetic experience.

Hegel mentions a form of art in which the symbolic is radically suspended: the Sublime.

The suspension of the symbolic occurs in the passage from pantheistic to monotheistic art. The Sublime moment is the monotheistic moment *par excellence*.

The moment one starts to think of the Sublime, one starts to think of the *One* moment: the Sublime is the negation of pantheistic art.

The Sublime Hebraic poetry is seen as a negation of the diffusion of the multitheistic Indian art.

Bottom p. 469: “*was da ist, ... nur als ein dienendes Akzidens und ein vorübergehender Schein in vergleich mit Gottes Wesen und Festigkeit dargestellt ist.*”

The whole beauty of the phenomenal world is there only as an accident in the service of the divine; everything in the world is passing, is mere appearance – pure *Schein* – with no stability, in subservience to the One.

That is monotheism: there is no way of access to the One, the single; no access to the singularity of the One through multiplicity. Whatever is appearance is just fragmentary; there is no passage from this to God. We are no longer in a symbolic mode.

The passage is similar to others where the necessity arises of distinguishing the knowledge of the world as [signs], physics, science, and mathematics – as numbers on the one hand and the knowledge of knowledge (epistemology), on the other.

The knowledge of the world is not the knowledge of knowledge.

That distinction is the moment in philosophy where the problem arises that is the equivalent of the monotheistic moment.

That distinction is also the moment in philosophy when spirit gets singled out and becomes the object of thought.

From the moment knowledge as a faculty of mind, Spirit., etc., becomes the sole object of philosophy, philosophy becomes the sole knowledge, the only science. The science of the physical world is then subordinated to philosophy as the monotheistic center of thought.

There is a shift from philosophy of nature to philosophy of mind.

For Kant, who taught physics and wrote on astronomy, philosophy was a single science: a similarly monotheistic moment.

From that moment, the knowledge of monotheism, there is always something called the "One," be it *Geist*, the mind, knowledge, etc.

That One can have many philosophical names: e.g., Being, God, Substance (as for Locke), I (for Fichte), etc.

In all these, it has a name: it is the *One*; therefore you can give it a name.

And from the moment you give it a name, you're lost. Because you're no longer in the order of the Sublime, but back in the symbolic mode, since the Sublime is the radical separation of the order of discourse from the order of the sacred.

When the name functions symbolically, it has predicates. The name has to take predicates so that one can say things about it.

The name can then work deictically: it can point.

From the moment the one has a name, it becomes a symbol – and is therefore in the order of discourse. In the moment of the Sublime there is no name.

This is the order of discourse we're used to: with the symbolic, predicative, deitic functions.

Language, or the symbolic order, would disappear without the predicates.

There's a contradiction here between the One that can't have a name, but must, and what Hegel calls the "One" ("*die Eine Substanz*").

This contradiction can be understood as a simple negation: one can negate any of the particular predicates of the One, and as long as you are in the particular dialectic of the negation, you can stay alive: you *can* have a discourse of negation.

But this negation of the particularization of the One can be done only when the Absolute has been given a name and therefore qualities. It has thus actually entered the dialectic and is no longer the Absolute.

The negation of the Absolute as Absolute is not the same as the negation of a property of the Absolute.

p. 480: The negation of the Absolute would be the Absolute entering into a relationship with its other, which is inconceivable. The divine content forbids this phenomenalization.

It is impossible for art to represent this relationship in any measure that would be adequate: there is no possible *angemessene Gestalt*.

The only relationship of the Absolute to its other is that of God to the world he has created, but that is incomprehensible: the relationship of the Absolute to its other is beyond the dialectic of the one and the other. The Absolute is what, by definition, gets beyond the relation of the one and the other: there is no other to the Absolute.

The relation of the Absolute to the world is the problem. How do we understand this? Is it an *Aufhebung*?

The passage here (p. 481) functions according to two principles: the first movement is the classical power of the dialectic, including the power of negation, which has all the recuperative power of the *Aufhebung*.

There are places where the sacred seems to be recuperated through negation: by stressing our very nothingness in front of the divine, we recuperate the divine – we reassert our divinity in the very assertion of our nothingness. If we can know and say this nothingness, God becomes manifest in the verbal discourse in which the nothingness of the creature is asserted. (Maybe.)

The discourse continues as the assertion of the negation – which is fundamentally Longinian. (Longinus also suggests a similar non-being of a particular soul.)

(This continuation raises some questions.)

What is the relation of the word “*erhaben*” (as in “*Erhabenheit*”) to *erhoben*? *Erhoben* is uplifted, placed on a higher level, a higher elevation – as in *Aufhebung*. What is *aufgehoben* is always higher.

Are *erhaben* and *erhoben* the same? Are *Erhabenheit* and *Erhobenheit* the same thing? What is the play of these two terms in Hegel?

Sometimes they are used as if they were the same: e.g., on the bottom of p. 483: “*so haben wir hier die Kraft der Erhebung des Gemüts zu bewundern....*” They seem the same here, but the play between them is complex. Is *Erhebung* the Sublime?

There’s a recovery here on a higher symbolic plane, and questions about relating this text about the recuperation of the symbolic to the section that follows, which passes fast into considerations of the religions and the One. There are other readings possible: there are other passages here that can’t be reduced to a pattern of recuperation.

But there’s another movement here: Hegel quotes a passage from the Bible that Longinus quotes (p. 480), “*Gott sprach: es werde Licht! Und es ward Licht.*”

God cannot be considered as a natural progenitor of the world, as an extension of the human; he is not a father.

Our usual experience of creation is on the familiar model, which isn’t it. God created in the sense that he generated: not *zeugen*, but *schöpfen*.

But creation is not the same thing as generation, which is a mistaken phenomenalism.

You shouldn't use *zeugen* (which is to *procreate*: there are no family romances in theology) but *schaffen* (to create) – but not as artistic creation, which is invention with a negative overtone.

Creation is verbal: the positing power of the word which creates without natural justification or antecedents. There is no causal relation between past and present. One sees this when one does without the natural procreative metaphor.

Logos is the arbitrary positing power of the word, which comes to us as an order, as an imperative: a speech act of which we are *not* the subjects, since we are totally mute in relation to this discourse. (p. 481: "... *in stummen Gehorsam unmittelbar gesetzt ist.*")

As Hegel insists, we stand in mute obedience to what in our own language has power of position.

We are the dummy of the positing power of the word.

From the moment you become aware of certain autonomous powers of language that are not susceptible to the control of a subject, and thus cannot be the utterance of a subject or his desire, then to say "language speaks" is not wrong.

It is not wrong to say this, if you get it right. It is not an anthropomorphism of language; it is a grammatization of the subject.

The subject is a grammatical category, as in allegory.

To say "language speaks" is to say that language is the subject of speech, the grammatical subject.

The self has no power of position, which language alone possesses.

Since language can take place absolutely independent of the intent of a subject, the subject of a sentence doesn't have to be there as a self.

The self has no locutionary power: he is mute.

The self, and the phenomenal world, the *Dasein*, is a dummy.

But even though the *Dasein* has no language of its own, it babbles away all the time.

It writes poetry, it writes Genesis.

It is an exceedingly eloquent dummy: it quotes. This passage of scripture (*lux fiat*) is a quotation from Moses: scripture quotes Moses quoting God.

It thus uses forms of rhetoric: here, as direct quotation (*erlebte Rede*), or sometimes, as indirect discourse (*erzählte Rede*), which tells the story of what God says.

We have here the classic distinction between *mimesis* and *diegesis*. Always go to Genette or Plato far that. *Mimesis* mimics what happened; *diegesis* narrates what has happened.

Diegesis narrates language rather than mimics it. (This leads to narratology, Genette's *Figures*, and to representational problems.)

The system *mimesis/diegesis* sets up the system of representation. The system is characteristic of the representational text, which is a world of light.

The representational world is a world of light.

It is eminently correct that God says “let there be light,” since light and mimesis must come first. You have to have light to have diegesis.

Mimesis/diegesis is *not* an opposition, but as an opposition it produces narratology, papers on *style indirect libre*, etc. It is a polarity which is not really a polarity. Taken as a polarity, it misses the real issue, the real problem.

Mimesis and diegesis can be framed by each other; the opposition can be deconstructed.

What is essential is always the notion of quotation: representation is a quotation.

Quotations aren’t active or passive, but quotations are also not mute – they speak all the time. Quotations make the world go round.

Language performs only to the extent that it quotes.

Quotes produce degrees, quotes strip degrees away. Quotes lead to legal problems, questions of legitimacy and plagiarism.

But quotes have no positional power. Quotation is part of a system, the performative is part of the system. Quotation can’t posit the system “marriage,” but quotation can perform it.

The performance/positional distinction is part of a system, but performance is a quotation of the positional.

Performances, however, have cognitive weight; they are constatives, too.

The question of the authority of the quoter always crops up. Is Moses a reliable witness? In the question of the authority of the witness, there is a cognitive moment involved.

So again, the right word is “light,” as what allows for the system of representation, and as what allows for the cognitive adequation of discourse and the sacred by cognitive intuition: as in, “Oh, I see.”

The light of cognitive intuition, or the light of knowledge, is the fundamental metaphor of understanding.

Light establishes the performative possibility of language, and sets up the distinction between mimesis and diegesis, between performative and positional, etc.

These are all present in the statement, “Let there be light.”

We are not at all out of the Longinian system. All those assertions about language speaking through us, about us being dummies without speech, are of considerable arrogance, and are of considerable cognitive power.

There is colossal critical knowledge in the knowledge that we are dummies. As long as we say that language speaks like a dummy, we recuperate our control on the level of knowledge.

The assertion of one’s own weakness is one’s greatest strength; in asserting our weakness we become strong.

This is a dialectized Sublime (which is present in Hertz); this is the role in which religious metaphors can be accommodated. We still haven't gotten out of Longinus here.

But this is not the only passage Hegel quotes. p. 484: Psalm 104, "*Licht ist dein Kleid, das du anhast; du breitest aus den Himmel wie ein Teppich.*"

This is very different from the first quote. This quotation is formally, rhetorically different: it is not representation but an apostrophe.

The quotations are marked as symmetrical: the one is seen from the perspective of God, the other from the perspective of man.

This is nonsense – we can't take this distinction seriously.

In the realm of the Absolute, there can be no perspective. The possibility of "point of view" assumes a phenomenality and a spatial organization that is denied in the Sublime.

To think of the place of the divine is to imply a phenomenalization of the Absolute. There is no geography of the Absolute.

The distinction is, rather, that light gets inscribed in an inside/outside structure, as an outside hiding an inside world.

Light here is a phenomenal *Schein*. The same light that was said (in Genesis) to be the performative utterance is now the outside, sheer appearance.

Reading Genesis and Psalm 104 together gives: Spirit posits itself as that which is unable to posit. Light is posited by light, but light has no positing power of its own. That statement can't be made, except in bad faith. You can't mean it.

As you change from the order of knowledge to the order of position – at that moment, there can be no negation, as is possible in the order of knowledge.

In the order of knowledge, negation establishes the dialectic: to know you don't know is still to know – that's OK. You can't do that with position.

For one thing, position *happens* – knowledge doesn't happen. What's posited, happens.

The "linguistics," the "logic," the "power-structure," the "economy" of position are not the same as the economy of knowledge. The logic of position can't be dialectical.

So: the Spirit posits itself as that which is unable to posit, as opposed to that which is unable to know, and this (first) statement can't be said.

All this means: the two passages are not compatible. They set up a question, a duplicity of discourse, which radicalizes the disjunction between the two modes of discourse in a way which is out of reach of the dialectic.

That this disjunction occurs in the mode of apostrophe is not without import.

Apostrophe is the mode of praise, the figure of the ode.

[...]

What the ode really praises is the veil of appearances: its own ability to praise, its own power to apostrophize.

This means that what it praises is a rhetorical figure (apostrophe), which it shouldn't do. Rhetorical figures are beyond praise or blame.

Figures are valueless; the Ode, as a type of praise, is a figure, and therefore not a celebration of what it seems to celebrate.

Apostrophe is not representation. See Culler *père* on Browning.

You can't represent apostrophe on the stage: look at *Pygmalion*, it's grotesque. It generalizes a sub-genre that is real sick.

The assumption of praise in the Psalms undoes the grounds of praise in Genesis.

Light is what makes apostrophe possible; it is not itself apostrophe.

Next, Hegel quotes (p. 484): "*Verbirgst du dein Gesicht...*" ("If you hide your face..."). "*Licht*" becomes "*Angesicht*": light is maintained as seeing, the face as a metonym of seeing, as the place where seeing takes place.

Light becomes the giving of face to God, and so becomes the trope prosopopoeia. From light as external mode we have moved to light as trope.

The juxtaposition of these two passages mark a deep parting of ways between Hegel and Longinus.

When an apostrophe (which is not itself a trope, but a situation, or anthropomorphism) is used as a trope, when a face is given through a linguistic device, it exists only in a verbal world.

This puts a new complexity in the text. We can apostrophize, but we can't really prosopopoeia.

The juxtaposition of the passages is the performance of a reading. Hegel himself does not do it. But you couldn't stick with the Longinian reading of Hegel – you run into problems with statements in the section after the Sublime, which is a real weird one.

Although this juxtaposition is the performance of the reading, the problem is posed by the text. The text invites this juxtaposition, since both passages are quoted for different reasons than those that are given.

The reading has to find the means within itself to juxtapose the two Biblical texts.

For that, you will need all the help you can get.

You need to do this violence to think it through. Reading must find resources within itself for the continuation of its own discourse – it needs a conclusion, it needs to work it out.

You're graduate students of literature, so you'd better talk about it. You might as well combine your misery and your degree.

There is textual evidence that the two metaphors are supposed to be symmetrical.

The act of praising undoes the ground of what is to be praised: this is bizarre.

The function of the Sublime is to undo the stability of the sacred.

In Hegel, therefore, immortality cannot be represented in the Sublime (p. 485). The Sublime and the theme of immortality are incompatible.

In this new disruption, we get an Hegelianized Longinus, and some non-assimilability. The two statements do not negate each other.

The resources of mind and discourse are such that even this kind of problem can be recuperated.

A recuperation seems to take place as a radical secularization: discourse must be secular if it is separated from the Sublime.

In a Weberian gesture, an autonomy of discourse is set up that is exhilarating. Judgments of good and evil are now displaced into the subject, and are no longer in the divine (p. 485).

Ethics is fundamentally discursive, and whatever is discursive is not sacred. This is not the secularization of the divine, but a radical separation of the secular and the divine.

This is not at all like M. H. Abrams, who sees Romanticism as a secularization of scripture, which would allow recuperation on the level of the political in the assertion of the autonomy of the individual.

But in Hegel, the order of the political is discourse, the social; these achieve autonomy, and need not be concerned with the sacred.

Setzen becomes *das Gesetz*; the new law is the system of discourse.

The Law, as discourse, is no longer sacred in origin: it is a hermeneutic system, which means access to the political world.

But this recuperation has its own set of problems. The recuperation takes you out of the *Aesthetics* and into the philosophy of law and the philosophy of religion.

The relation between these two is crucially important in Hegel's system. We will have to go there to see these complications worked out.

It is very important that the *Aesthetics* is the only way into these problems of the social and politic world. The *Aesthetics* is central to nineteenth-century theology, beginning with the *German Ideology* and *The Holy Family*.

In the next chapter, to see the problem of the recuperation between the sacred and discourse involves passage to legality.

Law is not the enforcement of the existing order, the reinforcement of a preexisting imperative.

Law has to do with the *Gesetz der Unterscheidung* (the law of differentiation). The function of the Law is to keep things apart.

Law is not the grounding of authority, but unsettles illegitimate authority by establishing differences.

Law unsettles the tyrant to the extent that tyrants usurp and hide a difference – e.g., acting as if he were divine, etc.

Illegitimate authority is upheld by refusal to make distinctions (such as between God and man).

Law dethrones the positing power of language as the ultimate monarch.

A good preparation for these questions is the next section: *die Bewußte Symbolik der vergleichenden Kunstform*.

After the radical separation of the Sublime, the relation between the Longinian and the non-Longinian readings is not structured like a symbol – they are not specular – they have nothing in common with each other. They're just *nebeneinander*.

The section is a weird collection of *topoi* – there's an unbelievable flatness. Hegel seems to think these are the lowest art forms possible.

Part IV: Research

Introduction

Martin McQuillan

The shape of the de Manian oeuvre has for the most part been determined by post hoc rationalisations. During his lifetime he published two editions of *Blindness and Insight* (1971, revised edition 1983) and *Allegories of Reading* in 1979. These monographs, if that is what they are, bring cohesion to collections of essays by de Man in more or less satisfactory ways. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984) was planned for a similar purpose during de Man's final years and he also agreed a structure with Lindsay Waters for the book that became *Critical Writings 1953 to 1978* (published posthumously in 1989). However, de Man also had a number of unrealised projects and possible trajectories of research that he pursued throughout his academic career. The texts included in Part IV are a selection of the many notes de Man made about the ordering, editing and public presentation of his work. One such volume that he envisaged but never brought to fruition was to have been entitled **The Unimaginable Touch of Time**, perhaps the 'other' monograph he cites in the introduction to *Blindness and Insight*. It would have drawn together the Gauss lectures and other essays as a historical study of romanticism. He was also an effective editor, producing editions of Keats, Rilke and *Madame Bovary*. However, he also went a long way down the path of editing what we would now call a 'reader' entitled *Modernism in Literature*, which, as a project, began to morph into a reader on twentieth-century literary theory, suggesting how closely entwined de Man considered the theoretical avant garde and literary modernism. The project and its evolution are described in the initial outline of his **Modernism in Literature: Background and Essay Selection**, which ends with a draft table of contents for the book, though this was altered and de Man produced **Modernism in Literature: Revised Table of Contents**. The text on the background and essay selection for *Modernism in Literature* was prepared for his publisher but may also have been intended as a preface to the volume. He also invested considerable effort in realising a commission from Viking Press for *The Portable Rousseau*, which was to include original translations by Paul and Patricia de Man as well as editorial corrigenda and an introduction by de Man: the original **The Portable Rousseau: Table of Contents** (later replaced by an 'Optimal Table of Contents', based on available canonical translations, as de Man sought to complete the volume before his death) and **The Portable Rousseau: Principle of Selection** are included here. The **Outline for a Monograph on Nietzsche** demonstrates a possible trajectory for de Man's writing before he undertook work on the

manuscript for *Textual Allegories* in 1973 and shows de Man's abiding, and as yet inadequately explained, interest in Nietzsche as a hinge between nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and thought. The text **From Nietzsche to Rousseau** comes from an application for a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1970. It outlines a monograph study that combines elements of the Gauss lectures and *Allegories of Reading* in a wider study of literary romanticism and modernism, including texts on Mallarmé and Baudelaire. At this stage in his writing, de Man gives significant consideration to the possibility of a study on Nietzsche before foreclosing the option in favour of the structured closure of *Allegories of Reading*. The text included here, **Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust**, is de Man's own description of that monograph for his publisher. The penultimate document is a table of contents de Man made as a possible organisation of his collected essays. The list for **Aesthetics, Rhetoric, Ideology** suggests the direction in which de Man wished to extend his writing, citing possible unwritten texts on religion and political ideology in Kierkegaard and Marx, as well as essays on aesthetics and society in Benjamin and Adorno. The final document is dated **11/3/82** and similarly outlines an alternative order for de Man's late writing as the possible contents for an 'unfinished book, in the event of my death', after his diagnosis of cancer. Taken from the pages of his teaching notebook for that term, it would seem to predate the structure proposed in 'Aesthetics, Rhetoric, Ideology', given that de Man was able to complete several of the 'unfinished' essays cited here. De Man died in December 1983.

***The Unimaginable Touch of Time:* Proposed Table of Contents**

1. Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image
2. The Contemporary Criticism of Romanticism
3. Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self
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5. The Image of Rousseau in the Poetry of Hölderlin
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7. Wordsworth and Hölderlin
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10. The Poetic Itinerary of John Keats
11. Allegory and Irony in Baudelaire
12. Rhetoric of Temporality: Romantic Allegory
13. Rhetoric of Temporality: Romantic Irony

***Modernism in Literature:* Background and Essay Selection**

This anthology¹ is conceived as background reading for courses in nineteenth- and twentieth-century general literature, fiction, poetry or literary criticism, as taught in Departments of English, Comparative Literature or under the auspices of General Education (Humanities) programs. Since the principle of selection that has determined the choice of texts is not obvious, some clarification of the book's general purpose may be needed.

The understanding of contemporary literature is considerably enriched if it is seen as part of a general movement of ideas, or of an extended reflection on the nature of literature, that originates in the past. Students respond to the writings of Kafka, Joyce, Rilke or Sartre by feeling an affinity of a type that they could not experience towards, say, Pope or Racine, since it is an affinity grounded in a shared modernity. If this intuitive response can be made more explicit by a deeper understanding of the time-bound literary temper to which students react, an important educational function is performed. This increased understanding can be gained in several ways, e.g. historically, by giving insight into the development that has led to the present-day conception of what literature ought to be. Readers approach literature with certain expectations that vary from generation to generation; to achieve a properly critical reading, we must become aware of the successive stages that have shared the particular set of expectations that we recognize to be modern.

In trying to trace such a development, the first decision to make is how far to go back in time, where to locate the origin of our own sense of literary modernity. One could confine oneself to the immediate past and stress the

1. This archival text has been extensively corrected with handwritten notes in the margins. It is not clear whether the handwriting belongs to Paul or Patricia de Man. There is a suggestion at one point that the notation might be by M. H. Abrahams, who was Professor at Cornell during de Man's time there. I have chosen to incorporate the corrections and notes insofar as they enrich the text and make de Man's argument clearer – MMcQ.

various avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, as far back, for instance, as the Dadaism and surrealism of the 1920s. But such a procedure would be self-defeating if one wants to gain a historical perspective; it necessarily involves one in questions of literary fashion that are too fast-moving to be anthologized: an anthology of the avant-garde is bound to be hopelessly out of date on the day it appears. Broadening the perspective, one can instead isolate a period in literary history that begins roughly after Victorian literature (experienced as definitely non-modern by most students) and consists of the aestheticism of the 1890s in England and Germany, French symbolist poetry, etc. – a period whose immediate ancestor would be, above all others, Baudelaire, and whose main exponents would be figures such as Pater, Mallarmé, Yeats, Proust, George, etc. A valid historical insight into our own modernity could certainly be gained by gathering a collection of texts from these authors and their commentators. But critics and historians today tend to push the origins of the modern mind further back, and to find the most meaningful historical approach to modernity in a continuous development that starts in the second half of the eighteenth century and extends to the present. Many American and European historians argue convincingly that the aestheticism and symbolism of the late nineteenth century have to be understood in a post-romantic perspective and that, consequently, the most relevant historical viewpoint from which to define our present relevant historical viewpoint from which to define our present-day situation should include the period from early romanticism to the present. This is the principle on which this anthology has been arranged. In adopting this perspective in the present anthology, we are in accordance with prevalent trends in American and European historiography.

More delicate to establish is the principle according to which themes and ideas are to be selected from the mass of material constituted by 200 years of world literature. Since the concept of modernity is the central theme of the book, it would seem obvious that texts in which modernity as such is being openly discussed would be the most appropriate. And it is certainly true that, from the early romantic writers on, there has been a notable tendency for writers to set themselves off from their predecessors and to invest their work with an aura of originality, presenting it as a fresh beginning, modern in its deliberate differentiation from earlier models. Such claims are at times made to justify various formal innovations, changes in poetic diction or in prosody, a preference for contemporary over traditional subject matter, etc. Various documents exist in which such specific technical claims are made and justified, often in polemical opposition to earlier, neo-classical conventions: this is the case, for example, in Wordsworth's Prefaces to the *Lyrical Ballads*, in Stendhal's *Racine et Shakespeare* (in which the equation of "romantic" and "modern" is openly stated) or in Baudelaire's *Salons* or in essays such as

“The Painter of Modern Life.” Such texts are very useful for our purposes, especially if, as in the case of the three examples cited, the formal, stylistic claims are based on a sophisticated and interesting general argument. The technical points have often lost their interest for us (we have little reason to grow excited over the place of the cesura in an alexandrine, the law of unities in the theater, or the right of a novelist to depict working people rather than aristocrats), but the justificatory arguments maintain all their freshness and intense modernity.

Texts of this type, however, are relatively scarce, and were we to confine ourselves to them, the element that contributes most of all to their significance might well be lost. We have hinted that it is not the technical innovations or changes that matter most but the reasons given for the changes. And these reasons can always be brought back to considerations that are not primarily technical, but that reside in the awareness, which the writer has of himself as the creative source of his work. The texts reveal how the writer was led to innovate in the process of reflecting upon his own vocation, in the very act of writing. Numerous historians of literature have stressed that the romantic period is marked by a transition from an imitative, relatively impersonal and general conception of literary language to an intense preoccupation with the self as the center from which the work issues forth.² We are on safe ground and in good company if we make the origin of modernism, in our sense of the word, coincide with the advent of this self-reflective mood and, more specifically, with the use of literature as a privileged mode of self-reflection, leading man to acquire a deeper knowledge of himself than that which is available from the observation of outward appearances and modes of behavior. It can be shown that not only the characteristics of modern literary styles and techniques, but also the large divisions of modern thought (in relation to such general categories of existence as history, myth, the natural world or society) originate in the new types of self-awareness that abound in the pre-romantic and romantic literature. It can also be shown (this would be the burden of proof of the implicit assumption on which this anthology is based) that this form of self-concern is still the prevalent characteristic of the most recent literary and intellectual movements. It has enabled us to understand that structure of our own consciousness in a manner that is not always reassuring but that determines, for better or for worse, the texture and the mood of the contemporary mind.

2. See, for instance, M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Georges Poulet, *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, chapter vi, Albert Béguin, *L'ame romantique et le rêve*, Karl Wasserman, “The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge,” *Studies in Romanticism*, autumn 1964, William Wimsatt, “The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery,” in *The Verbal Icon* (1952) etc.

If this link between the concept of modernity and the concept of the literary self as a privileged theme for reflection is granted, the principle of selection of the anthology naturally follows. Next to the few programmatic texts mentioned before (in Wordsworth, Stendhal, and Baudelaire) the extracts consist primarily of meditations on states of consciousness, often associated with the act of writing, of which innumerable instances can be found in the literature of the late eighteenth and of the nineteenth century. We have given preference to texts where this meditation takes place in genuine inwardness, prior to the moment when it turns to more elaborate or more exterior forms of human behavior, social, ethical, political, historical or even philosophical. Rather than selecting from Rousseau's *Discourses* or from *Émile*, for instance, we chose passages where Rousseau speaks either directly or through the medium of fiction, about his own static consciousness. We do include, however, texts in which the author defines his relationship toward his work, because these often express the moments at which the private self-awareness is capable of rising to a wider level of generality: hence the inclusion (to remain within the example of Rousseau) of a text such as *Pygmalion*, which deals specifically with Rousseau's view of himself as an artist, next to more confessional or personal passages. By thus limiting ourselves to the problems of the literary self in its originary, intimate manifestations, we try to avoid the confusion that is bound to result from an involvement with problems that belong to more abstract and general reaches of intellectual history. One could compose very useful anthologies on the backgrounds of modern historicism in literature, or the backgrounds of modern conceptions of myth, etc., but [these] would have to be separate books that could not be integrated into a single volume. And they should be used after and not prior to an anthology of this kind.

With the total span of the period and the principle of selection thus defined, it remains to indicate the extent of coverage and the manner in which the anthology is set up. Even with the main theme thus restricted, the amount of available material remains staggering. Any attempt to "cover" the period and to include as large a number as possible of important names has been abandoned. Only representative samples are given (with no attempt to justify omissions); the selections, however, always constitute a rounded whole or are complete in themselves. We have avoided truncating texts or reducing them to a few lapidary statements; on this level of advanced self-awareness, the finer dimensions of language, the subtleties of tone and of metaphor matter a great deal, and statements cannot easily be removed from their context.

In the first part, entitled "Backgrounds," we focus on a few major figures, grouped in a succession that projects meaningfully the curve of the historical evolution leading from the romantic to the contemporary period.

Whenever feasible, the texts have been grouped around one single figure who synthesizes, as it were, the complexities of an entire era. Thus it is possible to suggest the modernity of pre-romanticism merely by means of passages from Rousseau, and to document the important transition from romantic to “modern” poetry by the cultural and extraordinarily influential instance of Baudelaire. This use of unique exemplary characters is not always possible, so that the two other sections of “Backgrounds” (on romanticism proper and on the beginnings of the contemporary novel) had to include a number of names. It is obvious that the proposed groupings are in all cases meant to be representative and that a great number of alternative combinations are possible. But the passages chosen in every instance have been representative and influential; and the justification for a particular choice is stated in the editor’s introduction to each section.

The second part, entitled “Essays,” is restricted to figures that belong, with few exceptions, to the twentieth century. By then modernism becomes, in the first place, outright experimentation with new forms and devices, as in the various avant-garde movements that succeed each other from decade to decade. Examples of such experimentation constitute primary materials and are not properly part of auxiliary texts such as this one, and the essays by Breton and by Brecht have been included for their value as critical documents rather than for their historical significance as collective manifestos. On the other hand, twentieth-century modernism persists also as a continued reflection on the literary premises inherited from the previous century. This reflection becomes increasingly confined to matters of form and literary strategy, and often seems less intimate, less inward than during the romantic period. Where the romantic poet took his own consciousness for his theme, the twentieth-century writer often reflects instead on his literary predecessors, who become a kind of substitute for his own self. Thus the distance between creative writing and criticism grows smaller and smaller, and it becomes not only possible but necessary to mingle the names of poets, novelists, critics, and philosophers in order to capture some of the diversity of twentieth century modernism. Several of the most representative texts are written about the themes or the writers that have been represented in the first part of the anthology, and thus illustrate the continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This re-interpretation of writers who were themselves engaged in self-interpretation opens the way to the kind of insight one would want to see students develop at the contact of contemporary works. The anthology thus leads back to the study of actual works of modern literature. It is not a primary but an auxiliary text, not an outline for a course, but a collection of essays of very high quality that should assist in the self-definition and self-interrogation that the reading of contemporary literature is bound to provoke.

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(Each section is introduced by a general commentary of two or three pages and each particular selection by a brief comment, not more than a page long)

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2. J. J. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*
3. J. J. Rousseau, IV, letter 8, from *Julie ou la nouvelle Heloise*
4. J. J. Rousseau, Second and Fifth *Rêverie*

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7. Kleist, "On the Puppet Theatre"³

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1. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life"
2. Baudelaire, from *Salon* of 1846
3. Baudelaire, "Essay on Laughter"
4. Baudelaire, from on "Wine and Hascgisch" [*sic*]
5. Rimbaud, Letters to Isambard (May 13, 1871) and to Demeny, May 15, 1871

D. The Modern Novel

1. Stendhal, from *Racine and Shakespeare*
2. Stendhal, letter to Balzac
3. Balzac, to be determined
4. Flaubert, from Correspondence

3. Handwritten notes in the margin suggest that de Man was contemplating a revision to insert another section between B and C: "Can have a section from Hegel's *Phenomenology*, on the goal and culmination of an historical process being the collective consciousness of mankind (the 'Geist') becoming aware of itself as self-reflective in all phenomena? This would seem a central, dramatic, and uniquely influential selection. Also Hegel is exciting growing interest among current students." – MMcQ

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4. Réveries (trans. Butterworth, New York University Press)

***The Portable Rousseau:* Principle of Selection**

The selection combines the theoretical side of Rousseau's thought, which is primarily of interest to students of political science and of intellectual history, with the more purely literary components of the works. It also provides the means to make connections between these two aspects of the work, by including such texts as the "Essay on the Origins of Language," in which the link between Rousseau's reflections on language and his political theory becomes manifest. The book could therefore be used *in* courses in European civilization, *in* political theory, in the history of the Enlightenment, in the European novel, in romanticism or even in linguistics. The inclusion of the two main theoretical texts in unabridged form (*The Second Discourse on The Origins of Inequality* and *The Social Contract*) weighs the contents in the direction of political theory, but the literature-oriented interpretation, in the introduction, notes and explanatory comments, restores the balance. The inclusion of shorted and lesser-known literary texts serves the same purpose, since the two main literary texts (*Julie* and *The Confessions*) are too lengthy to be included in toto. The integrity of the texts is maintained as faithfully as possible, by respecting the author's own internal divisions. For instance, the extracts from the epistolary novel *Julie* are always the complete units of the individual letters, given in their entirety. The excerpts have to be fragments but, whenever possible, the fragments are complete in themselves. The religious and educational elements that are parts of Rousseau's contribution are represented in the selections from *Emile* and *Julie* and especially in the famous public letters (to Voltaire, to Mr de Franquieres, etc.) in which his views on providence and faith are stated with particular clarity.

Outline for a Monograph on Nietzsche

The juxtaposition of Rousseau and Nietzsche has not been studied, partly because Nietzsche has nothing good to say about Rousseau, partly because their main common interest has for a long time been neglected in works dealing with these two authors. Of late however the theory of language and of rhetoric that both develop in their early writings has received more and more attention (on Rousseau in the work of J. Derrida, R. Althusser, implicitly in Judith Shklar, etc.; on Nietzsche in recent books and articles by Ph. Lacoue Labarthe, Gilles Deleuze, B. Pautrat, etc.). The combined presence, in both authors, of an explicit theory of figural language together with concerns of an ethical and philosophical nature is particularly illuminating. In preparatory studies for this book¹ I have begun to establish the systematic link between, on the one hand, the theoretical considerations on language in Rousseau's *Second Discourse* and in Nietzsche's early course on rhetoric, and, on the other hand, the historical, ethical and political themes that remain prevalent in their subsequent works (*The Social Contract*, *Julie*, *Emile*; *The Genealogy of Morals*, *Zarathustra*, *The Will to Power*). Similar linkages between linguistic concerns and thematic assertions are found in various literary figures of the same period (Wordsworth, Mallarmé, Proust, Rilke, and others). The book tries to make a methodological contribution to the study of the relationship between the linguistic and the historical interpretation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

I began work on this project during 1970–71 under a Grant from the Guggenheim Foundation; the results of my preliminary work have appeared

1. "Theory of Metaphor in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*," forthcoming in *Studies in Romanticism*.

"Genesis and Genealogy in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*," *Diacritics*, winter 1972.

"Theory and Practice of Rhetoric in the Early Nietzsche," forthcoming in Proceedings of the Nietzsche Symposium held in November 1972 at Syracuse University.

in the various papers published and delivered since.² I plan to spend the full year of 1973–74 in Switzerland and to complete the book before my return to New Haven in the summer of 1974. Besides moving to Zurich and back, I will have to travel to Geneva, Neuchatel, Paris, Berlin, etc. to consult Rousseau and Nietzsche archives and to confer with specialists.

2. See note 1 and also "Introduction à la poésie de Rilke," in R. M. Rilke, *Oeuvres complètes*, II (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972).

"Proust et l'allégorie de la lecture," in *Moments premiers, hommage à G. Poulet* (Paris: José Corti, 1973).

From Nietzsche to Rousseau

Statement

The project is the outcome of a fifteen-year-long concern with the history and the poetics of romantic and post-romantic literature in France, Germany and England. It began as a study of the poetry of Mallarmé, Yeats, and George written as a doctoral dissertation at Harvard under the title "The Post-Romantic Predicament." In the course of rewriting this thesis for publication, I increasingly felt the need for a wider historical framework reaching back to the later part of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the experience of teaching alternatively in the US and in Europe has led me to reflect on certain comparative problems in the methodology of literary analysis. The results of these reflections appear in the book entitled *The Crisis of Contemporary Criticism*, scheduled to appear in 1970 at the Oxford University Press. This book, however, is only the by-product of the larger project described in this application, in which my experiences with continental and American methods of literary interpretation should find their practical application.

My continued interest in the problem of romanticism has focused on a group of texts by Rousseau, Hölderlin, Wordsworth, Keats, Kleist, Friedrich Schlegel, etc., as well as on works of a later period by Baudelaire, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Yeats, Rilke, George, Proust and others. From these texts, I have moved on to general considerations on distinctive aspects of romantic diction and rhetoric. Finally, the critical examination of patterns of interpretation that seem to recur everywhere, regardless of the considerable differences in the conception and definition of romanticism, has led me to adopt the historical framework briefly described in the outline that follows.

The list of my publications illustrates the orientation and the persistence of my concerns. A certain amount of these articles are to be used in the book

with minor modifications. In addition, I intend to use six lectures written for a Gauss seminar on "The Contemporary Interpretation of Romanticism" conducted at Princeton in the spring of 1966 as well as the revised manuscript of the thesis on Mallarmé and Yeats.

Plans for Research

I plan to complete a study of European romanticism and post-romanticism in two parts, to be entitled *From Rousseau to Nietzsche*. The first part consists primarily of a reinterpretation of Rousseau and of the Rousseauistic heritage in France, Germany and England, based on the particular configuration of the categories of self, language and time that appear in this writer. My starting point is the existence of what seems to be a recurrent pattern of error in Rousseau interpretation. Although the once-prevalent characterization of Rousseau as a naturalistic primitivist has long since been discarded by such commentators as Cassirer, Lovejoy, Derathé and Starobinski, regressive patterns linger on in even the most recent readings. The reduction to nature has been replaced by a reduction to originary pre-rational sensation (Marcel Raymond, Georges Poulet), by a mystified irrationalism of a self that remains inaccessible to reflection (Starobinski) or by a primitivistic conception of language as temporal origin (Jacques Derrida). I try to show how Rousseau's work expresses a critical awareness of the very positions attributed to him and how each of these regressive movements appears in his work as an intellectual temptation that is to be overcome, his literary language being the medium in and by which this renunciation takes place. His own awareness is therefore often ahead of that of his interpreters, who derive their critical insight from the very text they pretend to expose.

The pattern thus isolated in Rousseau turns out to be paradigmatic for the interpretation of romanticism in general. A similar interplay between writers and their critics, within very different contexts and with different emphases, is shown to occur in other poets, sometimes but not necessarily under the direct influence of Rousseau. Wordsworth and Hölderlin are the key examples, while Keats and possibly others such as Blake and Novalis serve as counterinstances of poets whose experience can, despite their own claims to the contrary, be subsumed under "Rousseauistic" categories. Similar tensions pervade the interpretation of more general aspects of romantic diction and rhetoric, as in the opposition between symbol and allegory, between a figural and a representational diction, between an ironic and a confessional self. The first section of the book attempts a redefinition of romanticism by means of a "deconstruction" of the prevailing critical picture and a return to texts that have been neglected or misinterpreted.

The second part extends the problem to the historical question of the romantic heritage in the nineteenth and twentieth century. I contend that the insight achieved in the latter half of the eighteenth century is in part lost during the subsequent era. The loss is apparent in actual literary techniques as well as in the manner in which nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers understand their relationship to their predecessors. I try to show that the loss is only apparent and that the configuration defined in the first part remains in fact determining for the later period as well, sometimes consciously so, more often as an underlying negative pressure to which the writer reacts without being fully aware of its presence. Using texts from Baudelaire, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Yeats, Proust, Rilke and others, the section aims at a reconsideration of our own modernity in its relationship to romanticism. The resulting scheme should justify the historical approach used throughout the book, based on dialectic of insight and error, of blindness and awareness, rather than on genetic continuity. The concluding essay on Nietzsche shows an extreme modern example of a reversed Rousseauism in its full implications and sums up the movement leading from Rousseau to Nietzsche as a philosophical development centered on the question of literary language. The reversed but complementary views of Rousseau and Nietzsche on the nature of language provide the theoretical commentary to the historical movement described in the other chapters of the book.

About two-thirds of the book are completed in the form of published articles, of six lectures written for a Gauss Seminar on "The Contemporary Interpretation of Romanticism" conducted at Princeton in the spring of 1966, and of a much revised version of my dissertation on Mallarmé and Yeats. In accordance with its own thesis, the book is not planned as a continuous historical narrative but as a series of critical interpretations adding up to a comprehensive view. The most important additions are chapters on privileged moments in Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Rousseau's *Confessions*, on the theme of Narcissus in romantic and post-romantic literature, on patterns of narrative irony in Flaubert and Proust and especially the concluding chapter on Rousseau's and Nietzsche's conception of literary language. The research for these chapters has been completed in seminars taught at Cornell, Zürich, and Johns Hopkins.

Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust

9. A summary of the book, with highlights and pertinent points which might guide us in the preparation of advertising, publicity, jacket, and catalog copy. Use reverse side of sheet if more space is needed. We would appreciate having about 300 words. Your own abstract of the book is essential as a guide in our advertising and promotion.

The book offers a reading of a group of authors and texts dating from 1750 to the early twentieth century and used as examples to illustrate a mode of reading and of interpretation. The most extensive reading offered is that of Rousseau, who is considered at length in an overview that includes the major fictional, political and confessional writings. In the case of Proust and of Rilke, the corpus is much less extended, although it claims to be representative of structures that recur in the work as a whole. No such claim is made for Nietzsche, where the reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* and of some sections mostly taken from the posthumous works is preparatory to an understanding of larger works such as *Zarathustra* or *The Genealogy of Morals*. On this level, the book aims to be a contribution to the understanding of four important figures, spanning several genres and a historical period from pre-romanticism to the present, addressed to readers and interpreters of this period.

It also has a wider theoretical aim. The readings start from unresolved difficulties in the critical traditions which these authors have engendered and return to the places in the texts where those difficulties are most clearly apparent or most incisively reflected upon. The close reading of these passages leads to the elaboration of a more general model of textual understanding. The thematic aspects of the texts, their assertions of truth and falsehood (epistemological dimensions) as well as their assertions of values (ethical and aesthetic dimensions) are linked to specific modes of figuration that can be identified and described: chiasmus in Rilke, metaphor in Rousseau's *Second*

Discourse, interplays of tropes too complex for easy classification in the other instances. The description of synchronic figures of substitution leads, by an inner logic embedded in the structure of all tropes, to extended, narrative figures or allegories. The question arises, always by way of loci of romantic resistance, whether such self-generating systems of figuration can account fully for the intricacies of meaning and of signification they produce. The necessity to resort to performative discourse next to the cognitive discourse of tropes points to the complexity, as well as the unavoidability, of the intertwined relationships between these two aspects of language.

Although *Allegories of Reading* does not openly define itself in relation to contemporary trends in literary theory, it implies an analytical rather than polemical discussion of these trends. Several of the traditional oppositions which determine these debates, such as the opposition between semiology and rhetoric, understanding and decoding, formalism and historicism (or ideology), reader- and writer-oriented approaches, etc., are put in question by a rhetorical analysis which ... [text missing].

Aesthetics, Rhetoric, Ideology

[Note: *signifies previously published, ° signifies to be written.]

1. Epistemology of Metaphor*
2. Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion*
3. Diderot's Battle of the Faculties°
4. Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant*
5. Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*
6. Hegel on the Sublime*
7. Aestheticism: Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel's Misreading of Kant and Fichte°
8. Critique of Religion and Political Ideology in Kierkegaard and Marx°
9. Rhetoric? Ideology (rhetorical conclusion)

The Resistance to Theory

1. The Resistance to Theory*
2. Reading and History in H. R. Jauss*
3. Hypogram and Inscription in Michael Riffaterre*
4. The Ideology of the Body in Kenneth Burke and Roland Barthes°
- 5/6. Aesthetics and Society in Benjamin and Adorno
(with a concluding section on the theory of the resistance to theory)

Blindness and Insight

1. Criticism and Crisis
2. Form and Intent in the American New Criticism
3. Ludwig Binswanger and the Sublimation of the Self
4. Georg Lukac's Theory of the Novel
- [*sic*] The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's reading of Rousseau
5. Impersonality in the Criticism of Maurice Blanchot

6. The Literary Self as Origin: The Work of Georges Poulet
8. Literary History and Literary Modernity
9. The Rhetoric of Temporality
10. The Dead-End* of Formalist Criticism Lyric and Modernity
12. Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin

Allegories of Reading

Part I Rhetoric

1. Semiology and Rhetoric
2. Tropes (Rilke)
3. Reading (Proust)
4. Genesis and Genealogy (Nietzsche)
5. Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche)
6. Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)

Part II Rousseau

7. Metaphor (*Second Discourse*)
8. Self (*Pygmalion*)
9. Allegory (*Julie*)
10. Allegory of Reading (*Profession de foi*)
11. Promises (*Social Contract*)
12. Excuses (*Confessions*)

11/3/82

Table of Contents for Unfinished Book, in Event of My Death

I

Epistemology of Metaphor CI [CI = *Critical Inquiry*]

Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion EI [EI = English Institute; he gave the piece
as a talk there in 1979]

Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics CI

Hegel on Sublime

Kant: unfinished MLA paper

II

Resistance to Theory

Poetics and Hermeneutics: Jauss

Hypogram and Inscription: Riffaterre

Bakhtin unfinished MLA paper

—

If I live 5–6 years

It should become a book (Minnesota Press)

With addition Bakhtin + Benjamin

Ideology → Burke + Jameson??

5 essays on critical method

It should become a 'major' book Yale? Columbia?
Adding Kaus (*sic*) – Schiller – Fr Schegel (Fichte)
Also Kierkegaard – Marx

Now I have to write
Rousseau for Viking
Marionette Theatre for Columbia
(should be possible even in the 6 months that Dr Weissburg gives me) if I
remain + or – as I am now

Appendix

The Notebooks of Paul de Man 1963–83

The following is a list of the teaching notebooks held in the UCI archive that accompany de Man's seminar program at Zurich, Cornell, John Hopkins and Yale: scope and content are noted under the notebook where appropriate. A full catalogue of the Paul de Man papers can be found at: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf6p30071t/>

Box 10, Folder 11

Yeats and reading notes (Zurich) (1963, June–July)

Includes notes on European romanticism.

Box 10, Folder 12

European romanticism I (Zurich) (1963–64)

Includes notes on Curtius, Rousseau, and Yeats.

Box 10, Folder 13

European romanticism II (Zurich) (1963–64)

Includes notes on Yeats.

Box 10, Folder 14

European romanticism III (Zurich) (1963–64)

Box 10, Folder 15

Übungen, Valère, Rilke, W. Stevens (Zurich) (1964)

Box 10, Folder 16

Mallarmé and George (Zurich) (1964)

Includes notes on Baudelaire, *Madame Bovary*, and Mallarmé.

Box 10, Folder 17

Rilke and George (Zurich); Hölderlin (Cornell) (1964–65)

Box 10, Folder 18

Eighteenth-century novel, Rousseau, Mme. de-Stael (Zurich) (1965)

Box 10, Folder 19

Eighteenth-century novel (Zurich) (1965–66)

Box 10, Folder 20

Eighteenth-century novel, Marivaux, Sterne, Wieland (Zurich) (1965–66)

Box 10, Folder 21

European romanticism, Keats and Kleist (Zurich) (1965–66)

Box 10, Folder 22

Narcissus (Geneva); Keats and Kleist II (Zurich) (1965–66)

Box 10, Folder 23

Twentieth-century novel (Zurich) (1966)

Box 10, Folder 24

Gide and James II (Zurich) (1966)

Box 10, Folder 25

Gide and James III (Zurich) (1966)

Box 10, Folder 26–27

Nouvelle Héloïse, Die Wahlverwandtschaft (Zurich) (1966)

Box 10, Folder 28

Narcissus (Cornell) (1966)
Includes notes on Echo and Rilke.

Box 10, Folder 29

Hawthorne and James II (Zurich); James and Proust I (Zurich) (1967–68)

Box 10, Folder 30

Seminar: Princeton lectures II (Zurich); Irony I (Zurich) (1967–68)
Includes notes on allegory, irony, and symbol.

Box 10, Folder 31

Hawthorne and James (Zurich; Princeton) (1967)
Includes notes on Coleridge, De Quincey, and Hawthorne

Box 10, Folder 32

Baudelaire (Cornell); untitled notebook (Zurich) (1967–68)

Box 11, Folder 1

Irony II (Zurich) (1967–68)

Box 11, Folder 2

Untitled notebook (Zurich); Rilke and Shelley (Zurich) (1967–68)

Box 11, Folder 3

James and Proust (Zurich) (1968)

Box 11, Folder 4

Derrida, etc. (Zurich) (1968–69)

Box 11, Folder 5

Narcissus (Zurich); Derrida *proseminaire* (1968–69)
Includes notes on Nietzsche.

Box 11, Folder 6

Modernity I (Zurich) (1968–69)

Box 11, Folder 7

Proust (Johns Hopkins) (1969)
Includes notes on comedy.

Box 11, Folder 8

Rousseau and Nietzsche (Johns Hopkins) (1969)
Includes notes on freedom, history, law, and narration.

Box 11, Folder 9

Narcissus, Coleridge, Hazlit, Schlegel; Modernity I (Zurich); Proust (Zurich) (1968–69)

Box 11, Folder 10

Rousseau and Nietzsche (Johns Hopkins); *Eigenart der literarischen* (Zurich) (1969–71)

Box 11, Folder 11

Nietzsche (Yale) (1971)

Includes notes on Rousseau

Box 11, Folder 12

Rousseau (Yale); Proust (Yale) (1971–72)

Box 12, Folder 1

Work journal: Rousseau, Mallarmé, Wordsworth, autobiography (1972, June)

Includes notes on Hartman and rhetorical deconstruction.

Box 12, Folder 2

Methodology (Zurich) (circa 1973–74)

Box 12, Folder 3

Nietzsche (Zurich); eighteenth-century novel (Yale) (1973–74)

Box 12, Folder 4

Rousseau (Berlin) (circa 1973–74)

Box 12, Folder 5

Rousseau (Zurich) (1974)

Includes notes on critical methods.

Box 12, Folder 6

Theory of rhetoric in the eighteenth century, *Jacques le fataliste* (Yale); Valéry (Yale) (1974–76)

Includes notes on dialogism, Genette, and narrative.

Box 12, Folder 7

Theories of language in the eighteenth century (Yale) (1975)

Box 12, Folder 8

Rhetorical readings (Yale); Irony (Yale) (1975–76)

Box 12, Folder 9

Gide (Yale) (1975)

Box 12, Folder 10

NEH Seminar (Yale) (1976)

Includes notes on art, Benjamin, deconstruction, history, language, Nietzsche, and self.

Box 13, Folder 1

Epistemology of metaphor (Yale) (1977)

Box 13, Folder 2

Lit Z (Yale) (1977)

Box 13, Folder 3

Baudelaire, Yeats, Rilke (Yale) (1978)

Includes notes on irony, Shelley, and Schlegel.

Box 13, Folder 4

Rhetoric of romanticism (Konstanz) (1978)

Box 13, Folder 5

Lyric: Baudelaire, Yeats, Rilke (Konstanz) (1978)

Box 13, Folder 6

Autobiography (Yale) (1978)

Box 13, Folder 7

Baudelaire and Rimbaud (Zurich) (1978)

Box 13, Folder 8

Baudelaire, Rilke, Yeats, Theory of Rhetorique (Chicago) (1979)

Box 14, Folder 1

Descartes and Pascal (Yale) (1979)

Box 14, Folder 2

Lit 130 b (Lit Z), with J. Hillis Miller (Yale); Hegel (Yale) (1979–80)

Box 14, Folder 3

Rhetorical readings (Yale); Kleist (Irvine) (1979)

Box 14, Folder 4

Hegel and English romanticism, with Hartman (Yale) (1980)

Box 14, Folder 5

Rhetorical Readings, Lit Z (130b) (Yale) (1981)

Includes notes on Benjamin and translation.

Box 14, Folder 6

National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar (1981)

Box 14, Folder 7

School of Criticism seminar; Kant and Schiller (Schlegel) (Yale) (1982)

Box 14, Folder 8

Theory of rhetoric in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries (Yale) (1983)

Box 15, Folders 1–5

Undated notebooks

Box 15, Folder 1

Flaubert, Victorian Novel

Includes notes on Condillac, critical methods, Herder, Lukács, Nerval, Rousseau, Valéry, and Wordsworth.

Box 15, Folder 2

Nouvelle Héloïse

Box 15, Folder 3

Keats, *Mme. Bovary*

Box 15, Folder 4

Nietzsche and Schlegel (Iowa); Lectures on Locke, Condillac, Kant, Lecture on Irony: Schlegel and Fichte (Buffalo)

Includes notes on psychoanalysis.

Box 15, Folder 5

List of “cahiers”

Bibliography

This comprehensive bibliography is based on the version compiled by Dr Eddie Yeghiayan when a librarian at University of California, Irvine (UCI). Yeghiayan made a speciality of producing extensive scholarly bibliographies as part of his work on the Critical Theory Archive and the Welles Lectures. This bibliography of de Man was for many years available on-line through the UCI portal; sadly, this is no longer the case. It is reproduced here in part to demonstrate the academic work of the Department of Archives and Special Collections at UCI, where the de Man papers are held.

All texts 1939–43 were reprinted in their original language, unless otherwise stated, in *Wartime Journalism, 1939–1943* (for which, see under 1988, below).

1936

“L’humanité et l’homme.” *Le Rouge et le Noir: hebdomadaire littéraire, artistique, politique et social* (September 9, 1936), 1(1).

1939

“L’Examen médical des étudiants.” *Jeudi* (March 23, 1939), 1(1):1, 5.

“Les Comédiens routiers.” *Jeudi* (March 30, 1939), 1(2):1, 2.

“L’Examen médical des étudiants (suite).” *Jeudi* (March 30, 1939), 1(2):6.

“Un livre sur la guerre.” Review of Jules Romains’ *Prélude à Verdun*, and *Verdun*. *Jeudi* (April 20, 1939), 1(3):4.

“Tribune libre. Défense de la Neutralité.” *Jeudi* (November 9, 1939), 2(2):1–2.

“Les Lettres. André Gide.” *Jeudi* (November 30, 1939), 2(3):4.

1940

“Que pensez-vous de la guerre?” *Jeudi* (January 4, 1940), 2(4):5.

“Le Roman anglais contemporain.” *Les Cahiers du Libre Examen* (January 4, 1940), 4(4):16–19.

- “Editorial” [Unsigned]. *Les Cahiers du Libre Examen* (February 1940), 4(5):1–2.
 “Littérature française.” *Les Cahiers du Libre Examen* (February 1940), 4(5):34–5.
 “Le Mouvement musical. Audition d’élèves au Conservatoire.” *Le Soir* (December 24–26, 1940), 54(315):2.

1941

- “Feuilleton littéraire.” Review of Charles Plisnier’s *Martine*. *Le Soir* (January 16, 1941), 55(14):2.
 “Le Mouvement musical. Le Concert de la Philharmonique.” *Le Soir* (January 27, 1941), 55(23):2.
 “L’Histoire de l’instrument est aussi l’histoire du peuple.” *Le Soir* (January 28, 1941), 55(24):10.
 “L’Organisation de la vie culturelle.” *Le Soir* (February 10, 1941), 55(35):2.
 “Conférence sur la poésie d’Eugenio Montale.” *Le Soir* (February 11, 1941), 55(37):2.
 “Le troisième conférence du professeur Donini.” *Le Soir* (February 18, 1941), 55(42):2.
 “Concert J.-S. Bach à la Philharmonique.” *Le Soir* (February 18, 1941), 55(42):2.
 “Michel-Angelo. La Représentation de gala du film de la Tobis.” *Le Soir* (February 19, 1941), 55(43):2.
 “Concert Joseph Jongen à la Galerie de la Toison d’Or.” *Le Soir* (February 21, 1941), 55(47):2.
 “La Femme à travers la poésie.” *Le Soir* (February 24, 1941), 55(47):2.
 “Grétry écrivain.” *Le Soir* (February 25, 1941), 55(48):6.
 “Un Concert de Jeunes.” *Le Soir* (February 28, 1941), 55(51):2.
 “Bibliographie. Vient de Paraître.” Review of Albert de Ligne’s *Le prince Eugène de Ligne (1804–1880)*. *Le Soir* (February 12, 1941), 55(37):2.
 Review of René Benjamin’s *Le Printemps tragique*. *Le Soir* (February 13, 1941), 55(38):2.
 “Bibliographie.” Review of Dr. Meuleman’s and J. Lamers’ *L’Enfant, notre espérance*. *Le Soir* (February 22–23, 1941), 55(46):2.
 “Les Livres sur la campagne de Belgique.” Review of André l’Hoist, ed., *La Guerre 1940 et le rôle de l’Armée belge*, and F. Rousseaux’s *Ma deuxième guerre*. *Le Soir* (February 25, 1941), 55(48):6.
 “Aux Beaux-Arts. Concert de Musique de Chambre.” *Le Soir* (March 2, 1941), 55(52):2.
 “Aux Beaux-Arts. Récital de chant Suzy Roy et Georges Villier.” *Le Soir* (March 3, 1941), 55(53):2.
 “Les Juifs dans la Littérature actuelle.” *Le Soir* (March 4, 1941), 55(54):6. English language translation appears in Martin McQuillan, *Paul de Man* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 127–9.
 “Aux Beaux-Arts. Récital Jiri Straka.” *Le Soir* (March 5, 1941), 55(55):2.
 “Le Mouvement musical. Au conservatoire. Troisième Concert populaire.” *Le Soir* (March 10, 1941), 55(59):2.
 “A l’Institut de Culture Italienne. Les systèmes impérieux de la Rome antique.” *Le Soir* (March 13, 1941), 55(62):2.
 “Activité des Editions ‘Labor’.” *Le Soir* (March 14, 1941), 55(63):2.
 “A l’Institut de Culture Italienne. Le ‘Risorgimento’ italien.” *Le Soir* (March 17, 1941), 55(65):2.
 “Au Palais des Beaux-Arts. Fête du chant du Printemps.” *Le Soir* (March 24, 1941), 55(71):2.

- “A la Maison de Culture Italienne. La formation de la jeunesse en Italie.” *Le Soir* (March 25, 1941), 55(72):2.
- “Le Folklore musical en Belgique.” *Le Soir* (March 25, 1941), 55(72):10.
- “Deux romans germaniques.” Review of Herman de Man’s *Maria et son charpentier*, and Hans Carossa’s *Les Secrets de la maturité*. *Le Soir* (March 4, 1941), 55(54):6.
- “Notre Chronique Littéraire. Premières réactions de la France littéraire. Review of Bertrand de Jouvenel’s *Après la Défaite*, Drieu la Rochelle’s.” *Nouvelle Revue Française* (February 1941), André Gide’s “Feuillets.” *Nouvelle Revue Française* (December 1944). *Le Soir* (March 18, 1941), 55(66):6.
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