THE PRESENCE OF THE UNKNOWABLE:

THE QUESTION OF THE UNIVERSAL

IN ROMANTIC POETICS AND DECONSTRUCTIVE THEORY

BY

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The Presence of the Unknowable: The Question of the Universal in Romantic Poetics and Deconstructive Theory

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ABSTRACT

While the English Romantic writers did not assume an ability to obtain certain knowledge concerning the world and our relation to it, their poetry was nonetheless informed by the conviction that the particularity of life's experience offers a sense of the universality of the relation of objects in time to the eternal and infinite. This conviction was founded in their knowledge of Classical epistemology and metaphysics; it is the offspring of a marriage of the imagination with reason. This essay explicates the place of this marriage in Romantic poetry and poetics particularly in relation to contemporary deconstructive literary theory, which attempts to construe Romantic poetry without properly understanding this relationship.

Chapter One outlines the significance of this tension for Romantic thought, introduces the Romantic concept of "contrariety" which best expresses it, and points out how a denial of the dynamic nature of the balance in question results for the sciences in hard-headed positivism and mechanism, for the arts in literalism, and for theology in fundamentalism and the reification of myth.

Chapter Two shows how Romantic poetics is seated in a long-standing tradition of Classical metaphysics. It examines relevant sections of Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine, as well as Heidegger and other more contemporary thinkers, in

conjunction with passages of poetry and prose from the Romantic era.

Chapter Three analyzes specific arguments from two of today's most influential literary theorists, Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida. Their inability to grasp the Romantic symbolic is seen to derive from their misunderstanding of certain Classical texts as well as of the place of Classical thought in Romantic practice.

Chapter four examines passages from Shelley, Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge and shows that these writers shared some of the fears of the deconstructionist. However, they are able to address their fears with a more profound, enduring, and ultimately, useful vision because they have a more coherent understanding of the interpenetration--or contrariety--of philosophy and poetry, of reason and imagination, and of things of this world with the eternal.

FOR MY PARENTS

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PART I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Is God unknown?
Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend
To believe. Such is man's measure.
Well deserving, yet poetically
Man dwells on this earth. But the shadow
Of the starry night is no more pure, if I may say so,
Than man, said to be the image of God.
Is there a measure on earth? There is
None. No created world ever hindered
The course of thunder.

Hoelderlin
"In Lovely Blue"

To measure the inaccessible consists in mimicking it within the realm of the accessible.

Michel Serres
Literature-Philosophy-Science

PART I.A. INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the writing of this essay I have pored for years over the works of ancient philosophers, Romantic poets, and modern theorists. In "Mont Blanc" Shelley's poetic voice questions whether the natural world is figuring forth a wisdom which he can grasp or whether he dreams, and "the mightier world of sleep/ Spreads far around and inaccessibly/ Its circles" (lines 56-58). The image of ever receding currents which may be bearing away the essence of meaning itself represents to me a very real condition. Whereas in my readings I had hoped to find some resolution--a missing piece--in view of which the "larger picture" would settle into clarity, I always found only another door, another turn in the spiral, or a new, renovated question. Ultimately the demogorgon who lives in the bowels of the liberal arts could tell me only what my heart felt, but I, like Prometheus's Asia, needed the strength that the journey would bring. This particular journey has given me the strength to see my attempts at making meaning crushed, as in the "Triumph of Life," the "shape all light" tramples the speaker's thoughts "like embers" beneath her feet.

I now believe that at the core of practically every conceivable philosophical stance, there lies a tension. Like twin stars caught in orbit around each other, or like a vortex, this tension cannot be dissolved or frozen if the

meaning and function of the proposition is to be preserved.

There is an unresolvable conflict at the basis of our understanding of the existence of the world and our place in it. More significant, for my purposes, there is a conflict in our theories of how we perceive our world, how we "know" it, and how we create and communicate in it. In their most pejorative aspects these conflicts have caused religious wars, intolerance, and a great deal of intellectual confusion (not to mention a great many Ph.D. dissertations about the confusion). In history's more graceful moments, however, this very tension has opened the door to a less polemic, more tolerant, and quite accessible way of seeing. If there is something that we can call the "Romantic Spirit," it would involve this very liberation from "single vision" and from the dogmatic adherence to any doctrine that would attempt to close down the necessary tensions which, alone, may protect Western culture from an eternity of "stony sleep." This current of Romanticism is easy to describe, as most things are, in the abstract. However, it is precisely in the abstract that the Romantic poet does not want to be. Consequently, the method for cleansing the "doors of perception" (Blake Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 39) cannot be passed along with a smile and an instruction sheet, but must be sought within each heart, as Asia well knew.

My superiors in the world of poetry and poetics have shown me that the most valuable lesson to be learned about the

Romantics is how to come to them within one's self. This means perceiving their writing, perceiving the world they wrote about, and then discovering and creating counter parts to these within ourselves. Such projects, when honestly undertaken, lead to those startling flashes when inner and outer meet and we, for a moment, feel a part of something greater than ourselves--a comforting little hug from the spatio-temporal turmoil of existence. But then we are released again only to watch our attempts to account for these moments be dashed to pieces by those forces greater than ourselves which now seem so totally "other" that we cannot believe we ever felt their embrace. Here is the tension.

A striking aspect of almost all Romantic poetry is its reliance on images of contrariety as a major mode of expression. How is it that darkness feeds "a dying flame"? (Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," line 45) How is it that men can be "Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (Wordsworth Prelude, 1850, 1.lines 301-302), and yet aspire to a vision of unity in which "All things shall live in us and we shall live/ In all things that surround us"? (Wordsworth, variant of The Ruined Cottage in Abrams Natural Supernaturalism, 279) To understand this we must understand the forces which helped to forge what I have called the Romantic Spirit.

It is now a truism that the Romantic "organic" view of the

natural world and man's place in it was a reaction against scientific mechanism. It is also often marked that the theories concerning the imagination and the function of metaphor and symbol which proliferated in the Romantic period were a response to a literal-mindedness that had arisen under the aegis of neoclassicism and that paralleled developments in the sciences. Clearly, natural philosophy and poetics were closely related for the Romantic, as is perhaps best typified by Coleridge's belief that the most creative aspect of the imagination operates in an organic fashion.

The poet interacted with and learned from the natural world, and the beauty and devastation he experienced were his teachers. The implications of this for poetry are that the Romantic poet attempted to recreate or to embody these moments in poetic art in order to create for himself an access to his feelings of harmony while living in an alienating world. The harmony does not arise, however, from ignoring fear or from ignoring darkness. It is more the case, as with Coleridge's wedding guest in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," that something like harmony, or peace, comes from accepting our complicity with the darkness. We, like the Mariner, must continue to retell the story lest we forget that evil is not "other." To forget this would be to experience life's harshness again as an external blow upon the fortress of the self, and again to start the long trek back to a consciousness of our connection with the worst and

the best which befalls us.

Hence, the beauty and the fear which fostered Wordsworth are the beauty of the natural world and fear of its power. There is a very real sense for the Romantic poet in which both of these things are internalized and recreated in every poetic event. Power is immanent in objects of contemplation, as it is immanent in their poetic configurations. Life itself is a matter of articulating and manipulating our impressions of such experiences. In this regard, the Romantic poets are not unlike today's postmodern theorists in their approach to experience and art. It is the particular that strikes us. It is with the particulars of the common day that paradise can be found or not found.

There remains a question, however, as to how it is that some configurations affect us powerfully, while others affect us not at all. What is it that grants certain images and events such force in our perceptions? In their response to these questions, most Romantics did not choose the path of today's postmodern critics and perhaps they resemble more, in this respect, their ancient classical forefathers. The Romantic was sensitive to universal intimations of a pattern in the images that strike us and which seem to awaken, as in Plato's Meno, memories buried in the unconscious. Quite the contrary to what we find in deconstructionism, attempts to explain this aspect of experience generate, for the ancients and for the Romantics, a metaphysics; there is always

something which the object of a moment is translucent to. This something is the force behind the fear and behind the beauty. Much of Romantic art is characterized by the fact that there is an unknowable presence, "The awful shadow of some unseen power" (Shelley "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" line 1), and that internalize as we will, we still can not possess or define this force. Despite our pure-hearted attempts to meet the world on its own terms, it still will not let us know it. There is something about the universe which remains "other," and it is against this that Romantic poetry rails and within this that it finds its wandering way. The poet is forced to concede along with Plato (Charmides, 175), that he knows that he does not know (cf. Shelley's "Hymn").

My object in this essay is to study the historical development of this tension as well as to examine the current critical theory, primarily that which falls under the aegis of deconstruction, which attempts to construe Romantic poetry without understanding this tension properly. Ultimately, it is to the Romantics I look for a better way of seeing the shape and the implications of this problem. The very argument which postmodern deconstructionist theory has with classical language theory (that is, the battle over the role of universals), is anticipated in a Romantic dialectic which seeks to keep this tension alive rather than to settle it in favor of one side over the other. We recognise this tension

in the Romantic concept of contrariety, in which neither of two opposing forces can function without the other, but, in fact, each generates the other perpetually. The experience of the particular and the power of the creative endeavour, therefore, when pushed to the extreme, do not, for the Romantic, yield philosophical nominalism or poetic literalism or idealism. They turn, instead, into their contraries: for philosophy these processes yield an eerie awareness of the unknowable aspect of the world, and for poetics, a respect for the archetypal process of man's coming to terms with the "unknowable."

Two initial points need to be made. The first attaches to our frequent references to "metaphysics" in this paper. Metaphysics has been historically understood to designate the field of philosophical inquiry which addresses the nature of "being": how things are, we might say. Although Plato did not call his pursuits metaphysical, they have been deemed so retrospectively, for his theory of Forms attempts to explain the nature of existence by the introduction of Formal essences in which all of reality participates. Although this is but one way of explaining our world to us, in recent years the appeal to the supra-physical in order to explain the physical has to a large extent usurped the title of "metaphysics," and what used to be subsidiary branches of this science--e.g., positivism and nominalism--are often referred to as quite separate investigations. Consequently,

when the term "metaphysics" is employed in this essay, it is often to the method of explaining the physical or sensible, by looking towards the supra-physical or supra-sensible, or to the non-physical realm itself, that it refers. We can then speak of metaphysics opposing positivism without creating any categorical confusion.

The other essential explanation which suggests itself here involves Romantic contrariety. Blake takes us to the heart of the problem in Milton:

> There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary:
> The Negation must be destroy'd to redeem the Contraries,
> The Negation is a Spectre, the Reasoning Power in Man:
> This is a false Body, an Incrustation over my Immortal
> Spirit, a Selfhood which must be put off & annihilated alway. (142)

Explicitly for Blake and Coleridge, and implicitly for Wordsworth and Shelley, the negation dictates a disjunctive attitude towards the universe. It belongs to a logic which dictates that Nature will yield her secrets to the mechanical mind: that she can be defined, measured, and modeled. Thus "reason" can account for all of our perceptions if we are rigorous enough in our analysis. Furthermore, our perceptions are limited to the data of our senses. Hence the belief that every particle of the universe's mighty flow can be located, identified, and known for what it is. Reason, so understood,

makes a finite nutshell out of something which is, as far as the Romantics are concerned, essentially infinite. Blake's reference to self-hood is two-pronged here, for it is the Self as egoist and tyrant (and scientist and theologian) that demands knowledge of the infinite realms, and prefers power (or a false sense of it) to the beauty of our experiential possibilities. Also, however, this mode of perception reduces the Self, which is infinite when aware of its own capacities, to a finite entity which lives in an eternal power struggle with the external world because it "locates" so little within, and very "reasonably," so much with-out, which it must conquer.

The Romantics locate themselves at that place where inner and outer meet. Experience, for them, constantly generates a new and larger sense of self and a new and more profound sense of the universe. Romantic poetry enacts this infinite process of integration and expansion. Thus, when I say that the experience of the particular does not yield a positivistic attitude for the Romantic, but its contrary, I mean that the Romantic appreciation of concrete particulars does not contribute to a worship of the material but to a recognition of the extent to which the non-material is inseparable from the material and intrinsic to our vision of it. The Romantics do not negate the power of the unseen because of their appreciation of the phenomenal; they instead realize the complicity of the visible with the invisible: they see the two

as contraries.

In terms of poetics, the principle of contrariety resists the limitation of word, image, or a literary work as a whole, to any single, literal, or logically demonstrable meaning. While the concreteness of the literary artifact calls specificity, definition, and even logic into play, this is only a part of the poetic process. Again, the Romantic project is to demonstrate the complicity of this kind of analysis with the more "poetic" task of perceiving that the multiplicity of meanings which attach to any given work of art, can be attended to without destroying meaning itself in the poetic event.

Deconstructionist criticism, when applied to Romantic poetry, accurately perceives the Romantic sense of liberation from all aspects of doctrinal servitude. The Romantics opposed blind adherence to any power-structures which might threaten the individual's abilities to become, each to himself, an oracle. Romantics and deconstructionists agree on the value of experience over and above the value of the abstractions to be made from it. Further than this, however, the deconstructionist cannot go. For while the Romantic, like the deconstructionist, fought dead abstractionism, much of his philosophy was still connected with Classical metaphysics. It is the job of the critic to see the integral role of this thread in Romantic thought instead of claiming, as deconstructionists have, that the struggle concerning the role

and character of the "unseen power" destroys the unity of Romantic poetry without the poet even knowing it. The struggle <u>is</u> the unity; it is the substance and subject of what I think of as the major Romantic inquiry.

Shelley, in the opening stanza of "Mont Blanc," speaks both of that which man creates and that which is other and participates in man's endeavors. He tells of "secret springs" from where "The source of human thought its tribute brings/ Of waters;- with a sound but half its own." I do not think it is unfair to say that deconstructionism can only entertain, and be entertained by, half of the Romantic voice.

PART I.B. MEASUREMENT, LANGUAGE, SCIENCE, AND WHAT THE ROMANTICS KNEW

Chapter Thirteen of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria culminates in a statement that is familiar to every student of Romanticism. "The primary IMAGINATION [is] the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and . . . a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (304). This observation is the measure of the man who made it and it has survived to measure those of us who now try to respond to it. John Donne once described religious language as that in the presence of which, "two men, equally pious, may meet, and one wonder that all should not understand it, and the other as much that any man should" (Expostulation 19, "The Language of God"). It is this ambivalence among people equally intelligent which has historically marred the critical response to Romanticism. Coleridge's statement is emblematic precisely of that aspect of Romanticism which is so immanently meaningful to so many and at the same time totally meaningless to others. For some it helps to explain why Wordsworth's Prelude was apparently among the most oft read literature in bomb shelters in Britain during World War II, while to others it supports the all too prevalent belief that the allegedly slim grasp which the Romantics had on philosophy was well nigh cancelled out by their rampant spiritualism. Our task is to demonstrate that

attention to matters of "spirit" is wedded, in Romantic poetry, to an astute philosophical comprehension of the problems of "being," and that it is this marriage which provides the willing who encounter Romantic literature with greater access to their own spiritual and intellectual resources.

At any rate, Coleridge was in good company. St. Augustine, centuries earlier, had formulated an analogy with undeniable similarities. The divine existence is to the divine nature, he maintained, as man's existence is to human nature or essence. Does Augustine mean that God exists in the same way that men do? If he does, it is curious that such a simple minded thinker should have become so famous as a great sage. If he does not mean this, however, what does he mean? There is nothing mystical or woolly about the answer to this question. We can find it in a philosopher who has to a large extent transcended the reason/passion system of classifying philosophical thought by his clear and honest treatment of both traditional epistemology and metaphysics and questions of religious faith and the experience of the sublime. In the Prolegomena zu einer jeden kunftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten koennen, Kant elaborates on the standard four-term analogy (a:b::c:d), in such a way that the machinations of Augustine and Coleridge become clear. Kant supports the Aristotelian explanation of analogy and thus maintains that the function of analogy is not to point to "an

imperfect resemblance of two things, but to a perfect resemblance of two relationships between quite dissimilar things" (Campbell The Inner Reaches of Outer Space, 56). Furthermore, it is possible to construct an analogy (a:b::c:x) "where "x" represents a quantity that is not only unknown but absolutely unknowable--which is to say, is metaphysical" (Inner Reaches 57). Kant provides us with two examples:

> 1. As the promotion of the happiness of the children (a) is related to the parents' love (b), so is the welfare of the human race (c) to that unknown in God (x) which we call God's love; and
> 2. The causality of the highest cause (x) is precisely, in respect to the world (c), what human reason (b) is in respect to the work of human art (a).
>
> [In the second case] the nature of the highest cause itself remains unknown to me; I only compare its known effect (namely, the constitution of the universe) and the rationality of this effect with the known effects of human reason, and therefore I call that highest cause a Reason, without thereby attributing to it as its proper quality, either the thing that I understand by this term in the case of man, or any other thing with which I am familiar. (Prolegomena, para. 58, footnote 2)

The implication of this, as Kant points out, is that the relationship between the eternal and the infinite (as First Cause) and temporality (as created effect) is by analogy only. "For temporal effects succeed in time their 'efficient' causes" (Inner Reaches 57), which is clearly not the case here. The eternal and the infinite are outside of category and definition, and "God" in this light, "is itself but a

metaphor of the unknowing mind, connotative, not only beyond itself, but beyond thought" (Inner Reaches 57).

This point becomes even more clear in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Here he says that in philosophy, "the analogy is not the equality of two quantitative but of two qualitative relations; and from three given members we can obtain a priori knowledge only of the relation to the fourth, not of the fourth member itself. The relation yields, however, a rule for seeking the fourth member in experience, and a mark whereby it can be detected" (tr. Smith 211). From the structure of an analogy with a missing variable we cannot identify, define or say anything about the variable except what relation it will fall within. In mathematics, we are able to constitute the missing fourth term with the information which the three known terms provide. In the philosophical analogy which Kant is explaining (and which we are also claiming as essentially poetic), our thoughts can only be regulated with regards to the fourth term, and the difference between regulative and constitutive thinking informs the entire direction of this essay. With the sort of analogical thinking which regulates but does not constitute our knowledge of the unknown, we are able to encroach upon the inaccessible, or to perform, as T.S. Eliot says in East Coker, "a raid on the inarticulate," and much scientific discovery stands on such encroachments and raids whose origins have long since been forgotten.

In art, the discovery is of a different sort. In The Doctrine of Signatures, Scott Buchanan says that "The organic patterns that lie back of figures of speech are analogies. From the grammatical approach the analogy appears to be the placing of the elements of two languages side by side to show the common form that their disparate material elements have" (ii). In the type of analogy which forges its way into the unknown, one side of the equal sign deals with the mundane, the other, the metaphysical. Often in metaphorical speech, the mundane drops out and is simply replaced with the "other-worldly" language with which it is in some sense identified. Thus, when Hoelderlin speaks of "measure" (Mass) in our epigraph, he has left out the mundane side of the equal sign which would establish the more straightforward aspects of measurement. He has replaced the mundane with an "other-worldly" application, in which the concept is used analogically to relate how the "immeasurable" becomes the "measure" of man and God.

The medievals, leaning on Aristotle's grammatical sense of these relations, developed a way of talking about the constituents of these "sentences" which is extremely enlightening. For our purposes, their findings are of two-fold interest. While their project, which involves the analysis of language in the abstract, seems anathema to the Romantic concern with process and particularity, my point is that their findings are inherent in Romantic poetics.

Furthermore, although it is conceivable that their way of seeing lends itself to the promotion of positivism, and it may be argued that historically this is precisely what has happened, the Romantics did not make this mistake. It is curious, therefore, that the deconstructionist in his own opposition to the abstractions which positivism generates, cannot more adequately comprehend Romantic poetics, but instead creates his own brand of positivism by clinging to the material and ignoring the abstractions.

The medievals believed that grammatical entities could be discussed in terms of first and second impositions; that is, there are two kinds of uses that we "place on" (impono) words. When a word symbolizes something else--for instance, when "cow" designates an animal or a contented person--it has first imposition. When "cow" refers to itself as a noun, it has second imposition. Furthermore, words of first imposition can have first and second intentions. When a word has its first intention it refers to a concrete object or classes of objects. When in its second intention it refers to universals. Words can refer to both simultaneously, and when they do there is a sense of ambiguity about them that Scott Buchanan has associated with the enactment of the sublime in literature (Doctrine 17).

In a four term analogy (a:b::c:d), "a" is in a ratio with "b"; it bears some grammatical relation to "b" which is simply being expressed by their appearance here together. However,

"a" also bears a relation to "c" as does "b" to "d." What connects "a" to "c" and "b" to "d" Buchanan calls the "lines of signification" (Doctrine 39). "A" signifies "c" by virtue of the positions they hold in their respective ratios. "But if the analogy is well built, we can take the analogy by alternation thus "a:c::b:d," and this means that there is at least one relation between "a" and "c" that is similar to at least one relation between "b" and "d." Then as before "a" will signify "b" and "c" will signify "d" by virtue of their respective corresponding positions in similar ratios" (39). Within its ratio, "a" is in second imposition; it is a grammatical entity which states itself purely in terms of its relation to another grammatical entity. In the context of the whole equation, however, "a" is in first imposition because it signifies something other than itself; it signifies symbolically (not literally) another entity.

The arts and sciences seem to be, to a large extent, based on perceiving relationships. We see something cast a shadow, and we wonder about the relationship of the shadow to the object. We see children who are happy or unhappy, and we wonder what relation this bears to the attention they receive from their parents. These relations are grammatical; one constituent is defined in terms of its connection with the other. These, often subtle, often tenuous arrangements, form the raw material that the artist and the scientist record and formulate. What often gets lost, however, is the other side

of the analogy. The lines of signification are frequently ignored and so what we wind up with are series of relations.

The processes of experimentation, in science, often

> carry the whole burden of significance . . . But when this is the interpretation something like the catastrophe in tragedy takes place in the dramas of experimentation. Operations come and go and the observer is left staring at nothing, and this evanescent character of observations subjected to operational analysis, turns the attention of the observer, who is the hero of the drama, to the laws that are not merely of to-day or of yesterday. (Doctrine 47)

Experimental science is only significant insofar as it forces the sublimation of the data provided by particular operations to a higher order independent of these operations. This higher order cannot be reached via the laws of causation, and thus when scientists use causality alone as their chief method for establishing relationships, they will always draw their lines of signification to other causal connections and ultimately wind up simply establishing the equations for the rules of operation for their particular apparatus. In such cases science relies on observable fact and analogical thinking that is mathematical in form; it does not "refer" to the unknowable for any of its terms. Here we wind up with the tragic hero syndrome, since in this case the experimenter is refusing to recognise the patterns which have guided his behaviour--he will not recognise the universal in the particulars. But because this method does result in the

collection of patterns and relations which grow with the attending refinement of technology, "Its success persuades philosophers that it is the whole of scientific method, and their statement of it has been made into the positivistic and phenomenalistic doctrines under which we still work" (Doctrine 41).

If we believe that certain universal principles govern the natural world, we see science as an attempt to isolate these universals; science articulates the universal so that we may expand our literacy and hence increase our sensitivity and comprehension in our experiences of the world. The "art" of a science involves precisely this process; it translates the logical and grammatical configurations which experiment yields, by a gift of rhetoric, into a proposition which envisions and renders accessible the universal aspect while preserving the dynamic of the concrete relations. The new terms will have both first and second intentions; they will refer to the data and they will refer beyond them. What was once the raw language of experience, that is, our perceptions in a field of inquiry, has been translated or interpreted into a new language. Insofar as the new language describes experience, it signifies our perceptions. When it alludes to a higher plane of differentiation, it gives us a way to symbolize our experiences. A new language is thus created by which we can order our perceptions and sometimes increase our literacy by subsuming other experiences into this order and

thereby rendering intelligible configurations that hitherto had been meaningless. The universals to which we refer here are beyond the reaches of abstraction; they belong to metaphysical questions of "being" which transcend the mechanics of the abstracting process because they cannot rightly be considered apart from the particulars which they represent and the human perceptions of them. The inseparability of questions of existence from existing things will become more clear in our final chapter. In the mean time, suffice it to say that although Plato did not generally recognise the contrariety of being and becoming, he paved the way for a sensitivity to this possibility, for those who were not already eager to become positivists.

Our above discourse on science is the key to a section of the Republic which, as Eric Havelock points out in his book Preface to Plato, baffles empiricists. Here we find that Socrates "damns and dismisses the study of the "visible heaven" (529C7 ff. and especially 530B7)" (259). Havelock claims that Plato is appealing for a graduation away from

> . . . the kind of story of the heavens of which Hesiod's calendar is the epic prototype . . . A star map is an example of what he rejects. He is demanding instead a discourse which shall rearrange these phenomena under general headings or categories of natural law. The visible heavens are to function only as a paradigm from which to elucidate the universal behaviour of bodies, expressed in equations which "are" and do not "become" or change. (259-260)

The perception of similarities and differences in the gradually evolving system of natural law will facilitate the development of our rhetorical powers, that is, our ability to articulate and measure our world.

Wherever universals are invoked, however, they suffer abuses which seem to be responsible for much antagonism and even revolution in the history of ideas. One abuse is that the order-seeking mind will often disregard differences out of what becomes an almost neurotic desire to see similarities. This is the scholar who will have very little interest in the dynamic of the particular and is happy in his academic play-ground toying with abstractions, preferably an even number of them, subsuming reality away without ever once experiencing anything one would be tempted to call sublime. The other abuse is that tendency, insidious because of the sheer humanity of it, to dress learned intuition in the clothes of the Truth. Whatever law is figured forth, and whatever relations are reformulated in light of this law, there will be those who want to claim that these renderings stand proven upon their data, and now that the Truth has been given form, the dialectic can stop.

The parallel tendencies in literary criticism, archetypal reductivism and the deluded sibyl complex, have both fed the fires of reactionary forces, the most recent of which is deconstructionism--the movement that has split the literary world into "them" and the rest of us. It is true that our

attempt to make meaning and our abilities to be creative can be straight-jacketed by the powerful demons of the past, particularly when they have become culturally sentimentalized. Therefore we are wary of old "Truths" and old archetypes. The story of the human need for certainty, however, is a story that just keeps coming back. Had I been unaware of myths of quest and archetypal voyages into the dark recesses of the unknown, I might not have so quickly linked scientific interpretation with its counterpart in literature. By so doing I am reinforcing "quest" mythology and throwing to the winds wariness with regard to historical renditions of mythical structure. Yet to ignore this wealth of mythical design, out of some totalitarian spirit of revolution and opposition, when concrete experience reaffirms archetypal patterns so powerfully, would seem to be throwing the baby out with the bath water. The subtleties of the interaction of particulars with universals cannot be accounted for by an inversion of past orders. My attempt to connect the respective problems of the arts and sciences, in their push/pull attitude towards Truth and certainty has, thus far, only given me a greater insight into the unknown that I am facing, as a light shone from a different source outlines different shapes.

And this quest is not unknown to the deconstructionist either, who, resist as he will, has locked on to psychoanalysis as his model for the journey into the darkness.

There is no escaping. Human beings are stuck with human behaviour. The critic whose interpretation has nothing to do with archetypes and universals, the more he insists upon its ultimate correctness, further substantiates the myth that he is denying. Deconstruction is caught in the embarrassing act of such a denial. The deconstructionist protests too much when he claims that the inaccessibility of certainty is no cause for despair, and that anyone who does, in fact, manifest such despair by attempting to make "meaning" in art or criticism, is manifesting neurosis. In fact, his "problem" with "meaning" is perhaps more serious than that of his "significant other," because in his protestations anxiety is concealed rather than dealt with.

Two neurotic forces then, battle over what "meaning" means and who needs it. Two forces, perpetuating that unfortunate fallacy that one of them must be right, fight over the limits of human expression. And the possibility of meaning without certainty, of profoundness without proof, sneaks quietly away.

** ** **

The potential for the mutual assistance possible between the arts and sciences is particularly clear in contemporary critiques of our society's various theoretical practices. Oliver Sacks, a well known neurologist, for instance, has written a book which is currently popular, entitled The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat. The title story in this collection of case histories concerns a man who has lost his ability to judge, or to use Goethe's phrase, to "live into" his world. Because of neurological damage, this unfortunate individual, Dr P., can only identify abstract qualities in objects around him. A rose, therefore, is, "about six inches in length, a convoluted red form with linear green attachments, [lacking] the simple symmetry of the Platonic solids, although it may have a higher symmetry of its own . . ." (13-4).

In Sacks's introductory remarks he calls for a "romantic science" (5), to replace the limited and limiting scope of neurology and psychology as they exist today. To these comments he now adds:

> Classical neurology (like classical physics) has always been mechanical . . . But our mental processes, which constitute our being and life, are not just abstract and mechanical, but personal, as well--and, as such, involve not just classifying and categorising, but continual judging and feeling also. If this is missing we become computer-like, as Dr P. was. . . By a sort of comic and awful analogy, our current cognitive neurology and psychology resemble nothing so much as poor Dr P.! We need the concrete and real, as he did; and we fail to see this, as he failed to see it. (20)

Thus the spirit of Romanticism is being invoked to breathe life into the mechanistic abstractionism which has allowed the sciences to remove themselves from the "actual."

In the same vein, Leo Marx's essay, "Reflections on the Neo-Romantic Critique of Science," is also relevant to our purposes. Marx notes that, "most of the themes which figure prominently in the current criticism of science were anticipated by the writers of the romantic era" (62). Major among these "themes" is the claim that "Scientific attitude is . . . inadequate to the (unified) nature of nature, which is assumed to be a whole distinct from the sum of its parts, and hence not apprehensible by means of the piecemeal, or analytic, procedures which dominate (normal) scientific inquiry" (62).

Clearly, Sacks resorts to Romanticism as a way of returning to the "particulars" that science has wandered away from. In Marx, on the other hand, Romanticism is turned to because of its sympathy for a wholeness, or a fabric, which exists in things though it is not empirically observable in the physical world. One calls for something that sounds like empiricism, the other speaks against it. Is there a contradiction here? Only to those who fail to grasp what the Romantics knew.

Mechanism, when adopted as a world view, must, according to the famous physicist Ilya Prigogine, work in terms of closed systems (Order Out of Chaos xv). These systems are the

products of abstract analysis by which it should be possible to account for all of nature in terms of fixed sets of formal laws. Organicism, on the other hand, has always been associated with attention to the particular, that is, with change and growth and process as it is manifested in the particular, but apparently impossible to consider in terms of formal laws which founder on whatever noumenal mysteries account for all the complexities of our changing world. Romanticism involves both the noumenal--the unknowable essence of things--and the particulars which provide our window, should we choose to look through it, into the unknown. Deconstruction, however, attaches with enthusiasm to all aspects of flux, but totally rejects the noumenal in favor of the appearance of things. Deconstruction is interested not at all in any "unified" concept of nature. The deconstructive emphasis is on the isolation of objects and perceptions in the world. Furthermore, language for the deconstructionist reflects objects, not ideas. Parts II and III of this essay discuss the fact that the deconstructionist sees no cause to look to metaphysics for an explanation of meaning.

Curiously, therefore, while deconstruction manifests the fascination with change which characterizes the organic perspective, its denial of metaphysics places it precariously on the edge of empiricism. The difference is that empiricism strives, at least, to account for the data of experience in systematic terms; conceptualization is part of the empirical

process. Deconstruction, however, is interested in demonstrating the impossibility of any systematic, meaningful, conceptualization. The vantage point it has chosen for itself, it seems, is the narrowest of any we have discussed so far. Like Romanticism, deconstruction dwells with flux, but a flux which it deems chaotic and inscrutable as we will see later in our discussion of Paul de Man.

There is a sense in which the most important questions for aesthetics, poetics, and meaning theory, all boil down to the problem of particulars and universals. Michel Serres' use of information theory to distinguish between noise and information is relevant here. In order for two parties to communicate successfully they must be allied in their attempt to overcome what Serres calls "the third man" (Literature-Philosophy-Science 67). The third man is the accidental noise which originates with the environment and/or the particular conditions governing the communicants: "the clumsiness, the education, the passion or the illness" (66). Residual noise in the written text Serres dubs "cacography." But to overcome the cacography and effectively communicate we have to heed the universal behind the accidents of circumstance; we "eliminate the empirical" and "dematerialize reasoning" (69). The third man is the empirical domain. Communication is made possible by universals or, we may say, by a process of analogy: the perception of sameness in difference.

An obvious objection to applying this theory of

communication to the arts is that the scope of artistic endeavor has often been thought of as an infinitude of variations on certain predominant or "archetypal" aspects of the human condition. If this is the case, it is the pleasure which the beauty of each <u>particular</u> work evokes that is important in our interaction with art. It is tragic to contemplate the overthrow of the experience of those particulars for the sake of the "amplification" of symbols which seem, by comparison, static. Is great art, then, "cacography"? And aesthetics the study of noise?

It seems more likely that while the particulars of each event must take precedence, the universal cannot be ignored if any convergence of interpretation and meaning is to be struck. Deconstruction, at its worst, is the study of cacography. The difference between this sort of deconstruction, and archetypal analysis which can be found in writers as disparate as Vico, Jung and Frye, is that bad deconstruction will tend to ignore the universal behind the particular. It loves the particular, the marginal, and the noisy <u>qua</u> particular, marginal and noisy.

The possibilities for deconstruction on its best behaviour, however, are perhaps most helpfully described by Jean Francois Lyotard in his book <u>The Postmodern Condition</u>. Lyotard discusses the postmodern disdain for our Western preoccupation with the all important "consensus of taste," but he at least perceives the tendency which is currently unfolding itself as

"representing" something; it is guided by "the unpresentable" itself, instead of consigning all unknowables to the eternally irrelevant.

> It is that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. (81)

The condition of modernism is that it deals with the problems of presenting the unpresentable: the search for an object to match the concept. It is conducive to the experience of the "sublime," in part by operating in terms of the "recognizable consistencies" of artistic and natural form--which is what we call "the beautiful"--but more specifically, through awakening the pain of realization that "imagination" cannot equal the "concept" of the unseen fabric of reality (Postmodern 81). By Lyotard's definition, modernism is melancholy because it is nostalgic, and it laments "the powerlessness of the faculty of presentation" (79). Postmodernism celebrates "the increase of being and jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game" (80).

Modernism is often considered to have roots deep in Romantic melancholy; it is thought of as an elaboration, as it were, on the darker side of the Romantic experience of nature's power and mystery. However, as Lyotard points out, "the generations

precipitate themselves" (79). In an infinite series of repetitions, postmodernism is, according to this scheme, nascent modernism. As we shall see, when the unpresentable is thought of primarily as a gap between the artistic image and the concept, attempts at presentation will always give way to a sense of alienation brought on either by the brutality of such a project or by the impossibility of it.

Lyotard defines the implications of the postmodern position for meaning theory in terms of an on-going historical dialectic concerning our attitude towards imponderables. Deconstruction is the major movement in the postmodern swing of the pendulum. However, as with children rebelling against "established order," theoretical necessity does not guarantee that the practical results will be pleasant. In the practice of literary criticism, deconstruction actively castigates art which manifests attention to the "other," when it is allowed its mystery or, more explicitly, when it is allowed its "otherness." Thus the "unpresentable," for the deconstructionist, becomes either presentable or it becomes nothing. No mystery allowed.

An interesting indictment of the effects of this deconstructive bent which has always been present in the annals of Western thought, is provided in the physicist David Bohm's book, Wholeness and the Implicate Order. Measurement is a very important concept for Bohm, and he discusses it precisely in terms of the ratios of proportion or analogies

which we have already introduced. He speaks of measure as we commonly understand it, that is, the application of fixed, external, systems of assessment to objects clearly quantifiable by such systems. But the process which primarily concerns him, and us, is that which is relevant "inwardly to the very nature of things" (20-1):

> When Newton perceived the insight of universal gravitation, what he saw could be put in this way: "As the apple falls, so does the moon, and so indeed does everything." To exhibit the form of the ratio yet more explicitly, one can write: "A:B::C:D::E:F" where "A" and "B" represent successive positions of the apple at successive moments of time, "C" and "D" those of the moon, and "E" and "F" those of any other object. Whenever we find a theoretical reason for something, we are exemplifying this notion of ratio, in the sense of implying that as the various aspects are related in our ideas, so they are related in the thing that the idea is about. The essential reason or ratio of a thing is then the totality of inner proportions in its structure, and in the process in which it forms, maintains itself, and ultimately dissolves. In this view, to understand such ratio is to understand the "innermost being" of that thing. (21)

Empiricism only measures the network of connections and causes observable in the universe. But epistemology, when grounded in metaphysics, perceives relations in the "ideas" which correspond to these objects, and by so doing, increases our ability to interpret the data of our experience and increases our literacy of nature's types and tokens. Measure, therefore, is insight into the internal essence of objects in the world. However, even this sort of measure, which cannot be codified and transmitted in the same manner that standard

weights and measures can, is still the product of the human imagination in the face of what Bohm calls "primary reality" (25). This primary reality is, in fact, immeasurable, and the Sanskrit term maya, which means illusion but comes from the same root as measure, reminds us that our insights are produced by us, and are not necessarily inherent in the nature of things. Nonetheless, attempts at perceiving ever greater patterns in ideas and in the things which they attach to has the result of creating greater harmony in a lived existence in the sensible world and a greater sense of connection with the immeasurable and imponderable primary reality.

> But original and creative insight within the whole field of measure is the action of the immeasurable. For when such insight occurs, the source cannot be within ideas already contained in the field of measure but rather has to be in the immeasurable, which contains the essential formative cause of all that happens in the field of measure. The measurable and the immeasurable are then in harmony and indeed one sees that they are but different ways of considering the one and undivided whole. (Wholeness 25-6)

Profound insight does not occur, as we noted in the case of our "tragic" scientist (see above 20), from meditation on the simply observable (measurable) relations in a field of inquiry. Instead, it is in those moments when that which is unpresentable makes itself present in our experience of the phenomenal world, and we are transported to a place where this presence is meaningful--although still not measurable--that "we see into the life of things" (Wordsworth "Tintern Abbey,"

line 49).

The problem which the Western world faces is that this profounder aspect of measurement has, over the centuries, been submitted time and time again to processes of standardization and mechanization ("vulgarization" as Blake would say), which, for the sake of convenience, strive to reduce intuition and insight to more managable systems of rule and habit. Both the Romantic and the deconstructionist have reacted against this, but again, as Part II and III should make clear, deconstructive behavior only amplifies the portion of the dialectic which enhances fragmentation. In their attempt to avoid metaphysics, which lends itself too easily to irrelevant conceptualization, the deconstructionist has opted for a kind of literary empiricism, which cannot be conceptualized because it does not rest on the kind of measure or ratio which we have been discussing, but is based instead on theories concerning isolation and difference. Bohm never specifically addresses deconstructionism, but he points out that the structure of our thought about the nature of our world and our place in it have become fragmented because of our assumption that our perceptions present us with a model of "what the world is" (Wholeness 27). Furthermore, language, and now we must add, language theory, which reflect our experience of ourselves as isolated subjects interacting with isolated objects, constantly obliges us to perceive life in terms of fragments. In fact the process of abstracting, which is necessary for us

to isolate and define individual entities, and as such makes language possible, must, after it has done its conceptualizing work, re-introduce the concept into the dynamic of the on-going flux of the universe. Therefore, although we can freeze a vortex into a series of diagrams which chart its motions in order to better understand its nature, we must remember that these diagrams are an abstraction, not a vortex. The vortex is process.

So with language. A process of conceptualization has facilitated our ability to translate experience into language, but we must not forget why this conceptualization has taken place. The positivist or empiricist may forget why, or even that, when we contemplate a diagram of a vortex we are not, by so doing, comprehending a vortex. Likewise, when we understand a subject-verb-object statement, we are not necessarily enhancing our ability to measure our world in a way that will bring us closer to primary reality. What will perhaps be more successful along these lines is remembering the fluid aspect of reality and seeking to recreate it in language. This does not mean that we should simply heed the flux and flow of our experience, but instead that we should bear in mind the relation of subject with object, perceiver with perceived, agent with action, and becoming with being.

Oswald Spengler has isolated a parallel problem in mathematics. In The Decline of the West, he points out that since classical antiquity we have been dominated by a stubborn

belief in numbers as magnitudes and that this is the basis of written notation. Now, this notation system threatens to "pervert its real content" (56). The new number is really "function": "function itself as a unit, as element, the variable relation no longer capable of being optically defined" (56). The old notation system, however, as in Bohm's account of the effects of linguistic structure, seems to force mathematicians into a less dynamic frame of mind than their abilities deserve. Function in language is what Bohm too is calling for: the relation of objects instead of the definition of objects, but both thinkers see the interplay of the abstract with the concrete in their demands.

We are being asked once again to "live into" our world, to return to a sense of its aliveness and our connection with it. It is one of the major tasks of this paper, however, to point out that there is a great difference between this activity as it occurred before Plato and as it can occur now in his wake. Bohm, and others like him, require that we return to what is in some sense a primitive or infantile interaction with the world. Indeed it has been pointed out that in primitive languages, preceding the Classical era in Greece, there was a tendency to use a single word to designate opposites. The Egyptians, for instance, employed one word to represent dark and light, another for strong and weak, etc., (Karl Abel Uber den Gegensinn der Urworte, qtd. in Freud "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words"). The project of leaving language open

to context, in which fixed definitions are not necessary in order to make meaning, is what Bohm outlines in his discussion of the idea of relevance (Wholeness 33-37). The deconstructionist would gladly agree with this aspect of his position, and yet what the Romantics knew is that the Platonic theory of language grew out of an attempt to explain our ability to recognize material attributes and abstract concepts both sensibly and intelligibly.

Plato made language self-conscious and consequently much fluidity was lost, just as Greek philosophers fastened on magnitude and logos for their number theory, delaying the advent of the irrational number (the alogos) by, in some sense, rejecting its role in mathematical thought. But our return to "fluidity" can only be meaningful after such a process of conceptualization has taken place. Thus, the deconstructionist call to abandon the immeasurable, in favor of the sensible, the actual, and the now, represents no progress at all. Deconstruction, like the varieties of abstractionism it opposes, is essentially non-poetic. The poetics called for--the "putting together" required to put an end to all the hideous strains of fragmentation that plague us--involves a vision of the implication of the immeasurable with the measurable.

Heidegger, in his discussion of Hoelderlin's "In Lovely Blue," describes the poet thus:

> Yet the poet, if he is a poet, does not describe the mere appearance of sky and earth. The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is--unknown. (Poetry, Language, Thought 225)

Learning to "mimick" the inaccessible in the realm of the accessible without doing violence to either is the poetic project. Metaphor is our share in the mysterium tremendum; it is the familiar connecting with the strange and the strange figuring itself forth in the familiar. To demonstrate Romantic poiesis--the dynamic synthesis which is the heart of Romantic "mimicry"--is the ultimate goal of this paper.

PART II: THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF LOGOCENTRISM

OR

WHAT TO DO WITH A METAPHOR

Die Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh--Trieb uberall zu Hause zu sein.

Novalis

The literature of mysticism provides a path for those who "ask the way to get lost." . . . It teaches "how not to return."

de Certeau
Heterologies

PART II.A. THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF LOGOCENTRISM

In the interests of "getting lost," the era in which we now find ourselves, that of postmodernism, has hatched a movement bent on very little else. Since, however, it is their business to promote disorientation, it is difficult to say anything about this movement upon which a random majority of its proponents would concur. Nonetheless, most would agree, I think, that deconstruction (as it is called in those foolish moments when its adherents believe that anything can meaningfully be called anything), is largely the snowball that began in the mittens of Jacques Derrida. The snowball's target is what Derrida takes to be the fundamental sin handed down through the history of ideas in the West in the form of logocentrism. This curious idolatry, the worship of the logos, is the product of our Western anxiety that our experience of the world and of ourselves in it should somehow be meaningful. The success of logocentrism testifies, according to Derrida, to our hubris and megalomania. We have, that is, in our art, in our major philosophies, and in certain generally held dogmas of the Christian tradition, quite successfully deluded ourselves that there is, indeed, meaning in our experiences and order in the world. The theoretical underpinnings of this belief, which deconstruction seeks to eradicate, are described as being dominated by the authority of the logos. Accordingly, the

word, the symbol, and even "the larger picture" which religion, literature, and philosophy, variously figure forth, represent a code which can be correctly transliterated. Hence, power is wielded by those with the "correct interpretation," and the complexities of human experience are simplified, beyond relevance, into a "system" which is so much the product of our need for meaning that it ceases to be meaningful.

Derrida claims:

> By an odd fate, the very metaphysicians who think to escape the world of appearance are constrained to live perpetually in allegory. A sorry lot of poets, they dim the colors of the ancient fables, and they themselves but the garners of fables. They produce white mythology . . . . What is metaphysics?--a white mythology which assumes and reflects Western culture: logos--that is, the mythos of his idiom, for the universal form of that which it is still his inescapable desire to call Reason.
> ("White Mythology")

This is the deconstructive diagnosis, and the prescription is the erasure of all power structures which have assumed the authority to dictate the "universal forms" of Reason through the ages. The question which is implicit in every perspective which this paper offers, however, is can the patient survive such a cure?

To some extent the deconstructive project sounds familiar to the Romantic scholar, and herein lies the subject of this chapter. "The way to get lost" is, in part, the inquiry of both the Romantic and the deconstructionist, but they

undertake their tasks with such different visions that for the Romantic "getting lost" and "being everywhere at home" pose no contradictions, while for the deconstructionist, home is a concept that ceases to have meaning. The similarities and differences of the two positions, as we have indicated, are perhaps most clearly visible in the context of the ancient philosophy which gave rise to logocentrism. First, however, we must briefly outline the tradition that we will be tracing back to its origins.

Derrida believes that sign theory has "metaphysical-theological roots" which have hitherto grounded all philosophical approaches to it in a distinction between the sensible and the intelligible. Indeed, he cites Heidegger's term "onto-theology" as a symptom of this condition and focuses attention on it for two reasons. First, Heidegger participates in a metaphysics which allows the empirical world its order and substance only through an appeal to a non-empirical, transcendent, intelligible, other. Second, the resulting concept of transcendent "being" which grants the presence of the "absolute" in things of this world, allows signification systems an ideal content: the famous "transcendent signified" (Speech and Phenomena xxxix). Neither of these moves is conscionable, according to Derrida, and his rejection of them is a corollary of his belief that absolute objectivity, the total presence of the referent, can never be claimed for meaning. Meaning is generated within a

sign system, not without it. But let us look more closely at that in "onto-theology" which Derrida objects to.

For Heidegger, "being" means all things or "beings" that exist. Being in being is how they exist. Different things relate differently to existence; they exist differently. Logos is the way in which different things relate to their existence, or if you like, participate in their essence. Logos is the ratio of being to Being; hence, it is that in being which is the same (insofar as everything exists) but different (insofar as everything exists differently). "This same logos as the gathering of what unifies, is the En. This En, however, is twofold" (Identity and Difference, English 69, German 137). It is the unifying One both in the sense that it is primal and universal and in the sense that it is the "All-Highest" ("Zeus" says Heidegger). The all-Highest is the highest cause; it is Being which overwhelms (infuses) being and creates the circumstances for the arrival (existence) of things.

Metaphysics is thus logic because it deals with logos. When it is concerned with the common aspect of things, that is, the mere fact of their existence, it is onto-logic. When it is concerned with "what differs in the difference" (the difference in the way things exist), as well as the sameness (the presence of Being), metaphysics is onto-theo-logic. When it measures the ratio of being to Being, where Being is the cause which accounts for everything, it is theo-logic.

Going backwards in time, the Medieval tradition of the Liberal Arts, which did so much to nurture the theological approach to meaning theory, gives us another perspective which will help to place postmodern deconstructionism. Ironically, the distinctions established, for our purposes primarily in the disciplines of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, make language theory in all its aspects (deconstruction not withstanding) comprehensible by affording the only context large enough to do its history justice. Yet it is precisely against these distinctions that Derrida pummels, fostering an "all too fashionable neglect" of the structure and insight which they provide (Speech ix).

Derrida's attack on logocentrism can be likened to a privileging of rhetoric over and above logic. Logic deals with the relation of a sign system to universals or predicates in the attempt to give expression to certain given qualities in our existence. The desire to be able to represent these qualities meaningfully, that is, without absurd contradictions, leads to the establishment of formal laws which exist independently of time, place, or circumstance. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is more the business of relating language to the world. We expect people to have a sense of the appropriate in their rhetorical abilities, but nonetheless the absurd and contradictory, when skillfully applied, constitute what is often labelled great rhetoric. Thus, our culture's frequent preference for the metaphorical, and in

fact the myriad aspects of human reality that seem only to be expressible metaphorically, implicitly grant priority to the rhetorical while philosophical history has privileged the logical. This is the essential tension around which language theory spirals.

Fundamental among the issues raised by this tension, and fundamental to Romantic poetics, is the question of reconcilability. Aristotle has frequently been maligned by deconstructionists for creating a rigid distinction between rhetoric and logic which hardened in the Middle Ages and has dominated linguistic theory ever since. Yet it may be the case that the classical mind brought to this distinction an understanding of dynamic tension which has rarely been recognized. In fact, Romantic contrariety and deconstructive differance may both be attempts at articulating a process already operative in classical philosophy. Now is the time, therefore, to return to an understanding of the foundations of language theory that the ancients laid.

Let us begin with words. From Plato onwards, very persuasive arguments have been advanced to the effect that language represents ideas. For Plato, metaphysics was a necessary part of meaning. A Word does not simply correspond to an object of perception but to the idea or form of the object. If words refer merely to objects caught up in the flux of time, meaning cannot occur. As Socrates says in Plato's Cratylus, "if the transition is always going on, there

will always be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know and nothing to be known" (440). Language itself is part of the mutable world which can be organized by convention. The test of linguistic truth, however, lies not with the mutable but with ideas of things, the forms themselves. Hence early language theory was rooted in the abstract in the same way in which mathematical theory was. As a result, Western thought has remained in one way or another attached to this belief, advancing by inches as it accepts or rejects corollaries of Plato's initial stance.

Aristotle, although not wishing to grant Plato's forms independent existence, nonetheless developed a logic and the beginnings of a language theory based on the similar concept of a system of classes. Universals, now genera and species, were the predicates to be applied to particulars, and meaning in language could only lie in its ability to discern these classes and manipulate them in a way that effectively reflected particular operations and conditions. Aristotle, at times, seems even to suggest what sounds like a Romantic insight into the relationship between our patterns of thought and the natural world:

> . . . those who dwell in intimate association with nature and its phenomena grow more and more able to formulate, as the foundations of their theories, archai such as to admit of a wide and coherent development; while those whom devotion to abstract discussions has rendered unobservant of the facts are too ready to dogmatize on the basis of a few observations.
> (On Generation and Corruption 1.2.316a.6-10)

Archai (first principles) can be likened to the universals which we earlier contrasted to abstractions (see above 22), and more will said about them later. The present point, however, is that Classical philosophy sets the precedent of a logic-based language theory, since the signs involved when we communicate were thought to represent abstract entities which are participated in by observable objects. Logos, it is important to remember, does not really designate the "word" at all, but that part of the universal which is susceptible to linguistic expression. It is that (first) principle which is the same in all cases, insofar as all substance that we can conceptualize participates in some predicate, but which is also different, insofar as all substance participates differently. Logos is that aspect of universals which becomes manifest in language; it is the articulation of universals.

In light of this, Aristotle's separation of poetics and rhetoric from logic, the "true science" (e.g. as discussed in Handelman The Slayers of Moses, 11), although significant in its repercussions, may arise from less profound motivations than has generally been observed. Logic is, for Aristotle, based on the relationship of symbols to universals; it is based on the classical concept of logos (or ratio) as we have defined it above. To talk of a logic of language that is not based on universals, as Handelman, Derrida, and members of the "Yale School" sometimes do, is to make questionable sense.

Rhetoric, on the other hand, involves the perception of patterns in language and linguistic convention, and the relation of both to processes in the world in order to discover new access to universal principles or new ways to comprehend particulars. Aristotle's Poetics should exonerate him considerably against the charge that he cannot see the interpenetration of these two categories. In his theory of tragedy he reiterates the above quoted sentiment that archai can be discerned in nature, and adds that these principles can be instantiated and interpreted in tragic poetry. The measure of the power of a given tragedy is its ability to expose this kind of truth about the world and the form of natural process. Thus, it can hardly be the case that poetics is excluded from the realm of the true, which often seems to be the deconstructionist's complaint. Poetics simply is not a science which is strictly involved with denotation; it does not deal solely with the symbolization of universals. Instead, poetics addresses itself to the fact that neither objects in the world nor our perception of them can be adequately described by universals alone. Each particular, as we shall see in our concluding chapter, is in some sense universal insofar as it participates in the condition of other particulars. Furthermore, each universal is particular because it is shaped (limited) by that which we can realize it by; that is, by what it is.

Metaphor falls, in Aristotle's system, into the territory of

rhetoric, and it has enjoyed such a long life there that it is now almost impossible to conceive of what a logic which could operate metaphorically might mean. The deconstructionist and the Romantic both object to a system which relegates the metaphorical to the category of trope, and a whole way of seeing to the department in charge of "style." The deconstructionist approach to the problem has been to attempt to eradicate the metaphysics which has given logic its authority. The question which we now must turn our attention to is can we have metaphor without metaphysics? It is a question which, as we shall see later, divides deconstructionism itself. J. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man, for instance, express disdain for a process which simply compounds the error inherent in all our perceptions and expressions. Derrida, on the other hand, is defending metaphor as an essential part of "proper" (in his terms) predication, and it is because of this that he feels the necessity of renovating the old metaphysical system. Again, before we examine what in Plato and Aristotle constitutes metaphorical practice, we must preview the renovations Derrida proposes in order to see both his reliance on and rejection of metaphysics and classical language theory.

In his essay "Differance" (Speech and Phenomena 129), in which Derrida discusses one of his principal contributions to current literary theory, he tries to explain the "a" in "differance" which grants this conceptual-non-concept its

force. He says that the power of the "a" cannot be "exposed," for only things with a presence can be exposed. Derrida has often been connected with the tradition of Rabbinical interpretation, specifically in its aspects which most oppose Christian and classical Greek hermeneutics (notably in Susan Handelman's book The Slayers of Moses which we have already referred to in other contexts). The word has never been "made flesh" for the Jewish scholar and consequently he is rather more comfortable with the absence of the "transcendent signified" than is his Christian counterpart, as well as happier to settle for the power of the word per se than is the classical philosopher or the theologian. Thus, Derrida operates in a counter-culture to the great tradition of "being" as it has evolved out of early Greek philosophy. Nonetheless, he describes the "a" in "differance" as follows:

> It is never given in the present or to anyone. Holding back and not exposing itself, it goes beyond the order of truth on this specific point and in this determined way, yet is not itself concealed, as if it were something, a mysterious being, in the occult zone of a nonknowing. Any exposition would expose it to disappearance. It would risk appearing, thus disappearing. ("Differance" 134)

What is surprising here is the striking resemblance this statement bears to one by St. Augustine which concerns the unspeakableness of God. The problem behind Augustine's statement is the contradiction which arises when we apply human reason to the unknowable (for Augustine, "divine")

aspects of the world. It would seem that Derrida has found for himself a similarly inaccessible aspect of experience and expresses his inability to articulate it in the language of classical Christian theology. Augustine says:

> Have I spoken of God, or uttered His praise in any way? Nay, I feel that I have done nothing more than desire to speak; and if I have said anything, it is not what I desired to say. How do I know this, except from the fact that God is unspeakable? But what I have said, if it had been unspeakable, could not have been spoken. And so God could not even be called "unspeakable," because even to say this is to speak of Him. Thus there arises a curious contradiction of words, because if the unspeakable is what cannot be spoken of, it is not unspeakable, if it can be called unspeakable.
> (On Christian Doctrine, I, ch.6)

Derrida is well aware of the resemblance in styles, as he explains, "the detours, phrases, and syntax that I shall often have to resort to will resemble--will sometimes be practically indiscernible from--those of negative theology" ("Differance" 134).

The difference, claims Derrida, is that negative theology has evolved because of the belief in God as "a superior, inconceivable, ineffable mode of being" (134). No such claim will ever be made about anything by a deconstructionist. "Differance" is not reducible to any ontological or theological reappropriation. It instead "opens up" (I suppose he means empties out) "the very space in which ontotheology--philosophy--produces its system and its history. It thus encompasses and irrevocably surpasses ontotheology or

philosophy" (134-5).

In one of his last interviews, Jean-Paul Sartre speaks of the full dawning of his atheism in terms which clearly link his philosophy with that which is now rearing its nihilistic head. Sartre says:

> Gradually [I was led] to a different concept of the world, which was not something that was to vanish, putting me in touch with a Paradise where I should behold God, but which was the sole reality. The absence of God was to be read everywhere. Things were alone and above all man was alone. Was alone like an absolute. . . . [I passed] from the absence of an idea (idealist atheism), to this new conception of the being--of the being that is left among things, and not set apart from them by a divine consciousness that contemplates them and causes them to exist.
> (Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre qtd. by Simone de Beauvoir in "Sartre's Last Years")

When we spoke in the Introduction of deconstruction's interpretation of life's flux as chaotic and inscrutable (see above 29), the implication was exactly this lack of relation between objects in existence and between existence and some "essential" something which causes it to be. This lack of connection grants deconstruction its lack of form; deconstruction figures forth what is felt to be the formlessness in our universe and in our experience of it.

Now added to the problem of the possibility of metaphor without metaphysics is the question of what presence and absence can mean in Derrida's system. Ontotheology is based on the presence of being according to Derrida. Yet one of his

major objections to classical semiology is that the sign replaces the presence and defers our grasping of it ("Differance" 138). The question of whether sense can be made of this use of deferral must wait till later. My point for now is that it is strange to consider a system to be based on presence when the signs in that system are only conceivable in terms of a presence that is absent. What Derrida means by absence, when he uses it to describe his own theory, is that metaphysical being is absent altogether, and meaning, if such there be, emanates from the word itself. The word discovers its meaning within its own system. The difference of the signifiers creates the system and grants meaning to the creation.

But philosophy has grown up, somehow, "indifferent to difference," and this is particularly curious, says Derrida, because it is based on difference. By the same token, it cannot recognize sameness when it does not involve identity (with some One presumably). "Differance," then, provides the mechanism for perceiving something that sounds suspiciously like sameness in difference:

> The same is precisely "differance" (with an a), as the diverted and equivocal passage from one difference to another, from one term of the opposition to the other. We could thus take up all the coupled oppositions on which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives, not in order to see opposition vanish but to see the emergence of a necessity such that one of the terms appears as the "differance" of the other, the other as "differed" within the systematic ordering of the same

> (e.g., the intelligible as differing from the sensible, as sensible differed; the concept as differed-differing intuition; life as differing-differed matter; mind as differed-differing life; culture as differed-differing nature). ("Differance" 148-9)

This statement reverberates down the ancient corridors of literary theory so profoundly that one cannot resist commenting on the "eternal return" which is both being commented on ("It is out of the unfolding [explication] of this 'same' as "differance" that the sameness of difference and of repetition is presented" 149), and enacted for us by the resurfacing of this system. In fact Derrida is talking about some of Nietzsche's observations when he makes this point; hence, he is aware of the "returning" aspect of entities which differ within a structure of identity or sameness, but he does not comment on the striking complicity of the new with the old that is so present in his own work.

To better understand this complicity we must direct our attention to Platonic "being" itself which has already informed so much of this discussion. It is in the theory of forms that we can find what we need in order to understand Derrida better and to more intelligently question his assumptions. Initially it seems reasonable to ask, could Plato have evolved such a theory without being aware of the necessity of the interpenetration of the sensible and the intelligible? If he was aware of this necessity, Derrida's observation, far from being new, is as old as most of

philosophy. As in the case of Aristotle and the postmodern despair over his apparent isolation of logic from rhetoric, we must constantly guard against blaming our benefactors for the various abuses of our heritage to which history has borne witness.

In Plato's Republic, the illustration of the divided line can be used to a large extent as a gloss explaining the myth of the cave. In the analogy of the divided line there are two major types of knowing, "rational insight" and "opinion." The objects of opinion are called "visible" (horata not aisthetai, Rep. 509D3, and cf. 517B1-2), and they are signified later by the underground shadow show in the cave (Rep. 517B2-3). This does not mean, however, that it is merely perception that occurs on the lowest rung of the ladder of knowledge. Even the lowest sort of opinion is not simply sensation or perception. It is extremely unlikely that Plato could ever have confused opinion with sensation, for, as John Wild points out in his book Plato's Theory of Man, he believed that "Opinion is true or false, whereas sensation is infallible (apseudes) (189, n.34 and cf. Theaetetus, 153C5).

Even in the earliest dialogues which are often labelled aporetic, in the absence of a well developed theory of Forms, there is a difference between the changing, becoming, object of perception and its stable essence. Eikasia, or conjecture, Plato's lowest level of opinion, makes the mistake of subordinating the thing--the object of perception as it really

is in itself--to the relative appearance of the object. This is the mistake of empiricism when it loses its connections with what Plato calls first principles (archai), and it is also the mistake of deconstructionism. Derrida actually calls his process of dealing with his concepts-which-refuse-to-be-conceptualized, "empirical errance" ("Differance" 135); he acknowledges no archai or telos. Nonetheless, the object of opinion is, for Plato, still universal structure, and opinion is capable of forming (conjecturing) universal concepts (as is the case with empiricism and deconstructionism), but the universal structure in this case is simply that which is represented by "the accidental accretia of sensation" (Plato's Theory of Man 189). Thus, while the objects of opinion are not "sensibles" but "knowables," we may still say the object of opinion is closer to the object of sense than to the object of knowledge. But, again, the apprehending faculty is closer to the faculty of reason than to that of sense, or to quote Wild, "The visible intelligible is a species of the intelligible, not of the visible" (190). The object of the deconstructive lament over the harsh Platonic division of our faculties, and of the world as a result, that is, the division between the sensible and the intelligible, seems to be deconstructing.

Education, as we come to see it in the Republic (518D4 & E4), is a revolution or process of turning (periagogai). By awakening our reasoning faculties (by granting it Coleridge's

"wings"), we gradually learn to turn away from the "shadows" of the processes which surround us and to see their cause and archetype on a higher level. Our confidence in the truth of relative, subjective images--the lowest division of Plato's line--is replaced by an understanding of their ontological existence apart from our perceptions of them (Coleridgean "understanding"). This is the profoundest level of mere opinion. Physical existence is then, in turn, viewed as a geometer may view his diagrams, and we come to understand some scientific principle or natural law which operates in the existence of things and thus graduate to the top half of Plato's line which represents knowledge and rational insight as opposed to opinion. Ultimately, philosophical thought, and the object of education, represents the fourth and highest segment of the line which is analogous to the ability to perceive objects in the sunlight outside of the allegorical cave. This is the meditation on first causes and the grasping of the "Being" or essence without which the world would not exist.

Centuries later, Wordsworth addresses these essences or forms or ideas as a universal power in The Excursion:

> -thou, thou alone
> Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
> Which thou includest, as the sea her waves:
> For adoration thou endur'st; endure
> For consciousness the motions of thy will;
> For apprehension those transcendent truths
> Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws

> (Submission constituting strength and power)
> Even to thy Being's infinite majesty!
> This universe shall pass away - a work
> Glorious! because the shadow of thy might,
> A step, or link, for intercourse with thee.
> (IV.91-102)

Education is therefore an ascent and a descent. It is impossible to dwell at the heights where one simply contemplates "Being." The return to appearance, however, will be a return to a world radically changed by the insight of a philosophical education. Yet for Plato's sophist, as for the deconstructionist, the way up and the way down are confused. These individuals believe that the "way up" leads to a lesser reality. As we have seen, "What Greek thought split asunder--word and thing--Derrida seeks to rejoin" (Handelman Slayers, 18). Consequently, Derrida seeks to lead us down and keep us down, away from metaphysics, away from that light outside of the cave which we delusively call "Reason," away from an "other" that gives language its ideal content.

> Hence he resists and obstructs the process of education at every point, clinging to becoming as though it were being, to science as though it were philosophy, and to the object of subjective consciousness as though it were the natural being of things. [Deconstructionism] is no isolated theory or doctrine but a transcendental confusion of direction in the individual understanding which reverses the whole educational process and thus inverts the very life of man. The historic nature of this transcendental inversion as it actually occurs in the concrete flux of history is poignantly suggested to us in the great image of the cave. (Wild Plato's Theory of Man, 179)

This description, into which I have taken the liberty of

injecting "deconstructionism," is actually intended to describe the sophist, and was written long before deconstructionism had let this old familiar ghost into its latest home in the dialectic of Western thought. The deconstructionist, indeed, would be offended (as he should be), since his project is never to return. Yet return he always does. Without metaphysics, however, and without true poetics, he can never really be at home for he can never "put together" any metaphysical "other" with the particulars of his existence in such a way as to make them meaningful through time and to more than one person for more than one instant, which is to say, at all.

Unfortunately, in his "transcendental confusion," the deconstructionist breathes life into the body of thought he claims to oppose. He affects to disdain the corpus of Western philosophy which Plato and Aristotle began with their metaphysics, their rigid categorization of modes of perception, and their privileging of <u>logos</u>. And yet Plato and Aristotle did not insist, as I have tried to demonstate, that "reality" was <u>itself</u> ordered in the way that our categories of perception and understanding are. These divisions are the foundations of epistemology; they were not intended to be considered in isolation but to facilitate the ultimate integration of the sensible with the intelligible, and the logical with the rhetorical. Coleridge has given us a definition of the problem: "It is a dull and obtuse mind, that

must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse, that distinguishes in order to divide: (Aids to Reflection in Barfield, What Coleridge Thought, 19). This dullness, however, is rooted elsewhere than in Plato and Aristotle. It is the dullness of those whom Bohm describes as taking language for a model of what the world is:

> The divisions in thought are thus given disproportionate importance, as if they were a widespread and pervasive structure of independently existent actual breaks in "what is," rather than merely convenient features of description and analysis. Such thought [brings] about a thoroughgoing confusion that tends to permeate every phase of life, and that ultimately makes impossible the solution of individual and social problems. (Wholeness 27)

Deconstruction is our latest visitation from the chaotic abyss that loosed sophistry, nihilism, positivism, nominalism, and rigid empiricism upon the world. That is to say, it is the voice of confusion.

PART II.B. WHAT TO DO WITH A METAPHOR

Hazard Adams has given his seminal work Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic an epigraph that is extremely relevant to our own purposes:

> . . . one portion of being is the Prolific, the other the Devouring: to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains; but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence & fancies that the whole.
> (Blake, Marriage of Heaven and Hell)

Adams, in his Introduction, discusses how Blake connects what was once the "naming power of the ancient poets" with a constant social force which is here being labeled "the Prolific." "The Devourer" is manifest in an "abstracting, interpreting, using, hungering society" (6). Ultimately, the "priesthood" is the term which, for Blake, literally and figuratively designates those who grant themselves decisive abstracting powers: the power to "bureaucratize" interpretation into law. However, the epigraph to Milton, "Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets" (Numbers 1:95), signifies Blake's preference in these matters. His vision is one in which each individual is capable of performing his own act of interpretation; the natural world, religious and secular word and symbol, all undergo a new poiesis in each mind that beholds them. But, "All great visions court the danger of enslaving vulgar minds into

worship and imitation," he tells us in the Marriage, and since this is the case the question arises concerning the transmission of the product of visionary insight. But here again we have a problem. As soon as we start operating in terms of a "product," we have entered the realm of the abstract; justice and morality are now packaged and distributed to the individual in the form of external edict. Here again is the theme of the need to locate the world within ourselves, and this is Blake's hope for the poetic experience. It is not a moral, or even a spiritual or intellectual product that is to be gained from poetry. It is the structure for a process. As Jerome Mcgann explains in "The Aim of Blake's Prophecies," "Blake's ideal art released every man to the achievement of his own fullest powers . . . [his purpose is] not to lead men to copy him but, through his example to 'copy imagination'" (6 & 8).

Nonetheless, the difficulties of creating an ability in the individual to experience the world "poetically," as it were, exist in every sphere of human action and belief. Questions of legislation, education, and spiritual fulfilment all rotate around the mystery of whether such a condition can ever be attained and whether its achievement will involve the engagement of the rational or the irrational side of our mental processes. The problem is precisely the disjunctive condition of our thinking about these matters, and it is a condition with a long history. Primarily it is reason--reason

which excludes any form of intuition or imagination--which is raised above our heads with a false promise of progress. Thus, the circumstances which Blake addressed, and which we unfortunately still address today, are those of a fragmented society whose every faction is controlled by dictates which appear to appeal to the rational. In effect, however, society's political and spiritual bodies are governed in a fashion which encourages unconscious dependencies; the whole achieves solidarity by fostering within the individual a false sense of identity. "Submission" to these forces does not "constitute strength and power," as in Wordsworth's memorable verse (see above 59). Even proud democracy operates by granting its constituents a sense of "belonging" that ultimately translates into dependence on a system which heeds and represents the individual barely at all, even though it is the individual who empowers the system.

Joseph Campbell, in The Inner Reaches of Outer Space, points out the larger implications of tribal systems which are so governed:

> . . . one of the first concerns of the elders, prophets, and established priesthoods of tribal or institutionally oriented mythological systems has always been to limit and define the permitted field of expression of [the] expansive faculty of the heart, holding it to a fixed focus within the field exclusively of the ethnic monad, while deliberately directing outward every impulse to violence.
> (16)

The problem of the interpretation of, or response to, the

symbolic begins with the advent of bureaucratization of the value system in any given organization. Campbell says that, "any god who is not transparent to transcendence is an idol and its worship is idolatry" (Inner Reaches 44). He is referring to the upsurge of literal-mindedness that currently racks the Christian tradition which is generally known as fundamentalism. However, his remarks reverberate in the annals of all traditions in which "the messenger has been mistaken for the message," and mediators are mistaken for the mystery. In Blake's words, the "unnam'd forms . . . were recievd by men . . . and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries" (Marriage 40). This can be taken as an explanation not only of the delimiting of moral values by religious and political sects, but also of the constraints imposed on the individual's reactions to "the actual," be it experience of the world or of art, within any kind of social structure. It is clear, however, that social structures are necessary. The question is, how can the "poetic experience" be preserved within such structures? Campbell argues that in order to make "myth" and in a sense, morality, accessible to the many, honesty and integrity have been sacrificed. Myth has been codified into literal truth; the symbolic is not symbolic any more, but it is taken as fact. This is the most prevalent form of symbolic illiteracy, and it provokes a response which is no better. Thus, the rejection of "myth" as falsehood, which so often answers fundamentalism--because, of

course, when myths are represented as fact they are false--just represents another kind of illiteracy. Neither side appears to be very helpful, and our age, like practically every age, appears to be riddled by a crisis of meaning.

Campbell's solution lies with the advocation of a better understanding of the metaphorical process. A true prophet, he says, understands "the difference between his ethnic ideas and the [primal] ideas that they endorse, between a metaphor and its connotation, between a tribal myth and its metaphysical import" (Inner Reaches 34). In an ideal world we would all become prophets. Blake tells us over and over in Milton, "Mark well my words, they are of your eternal salvation." But does he give us aphorism and edict? No. He gives us action: "All that is not action is not worth reading" (A Descriptive Catalogue, 544). In the action, perhaps we can locate ourselves, in ourselves perhaps, we can locate the action. Thus "myth" (though Blake does not choose this word for poetic or religious literature) is "the dictionary of the language of the soul" (Inner Reaches 58). And, as Novalis says, "The seat of the soul is there, where the outer and the inner worlds meet."

Blake's emphasis on the active is a corollary of his identification with the Prolific which we touched on earlier. The ancient poets, whose abilities were prototypically Prolific, did not treat questions of interpretation; the idea of extracting precept from the whirlwind that their poetry

created was not their concern. It has been pointed out, notably by Eric Havelock in his book Preface to Plato, that certain kinds of thinking were simply not possible in a culture conditioned by an oral tradition such as that which existed in the age of Homer. This is because the poetic language of Homer consists entirely of activities performed by characters or personified forces on concrete objects in a linear narrative format. Hence, "neither technical information nor moral judgement can be presented reflectively in the saga as true generalisation couched in the language of universals" (181).

This mimetic aspect of the poetic, according to Plato's famous pronouncement, consists of a reproduction of illusion. It is just another "shadow show of phantoms, like those images seen in the darkness on the wall of the cave" (Preface 25). Furthermore, the reason for the "action oriented" nature of the epic is, according to Havelock, that in a non-literate society the legislative codes and general cultural mores were preserved in poetry and transmitted in dramatic performance and epic recitation. In order for the imparted information to be retained in the mind of the individual and integrated into his decision-making apparatus, a very strong bond of identification must link him to the poetic material. This was achieved in Homeric society, and in the society of the early tragedians (up to circa 400 b.c.), by the stress on agency in every aspect of the poetic composition. "Action presupposes

the presence of an actor or agent" (167), says Havelock, and it is with this actor or agent that the ancient Greek was expected consciously or unconsciously to identify in order to perpetuate the existing social structure. Isolation and analysis of the principles involved was no more expected of the citizen than it was of the poet. The point, on both levels, was to identify with, and therefore imitate, actions which the Greek spirit had, over time, deemed noble and worthy.

It is within this context that we can understand Plato's memorable and often problematic disparagement of the "poetic experience." Plato was writing, as Havelock points out (vii), in a period of great upheaval during which the oral tradition of the poets was being radically transformed by a new era of literacy. Reading and writing were no longer the magical machinery of the elite, but the household appliance of the common man. New facilities, however, always reveal the shortcomings of the old, and Plato was the mouth-piece for just this sort of observation. In a literate society codes and legislative tracts could be preserved and publicized in written form. The implications of this were immense. First of all, a question arose as to exactly how these laws and precepts were to be extracted from the existing body of poetic material. Secondly, how would the populace relate to its own legal system if not by a process of identification? These are the questions that Plato helped to articulate, and the

dialectic form within which he accomplished this contained the direction in which he wished the answers to be sought.

Thus, the mythic corpus which Campbell calls "the dictionary of the language of the soul," Plato casts as some sort of temptress. "We have," says Socrates in Book Ten of the Republic, "the city of the soul to protect against her" (608b1). Why is poetry to be shunned? Because now the Greeks have a chance to examine rationally the system whereby they are to live. Plato was, in fact, defining Philosophy itself, and by his account, it marked the road away from processes of emotional or unconscious identification. The ability to abstract, was to be the ability unique to the philosopher, and this is the very component that was so markedly absent in the poetic realm. The poetic experience, the practice of "reliving [mythic] experience in memory instead of analysing and understanding it" (Preface 45), is Plato's target in his philosphical manifesto as it exists in the Republic. Again, to quote Havelock:

> To this fundamental trait of the Homeric mind Plato and also the pre-Platonic philosophers address themselves, demanding that a discourse of "becoming," that is of endless doings and of events, be replaced by a discourse of "being," that is of statements which are in modern jargon "analytic," are free from time conditioning. (Preface 182)

In questions of moral behavior, as well as in the dawning physical sciences, as long as language stays on the level of

the expression and embodiment of the "particular," in an infinite display of facts and events, then thought processes will stay in the realm of opinion, with only the manyness of things to contemplate. If philosophy can build a ladder whereby the many can, by a process of abstraction and conceptualization, become grouped in terms of their oneness, then it will enable thought to transcend the flux and the mutability of the physical world, and enter the realm of "knowledge" by which path alone we can know the world which we see around us.

Hence it is that many modes of operation which are antithetical to the position earlier attributed to Blake, find their entrance into Western thought. An evolving and vivid world of action is to be replaced by the eternal realm of the forms. The language of expression gives way to description and classification; the discourse of becoming to that of being; identification to analysis; and opinion to knowledge. Indeed, when contemporary philosophers, scientists, and artists call for a more Romantic perspective in their respective fields, it seems that what they are actually seeking is a return, once again, to an emphasis on the experience of the concrete, as opposed to too much attention to abstractions. If we let this suffice as a definition of Romanticism, however, we have a misconception which must be eradicated in order for Romantic poetry, even that of Blake, to be understood.

It is a misunderstanding which, in its most harmless mode, opens the door to all the standard accusations concerning woolly-headed Romantic thinkers who attempt to eke out an existence by describing beautiful sunsets ("sensitive only to daffodils," as Tilottama Rajan describes it in The Dark Interpreter, 9). In its most serious aspects, this over simplification allows that new phenomenon, the deconstructive critic, his foot in the door, claiming, as he must, that Romanticism does not recognise the tension in its own position, and therefore, that this tension renders Romanticism incoherent.

There is, as we have said, some irony in this picture of the deconstructive/ Romantic stand-off. When the dichotomy between philosophical conceptualism and archetypal identification is portrayed, as it is by Havelock, as being a salient aspect of the inception of both philosophy and poetics, it would seem that the deconstructionist and the Romantic fall on the same side of the line. They are both interested in preserving the essence of experience against static abstractionism. As Oliver Sacks says, in his version of the critique of modern science: "An animal, or a man, may get on very well without 'abstract attitudes' but will speedily perish if deprived of judgment. Judgment must be the first faculty of higher life or mind" (The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat, 20). And indeed, Sacks' patient who lacked

"judgment" ceased to have the apparatus to recognize his own deficiency.

This, however, is where the question of tensions is most meaningful. Deconstruction, while claiming to involve the experiential and all the intricacies of the personal interaction with art and of the world in time, winds up being a theory without a practice. That is, without meaning to be theoretical at all, deconstruction has become nothing but. Jacques Derrida himself, in his opposition to logic-based language theory, claims that there can be no thought content that is independent of space-time constituents. There can be no pure apprehension of the "forms" of anything (Speech and Phenomena). What he neglects to mention, however, is that neither can there be thought content independent of history; even (perhaps especially) context-based language theories owe their ability to make meaning to the historical establishment of sameness and difference with regards to the referents of a system of signifiers. By the same token, our experience of art, over time, automatically constructs a system of paradigmatic responses. If this were not so, there could be no general referent of the term "human nature," nor could a theory of archetypes, no matter how rigorously or loosely maintained, ever have come into existence. In fact, there could not be any art because there could not be meaning.

Thus it is odd that while deconstruction is so concerned with the "in-time-ness" of the linguistic utterance, it tries to remove the concrete experience of art, and the world for that matter, from the historical continuum of response. While the deconstructionist tries to concentrate on the psychology of the particular response, the only experience his theory would allow him to describe, if he were honest, would be contentless because it would be out of historical time. The theory, therefore, that in order to avoid the strait-jacket of historical precedent we must isolate ourselves from historical practice, has no possible application.

The attention that the true Romantic grants to the concrete and the experiential, represents a completely different activity from that of deconstructionism. The consciousness that operates in Romantic poetry has already subsumed a certain amount of philosophical conceptualism into its process. The "Fall," the error that Romantic thinking often aims at correcting, can be characterized as the tendency in science and philosophy to limit and define the ineffable with unyielding, mechanistic models. However, the "return," as it is offered in Romantic poetry, functions, in part, via these models. Conceptualization, historically, has taken place. The return, therefore, to a sense of unity in an impersonal, eternally altering, universe, occurs with an adult

consciousness that cannot be left behind as the deconstructionist may wish. Hence, even Blake's battle cry for the advancement of personal insight, is shouted in the context of "mental fight" in which "the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer received . . . the excess of his delights" (Marriage 40).

The concrete means differently for the Romantic and for the deconstructionist. The Romantic must oppose the empiricist and the nominalist precisely because, whatever theories attach to these positions, they will be constitutionally incapable of engaging any concept of unity or identification with the "otherness" of the world at the level which Romantic discourse has achieved. This level of insight is itself possible, however, by virtue of the integration which occurs in Romantic poetry of the experiential and the philosophical. There is nothing in deconstruction which is inherently incompatible with empiricism or nominalism because deconstruction wishes to deny the metaphysical foundations of epistemology which have evolved out of classical philosophy and which have been appropriated by the Romantic into a theory of active perception which is enlightened by "winged" reason.

It is this attachment to the connective as opposed to the fragmented, present in the Romantic account of our experience of the world, which causes the deconstructionist, despite his parallel interest in the

experiential, to suspect the Romantic of duplicitous behavior or self-delusion. The whole Romantic project is endlessly accused of idealizing the world and our relation to it. Therefore, as Tilottama Rajan says, surely there "must be a doubt as to the reality of a mental creation" (Dark Interpreter 13). Rajan is influenced here by Paul de Man, a Yale deconstructionist who maintains that the poetic image is doomed to failure because it is "always constitutive, able to posit regardless of presence but, by the same token, unable to give a foundation to what it posits except as an intent of consciousness" (qtd. in Dark Interpreter 14). This statement comes from the crux of the misunderstanding, and indeed it will be at the heart of our discussion of Paul de Man in Chapter III. The poetic image, although it is many things, is not necessarily constitutive. Indeed, if we adhere to the Kantian connotations that this word carries (see above 16), it is more along the lines of the regulative that we should seek in an attempt to articulate the process of poetic imaging. Poetry in general, and Romantic poetry in particular, attempts to defy or transcend the freezing process that to some extent must occur when motion and thought are captured in words on a page. It is not unusual, therefore, that the poet should attempt to avoid constitutive language altogether and instead attempt to create images out of analogies and metaphors which invite

the mind to go beyond the place to which the words can take it. As such these configurations are regulative, they are the structure for a process. The mystery becomes less "whate'er these words cannot express" (Shelley, "Hymn"), and more the sublime sense of that moment when words lead where they cannot go and we move in and out of some sense of identity with the "other."

The experience of poetry is one which optimally creates this sense of "going beyond" in the mind of the reader. The practice of interpretation and criticism, however, is left with the difficulty of explaining this peculiar phenomenon. The impression that thoughts can go beyond words, and feelings beyond experience, presents the same sort of embarrassment to critics such as the deconstructionists, as religious experience does to the positivist. As in the previously mentioned case of the Homeric tradition, analysis of the poetic experience is not generally sought within poetry itself. Philosophy and critical theory, however, in their attempts to understand our experience of the world and of art must explain a process which often seems as ineffable as the forces in the world and in ourselves which give rise to the experience in the first place. Poetry, as Aristotle tells us in the Nichomachean Ethics, "enacts," whereas philosophy, "describes." But when the phenomenon to be described seems to transcend the merely human, sensible frame of reference, description must either, as Wordsworth complains, "murder to

dissect," or create the same metaphorical slights of pen as those under observation, and therefore, not really explain anything at all. The connection, already hinted at, between the interpretive task of the critic, and the prophetic task of the man of faith, cannot be over-emphasized here. Both parties are faced with the problem of breathing life into a huge corpus of historical doctrine, and only the power of their inspiration can bring about the enlivening of the imaginative perceptions of others. If this process ceases to be the result of a "lived" faith or "inspired" imagination, critics, philosophers, and prophets alike become the "priesthood" against which Blake warns us. They become the keepers of "the idealisms that provide the ideological justification for relations of power" (Krupnick, ed. Displacement 2), which have caused reaction and rebellion throughout history, most recently in the form of deconstructionism.

The individual who has been struck by some "other-worldliness" shining through experiences of this world, if he expects anything from theology at all, may reasonably expect it to explain what it is that strikes him. Those of us who have been moved by literature ask of the critic the same thing: what is it that moves us, sometimes to the point of spiritual transformation? If the critic and the theologian are honest, they must confess that the role of mediator places them in the dual bind of which we have been speaking. As Lewis

Hammond construes the problem for the theologian in his essay, "Theology as Theoretical and Practical Knowledge" (86), "How can terms and concepts, borrowed from their use in connection with created things and human knowledge be employed in connection with revealed truths, without a complete distortion of that very truth they are intended to express?" Indeed, in their respective spheres of reference, the literary critic and the theologian have both caused untold damage to the general ability of humanity to make meaning by seeking to establish a validity for the symbolic that would "answer the attacks of scientific thought" (Brett The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 28). The irony in this undertaking is that the kind of philosophy that the symbolic yields can never be empirically or logically demonstrable. We can go behind poetic imagery to something that can be expressed in conceptual terms, but to do so does not bring us closer to the "meaning" of the image.

The poet and the mystic, however, when struck by either a clash or concordance of the temporal with the eternal, or the particular with the universal, are left with the inverse problem. The only language that has really evolved to vivify these moments is religious language, and this is because religious language is, at its best, sufficiently paradoxical and mysterious to allow the unspeakable its inviolable existence, while simultaneously attempting to grant it some meaning in terms of human experience. This tightrope walking, which constitutes the highest achievement in poetic and

religious writings, represents that which is most anathema to those philosophers who are too much in love with the things of this world. The analogical process which gives rise to the "regulative" imagery which we have been discussing, is, to quote Hammond, "the occasion and principle of our insights into the intelligible form and nature of both the world about us and our inner experience" ("Theology" 90). When we are "struck," we "see into the life of things" (Wordsworth "Tintern Abbey," line 49), by a process of perceiving the analogical symbolization which the relations of our daily world bear to the unseen, but eternally presiding forces of the "otherworldly." In such cases analogical thinking is the occasion of our insight, cold as it may sound to describe what is frequently a mystical experience in such terms. This way of thinking then becomes the principle for the re-creation of the "striking" experience in art.

Two important features of this act of perception, however, keep it from falling into the purely logical. One is that the form of analogy involved is that which transcends the knowable aspect of things and, as we have discussed, regulates thinking in terms of the relation which the unknowable bears to the patterns of that which we feel we can know. The other is that to search for a symbol which will represent something greater than itself has the effect of limiting the dynamic relations which symbols bear to each other and to their mysterious, universal counterparts. Thus no instructions for inspiration

can be found; there is a vast difference between manipulating our experiences into art and being moved to the point where experience and art seem to imitate each other. The individual who senses the latter and is guided by it is the poet or the prophet who stands a chance of enriching the lives of others. The individual who merely manipulates is in danger of becoming a mechanic who helps to build the system which fixes "the shifting luminous events in the natural process" into a particular "death dealing, imposed shape" (R. Dunham "The Return to the Actual: Myth and Enactment in Coleridge's 'The Nightingale,'" 7). Although Goethe's definition of allegory deserves more attention than we can give it here, his recognition of these two modes of creation is very much to the point:

> It is a great difference whether the poet searches for the particular to go with the universal or whether he sees the universal in the particular. From the former there arises allegory where the particular is only an example, an instance of the universal; the latter is actually the true nature of poetry: it utters a particular without thinking the universal or indicating it. Whoever now vitally grasps this particular acquires the universal at the same time, although not then aware of it, or only later. (maxim 279)

This statement is really yet another attempt to close in on the nature of poetic inspiration. The true poet has a special sensitivity to relations, configurations and processes which awaken that "within us which is greater than us" (Coleridge). It is this sensitivity which enables him to recreate that

sense of belonging, or that vision of the "other" as not totally other, which we have identified as such a crucial part of the poetic experience. The process of poetic composition that Goethe describes is also that which is often portrayed in Romantic poetry itself as the experience of the world which is so rich that it provides continuity in the individual's life even in the absence of the conditions of its creation. Wordsworth, in particular, provides more examples of this sort of observation than can here be cited. In "There Was a Boy," a child's experience of nature is described precisely in terms of this recognition, yet non-recognition, that characterizes the creative act:

> Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
> Would enter unawares into his mind
> With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
> Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
> Into the bosom of the steady lake.
> (lines 18-25)

The distinction between truly imaginative genius and merely fanciful poet easily translates into other disciplines, and it is this special sense of the imagination that finds its analogue in history's outstanding revolutionary and synthetic thinkers. In all artistic and scientific endeavours, there is a process which the Romantics call "Understanding" which is the capacity of the mind to add, divide, combine, and measure.

Reason, on the other hand, the mythopoeic, analogizing, intuitive mode of perception, "transfers all these lessons [of the empirical Understanding] into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind" (Emerson qtd. in Marx "Reflections," 64). The problem, which we have already discussed, is that since 17th century blossoming of scientific enquiry, empiricism, unredeemed by "winged reason," has tended to monopolize our thoughts about the way the world works and our place in it.

The saying of Heinrich Zimmer, that "The best things cannot be told and the second best are misunderstood" (qtd. in Campbell Inner Reaches, 21), aptly sums up our current condition: we base our actions and beliefs on misunderstandings of the second best. If philosophy is a homesickness, as Novalis says, it must contend with its own inability to make this world yield itself in terms that are truly familiar. The best cannot be said, it cannot be measured, and it cannot be imaged in human-sized terms. To be "everywhere at home" we must live with this sense of loss and lostness; we must be at home with the infinite as it beckons to us through the objects of our daily lives. The anxiety produced by this project is the pendulum's swing into the dark side of human experience: the loss of identity that precedes a sense of connection with the infinite characterizes the archetypal journey into the under-world. Here history and art imitate each other, whereby the essential value of archetype

and metaphor is reaffirmed.

Now, as in the Romantic era, there exist observers of this phenomenon who call out for a return to the particular, in opposition to the prevalence of "death-dealing" abstractions, and a resurgence of the rhetorical, as opposed to the logical. What keeps this trend from being straightforward is that both the deconstructionist and the neo-Romantic (if such there be), believe themselves to be answering the call.

PART III: DECONSTRUCTION
THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

At pater infelix, nec iam pater, "Icare," dixit.

And the unhappy father, father no longer, cried, "Icarus."

- Ovid, Metamorphoses

A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawk-like man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osier woven wing, of Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon.

- James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
- Epigraph for Jacques Derrida's "The Filial Inscription," in Dissemination

PART III.A. THE FORMS OF THE FALL

Thomas Weiskel, in his book, The Romantic Sublime, introduces the concept of the sublime in terms which prove useful for our project. The sense of the sublime, for Weiskel, is the aching awareness of that to which straightforward symbolic or allegorical terms cannot attach. It is the unknowable "other," the essence of things, which forever flirts with the Romantic imagination. Weiskel begins with Longinus' famous statement on rhetoric, Peri Hypsous, and we could do worse than to follow him:

> For Longinus, the human was the domain of art or techne; the sublime, just that which eluded the art in our experience of art, the soul of the rhetorical body. The sublime must be referred to nature (physis), for "it is by nature that man is a being gifted with speech," but the sublime is a spiritual principle: "in discourse," he says, "we demand that which transcends the human." Without some notion of the beyond, some credible discourse of the superhuman, the sublime founders; or it becomes a "problem." (3)

A "problem" is precisely what we have today. The contemporary denial of the metaphysical fits Weiskel's description perfectly; we have no "credible discourse of the superhuman." Philosophy and critical thinking have a wide sphere of influence, however, and any current trends are likely to be employed not only as guidelines for contemporary thought but also as methods for measuring the value of past insights. Thus it is that history does not stay still, but

shifts as we shift, so that now, the ability of the Romantics to embrace that which we can no longer embrace is seen, primarily by the deconstructionist, as problematic.

One of the salient characteristics of Romantic literature is the recurring vision of a primal unity which has been lost. The primitive man who precedes history is envisioned dwelling unself-consciously in nature's embrace. The child undivided from its mother, the infant interacting with the world before experience and language have taught it to differentiate self from other, all these states haunt Romantic literature and beckon to the poet in his most intense moments of alienation and anxiety. The Romantics have called this lost time a paradise, and much of their poetry swings back and forth between the search for a path back to this lost vision of unity and the need to dwell with hope and love in a world which can never accommodate a total return.

The analytical stance of the mechanistic scientific outlook that had taken hold in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--the drive to dissect, define, organize, and impose--provided Romantic philosophers and writers with a specific wound to heal. Man had lost touch with his innate responses to the world around him and to his sense of himself as a part of that world. Hence, the fall away from natural interaction with the environment implies two kinds of falls or two kinds of divisions. Man is divided with-in and with-out. He perceives the world around him as "other" and alien, and he is

also alienated from his own self. He has no sense of continuity with his own primal experiences or with his experience of the forces that shape his life. Since his world-view has become "mechanized" he sees no need for his own actions and beliefs to "grow" out of any organic union of his feelings with his experiences and desires, but is quite willing to seek after codes and dictates that will order his life without striking any essentially supportive resonance from the human heart. Hence, his actions may *seem* to have little to do with each other and his life becomes fragmented in proportion to his alienation.

One could say that the Romantic idea of the fall marked a time at which everything turned into its opposite. Schiller characterizes this transformation in his remark that, "instead of an innocent creature man became a guilty one, instead of a perfect pupil of nature an imperfect moral being, from a happy instrument an unhappy artist" (in Abrams Natural Supernaturalism, 207). The natural world, once paradisiacal in aspect, is "dead, absolutely manifold, and separated" (Schelling in Natural, tr. Abrams, 222).

Although the reaffirmation of the archetypal nature of human experience is unintentional, I am sure, postmodernism too recognizes a "fall" in our perceptions of external reality. Since, however, the deconstructive forces which shape this recognition have, for the most part, sought to invert established hierarchies in philosophical and critical thought,

it is not surprising that within postmodern ideologies the fall is taken to be almost the opposite of what it is in Romantic and theological terms. Paul de Man, in his essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Blindness and Insight, provides us with an exemplary description of the meaning of the fall in deconstructive terms. De Man is discussing Baudelaire's essay on comedy, "De l'essence du rire," but his speculations on the significance of falling remain central to much of his own critical theory.

> At the moment that the artistic or philosophical, that is, the language-determined, man laughs at himself falling, he is laughing at a mistaken, mystified assumption he was making about himself. . . . As a being that stands upright . . . man comes to believe that he dominates nature. . . . This is, of course, a major mystification. The fall, in the literal as well as the theological sense, reminds him of the purely instrumental, reified character of his relationship to nature. Nature can at all times treat him as if he were a thing and remind him of his factitiousness, whereas he is quite powerless to convert even the smallest particle of nature into something human. In the idea of the fall thus conceived, a progression in self-knowledge is certainly implicit: the man who has fallen is somewhat wiser than the fool who walks around oblivious of the crack in the pavement about to trip him up. (214)

Three obvious differences in the above representations of "fall symbolism" will shape our ensuing discussion. In the first place there is a straightforward conflict between Schiller's assertion that man's fall marks a change from his existence as a "happy instrument" to an "unhappy artist," and de Man's contention that by falling we become aware of

ourselves as a mere instrument of nature. De Man specifically invokes theological support for his claim and yet we must wonder what this can mean. Surely in theological terms man was once an object among nature's objects and by falling gained an awareness of himself as a creature outside of nature's network if only by virtue of his new found self-awareness. The Romantic position is that the self-consciousness which somehow both brings about and results from the fall begets a spirit of opposition towards nature which must overcome itself if the fall is truly to yield greater wisdom rather than disaster. It is in the most literal sense that this spirit must conquer itself, for it is this very spirit of reason which builds all humanity's machinery to enslave the natural world and to enslave all those who are not in agreement with this project. At its very best this machinery is manifested in science and philosophy which is too positivistic to deal with the genuine complexities of universal operations. At worst this machinery produces the Industrial Revolution or the rape of natural resources to which we are witness today. But reason cannot be absent from the process that will save us. The Romantics believed that by means of a marriage of reason to the poetic imagination we could return to a more cooperative, tolerant, and even loving relationship with all that seems threateningly "other." Here is the second remarkable difference between the Romantic account of the fall and that which we find in de Man. The

possibility of our "return," so to speak, involves a process of "interpenetration" of the human with the natural so that we do, in fact, "convert" the natural world into something "human," even as we are "naturalized" by it.

Michel Serres says in Literature-Philosophy-Science, "The laws of Venus-Mother Nature cannot be deciphered by the children of Mars" (99). Indeed, the deconstructionists seem to be these very children, which brings us to the third point of difference between these two positions. For the deconstructionist, the fall is quite literally a "trip." It is not surprising that the deconstructionist should be literal where all of history has been figurative, and in fact, this little kernel of literal-mindedness is quite an appropriate microcosm for the whole deconstructive project. The fall is a tripping: a stumbling which disorders the upright creature in all his pretensions to rationality. As a rational creature man had flattered himself that he was doing a reasonably good job of making order in his world; that is, he was succeeding in ascribing meaning to his life's experiences. As he trips, however, he realizes how precarious his hold is and, instead of falling into "modern" rationality as theological tradition has it, he falls out of rationality into the humbling experience of himself as just another object in nature's eternal and indifferent operations. (An interesting instance of this which depicts the above characterization of "falling" as something of a pathological tendency present in

deconstruction, is provided in Daniel Dervin's essay, "Roland Barthes: The Text as Self; The Self as Text." Dervin makes use of Lacan's work on "the mirror stage," which is described as that deceptive moment in the development of a child's self-awareness in which the mother holds the child up to the mirror saying, "That's you," while in fact, the child has no unified sense of self to match the mirror image and is totally manipulated by the mother in his attempts to develop one. Dervin uses Barthes' apparent lack of success in his own efforts to escape his mother's manipulations as an explanation for his suspicion of what we have been describing as a prelapsarian state for the deconstructionist. The love, that is, the meaning, in this stage is not to be trusted: it may engulf us or it may abandon us. Thus, life for Barthes, is here characterized by futile attempts to "fall" away from "love" (meaning), which only appears to be attractive.)

Thus, for the deconstructionist, the prelapsarian condition is one of self-delusion and the post-lapsarian landing place is a world of isolation and alienation. Neither circumstance sounds desirable and yet, since alienation is the most honest response to the world for a deconstructionist, it is this outlook that is ultimately cultivated. The reversal of traditional symbolism is so complete that error exists in this scheme as the refusal to fall. Once man has tripped, he must keep on tripping. What we call truth, in our prelapsarian state, is recognized by post-fall man as "the systematic

character of a certain kind of error" (de Man Allegories of Reading, 17). Stanley Corngold, in his essay, "Error in Paul de Man," writes, "Error functions as a movement informing both human existence and the thought adequate to existence that is literary language" (92). What is necessary to combat the error so prevalent in the world and in our experience of it is precisely a constant falling away from our hopeless tendency to ascribe order and meaning to our experiences of the world, and of course, of art. Instead of thinking in terms of relation, we must separate ourselves from the objects around us as we must separate them from each other. Everything is alone. In his discussion of Rousseau's "Social Contract" in Allegories of Reading, de Man emphasizes that the "separation and solitude," the "fragmented differentiation of entities" in a condition of "political estrangement" is reminiscent of "the state of nature" (255). It is by remembering that this is the state in which we must live that he feels we can be spared hideous self-delusion and the propagation of unhealthy myths such as metaphysics as the Western world has known it.

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The foundation of Western Metaphysics, according to Jacques Derrida, is none other than the "arrest and interpretation" of fall and castration imagery (Dissemination, 26). Furthermore, the mythological enactments of these events, according to Paul de Man, "reflect the inherent tension that resides in the metaphorical language itself" ("Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image" 137). These enigmatic statements provide us with the foundation for this chapter. In part, my discussion of Paul de Man "enacts" my agreement with the above assertion. Our subject arises, however, out of the fact that for me, what de Man observes is a source of pleasure, the same pleasure, in fact, which I take in Romantic poetry itself. De Man, on the other hand, believes he has sounded the death knell of the Romantic symbolic.

For the deconstructionist, the signifier re-presents a signified which is absent. The signifier both imitates the form of what it is re-presenting and at the same time replaces and usurps it. Thus, for Derrida, signification is a process of castrating the author/ father, which is in this case the authority of the metaphysical. The authority of the metaphysical, however, is illusory; it is a construct of our misguided search for meaning. What is signified, then, is not a presence, but an absence, and the relationship is not one of coherence but violation--the violation of a construct. The deconstructive critique of the Christian/ Western consciousness charges it with the refusal to recognize its own

fallen nature, or rather, with the refusal to keep on falling; it will not call into question the authority of the signified. Furthermore, within the traditional Christian/ Western schema, as we have said, the signifier, or off-spring, is acknowledged, but its inherent contradiction is not: the off-spring or symbol is the representative of the father and the father's usurper. In deconstructive terms, life's experiences optimally cause our consciousness to fall into the recognition of this "differance," and thus, if we keep on falling, we can lead a disillusioned but wiser life. Myth acts out the discovery of "differance" without attempting to evaluate it, and for Derrida, the contradiction implicit in "differance" has not successfully passed from the mythological to the philosophical. In his estimation the principles of signification, which are derived from metaphysics, when understood, destroy philosophy at its foundation. The off-spring destroys the father by its very nature.

In what follows we shall examine an argument by de Man concerning metaphorical process, and a major thesis concerning signification systems in general in Derrida's book Dissemination. Our intent is to analyse the result of the applications of deconstructive theory as it is represented by two of its best known advocates in France and in North America.

PART III.B. DE MAN'S ERROR

THE PROBLEM OF THE OBJECT

Once again we are in the position of having to pause and examine what it is, exactly, that the error consists of which so riddles our perceptions and is so abhorrent to the deconstructionist. The project should sound familiar. We have travelled this ground before in an attempt to delimit the aspects of classical metaphysics which, in the form of logocentrism, are so problematic in deconstructive ideologies. We must return now, and measure what we have divined about the function of metaphor under the auspices of Western metaphysics against the deconstructive practice. For in order to understand de Man's use of "error" we must understand very precisely how he interprets the problematic aspects of philosophy as they exist in the practice of literary criticism and in the function of the poetic imagination itself.

Paul de Man, in a manner that by now seems to me the hallmark of deconstructive criticism, very astutely identifies the tensions present in Romantic poetics. Again, what is curious is that he considers the very richness of this thought, its depth and breadth, to be problematic. De Man describes the Romantic shift in attention towards imagination and language in the following way:

> The change often takes the form of a return to a greater concreteness, a proliferation of natural objects that

> restores to the language the material substantially which had been partially lost. At the same time, in accordance with a dialectic that is more paradoxical than may appear at first sight, the structure of the language becomes increasingly metaphorical and the image--be it under the name of symbol or even of myth--comes to be considered as the most prominent dimension of the style. . . . An abundant imagery coinciding with an equally abundant quantity of natural objects, the theme of imagination linked closely to the theme of nature, such is the fundamental ambiguity that characterizes the poetics of romanticism. The tension between the two polarities never ceases to be problematic.
> ("Intentional" 133-4)

To illustrate the problem, de Man chooses a passage from Hoelderlin which, while he feels it does not do justice to Hoelderlin's own comprehension of poetics, does depict what, for de Man, is the essential impossibility of the Romantic position. In "Brot und Wein," Hoelderlin "speaks of a time at which 'the gods' will again be an actual presence to man: '. . . nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes/ Nun, nun mussen dafur Worte, wie Blumen entstehn' (stanza 5)" (134). De Man points out that while we have the most straightforward of metaphorical constructions here, a simile linked by the conjuction wie, the words are lifted out of their ordinary usage by the verb entstehn, "to originate." Ordinarily, says de Man, we want words to be as "common" as possible; in order for them to obtain for us that which we wish, we want them to be well-known and not "originating" anew each day. But de Man makes the profound observation that poets "know the act of naming" in a different way: poetic naming implies "a return to the source, to the pure motion of experience at its beginning"

(134). We are reminded of the "naming powers of the ancient poets" discussed earlier (see above 62), and this is a function of the poetic process which de Man seems to understand very well.

What relationship, therefore, is established in these lines between "flowers" and "words"? De Man says that the first term of the simile, "words," has "no independent existence, poetically speaking, prior to the metaphorical statement. . . . The image is essentially a kinetic process: it does not dwell in a static state where the two terms could be separated and reunited by analysis" (135). Elsewhere he says, "The two terms of the simile are not said to be identical with one another (the word = the flower), nor analogous in their general mode of being (the word is like the flower), but specifically in the way they originate (the word originates like the flower)" (134). These are provocative statements to say the least.

It is not unusual in poetry for terms, although carrying the baggage of everyday usage, to take on a new and special meaning by virtue of the configuration within which they occur. We even described the function of analogy in this fashion, quoting Kant's remark that by postulating "Reason" as the highest cause of the universe, he was not attributing "to it as its proper quality, either the thing that I understand by this term in the case of man, or any other thing with which I am familiar" (see above 15). Thus I beg to differ with de

Man on two accounts. I do not hold that the "kinetic process" which I believe optimally occurs in our experience of poetry is impossible to analyze. I am in sympathy with de Man insofar as he is suggesting that in analysis, something of the dynamic quality of the experience of the image is lost. However, I believe that we can gain insight into the poetic "regulative" process in which we and the poet are involved, and Kant's observation is precisely of the sort that is useful in this attempt. Thus, and this is my primary difference, I feel de Man takes his first false step in his attempt to demonstrate the problematic nature of the Romantic image, by missing the analogical character of Hoelderlin's lines. Hoelderlin, for me, is comparing the relationship of words to their origin to that of flowers to their origin. It is a four-term analogy which I read as "Words will have to originate in the same way that flowers originate" (cf. "Intentional" fn.1, 134). We must assume that this new kind of origination for words will be analogous to origination as it occurs in flowers; it must be mutatis mutandis, appropriate for language.

And how do flowers originate? Here de Man makes his next false step:

> [Flowers] rise out of the earth without the assistance of imitation or analogy. They do not follow a model other than themselves which they copy or from which they derive the pattern of their growth. By calling them natural objects, we mean that their origin is determined by

> nothing but their own being. Their becoming coincides at all times with the mode of their origination . . . existence and essence coincide with them at all times. Unlike words, which originate like something else ("like flowers"), flowers originate like themselves: they are literally what they are, definable without the assistance of metaphor. It would follow then, since the intent of the poetic word is to originate like the flower, that it strives to banish all metaphor, to become entirely literal. (135)

At this point, the reference to "being" notwithstanding, de Man's belief that flowers are like nothing but themselves has clear nominalist connotations. This would render the concrete manifestation of the flower the sole bearer of its own significance. But de Man is not a nominalist, nor even a positivist. He very shortly announces that "particular flowers can at all times establish an immediate identity with an original Flower" (135). Since this is so, the particular, which only a moment ago looked like a spontaneous ("without the assistance of imitation or analogy"), immanent signifier, bearing only itself to the world at all times, turns into an "epiphany" (136): the revelation of "flowerness" to the world. As such, the spontaneous particular is spontaneous no more; it is tied to the eternal:

> [The natural object] seems to have no beginning and no end. Its permanence is carried by the stability of its being, whereas a beginning implies a negation of permanence, the discontinuity of a death in which an entity relinquishes its specificity and leaves it behind, like an empty shell.
> (135).

I wonder where we learned about the "discontinuity of death," and the "relinquishing of specificity," if it was not from living organisms? This statement serves as further evidence that regardless of what de Man thinks he is talking about, he <u>is</u> talking about a comparison of "the general mode of being" of flower and word, which he specifically denies above when he claims that Hoelderlin's lines are not essentially analogical. Furthermore, he has attributed to the spontaneous natural object, neither transience nor, apparently, <u>life</u> as we know it. The natural object is permanent, and on this most of de Man's theory concerning Romanticism hinges. Because of their appearance and disappearance in the world of perception, he reasons, it is possible for humans to forget that natural objects are really epiphanies; we forget that "origination is inconceivable on the ontological level" (136). However, our willingness to behave as if objects are involved in processes of "becoming" represents, for de Man, "our desire to forget" (136) that objects merely "unveil" transcendental principles.

It appears that de Man's argument has taken a decidedly Platonic turn, but it is where this turn takes him that is, to me, much more baffling than the Romantic maneuvres here under observation. Despite the fact that he has established this metaphysical foundation for his discussion, de Man goes on to say that Hoelderlin's lines represent a nostalgia for the origin of the natural object which can only be felt when the

ontological permanence of the object has been forgotten: "The existence of the poetic image is itself a sign of divine absence, and the conscious use of poetic imagery an admission of this absence" (137). De Man's final assessment of these lines contains something like the contradiction he is finding fault with in Romanticism. He accuses Hoelderlin of the ultimate Romantic slight of word:

> Hoelderlin's statement is a perfect definition of what we call a natural image: the word that designates a desire for an epiphany but necessarily fails to be an epiphany, because it is pure origination. For it is in the essence of language to be capable of origination, but of never achieving the absolute identity with itself that exists in the natural object. Poetic language can do nothing but originate anew over and over again: it is always constitutive, able to posit regardless of presence but, by the same token, unable to give a foundation to what it posits except as an intent of consciousness.
> (137, my emphasis)

The contradiction of Romanticism, according to de Man, is that the Romantic would desire his image to spring forth like the flower: beautiful, ephemeral, yet attached to something eternal. However, this the image cannot do, says de Man, because it has no connection to the eternal. The word cannot be an epiphany, it can only be something new and man-made: a pale art in the shadow of divine Being.

The confusion in de Man's position springs from his calling the relation of image to its eternal Form "literal." De Man seems to participate in the deconstructive attachment to literalism, but at the same time he is unable to wean himself

from the authority of the metaphysical. Thus, although he speaks from bad faith rather than good, de Man suggests something like the Romantic position--the fusion of the transcendent with immanence in our experience of the object--but because he misunderstands Romanticism he opposes this suggestion to the project of the Romantic imagination. The problem attaches to the inability of postmodern theory to comprehend the analogical process. In this case de Man's troubles began with his mis-describing Hoelderlin's lines as non-analogical. They culminate in his inability to connect the logical relation of signifier and signified with the relation which obtains between particulars and their essences or Forms.

If an object reveals its essence or Form, if it is the occasion of our awareness of this essence or Form, it has what de Man calls "ontological primacy," and this means, to me, that it speaks something other than its mere self to us. In an <u>analogous</u> manner, words reveal something other than themselves to us, and Platonists usually consider the something to be ideal in nature. The word does not have the same kind of primacy that the natural object has. As artifact, the word's meaning is appointed in a way in which sensations of objects are not, but the word is just as much a window to ideal content as objects are windows to ideal Forms. The Romantics backed away from the concept of "ideal content" and concentrated instead on the process of relation. They

were interested in how words and objects "regulated" our thoughts; it was the process of our relation to the image and of the image's reflex to internal and external Forms that fascinated them. The flower is not an epiphany, but our experience of it can be epiphanic. I hold that Hoelderlin is longing for a time when we will attribute to language the same ability to reveal universal truths which we grant the flower when we recognize it as an epiphany.

To name something in a new way, to recapture "the motion of experience at its beginning" ("Intentional" 134), is not simply to constitute meaning with only the "intent of consciousness" as foundation. At some point immanence and transcendence meet, and it is not the failure of Romanticism that this is reflected in its literature, but the strength. There is something archetypal about "experience at its beginning"; metaphors, even in the process of naming anew, reflect universal patterns in the history of our perception of the world. If this were not the case, neither the Romantics nor the Ancients would have played such a significant role in man's infinite process of self-definition. Again, the project of poetics, for the Romantic, is the putting together of the experience of the particular with that unknowable essence to which the particular is translucent and which exists for us solely as a result of our experience. The word and object seem spontaneous and ephemeral, but in fact they open into that within us "that is greater than ourselves" (Coleridge,

Aids to Reflection, 1839, 15n). This is a phenomenon which de Man's poetics are unequal to, largely because of his own metaphysical confusion.

The presence of an imponderable but absolute essence is not, when rightly understood, a constraining mechanism imposed on the poetic voice. It is that quiet strength which holds the world together while we rename it a thousand times. It is the stability which, though faceless itself, allows our naming to mean and our differences to resemble. It is not a totalitarian dictator striving to limit every aspect of our responses, but the commander which orders every "legion of wild thoughts" (Shelley, "Mont Blanc") in our experience of the symbolic. Deconstruction fears service in a (visionary) Company which moves to an unseen ruler. Consequently its wild thoughts move forever in anarchic disarray against a tyrant in which it does not even believe. Thus, as John Wild pointed out with regards to sophistry, this practice does not represent a poetic or didactic stance so much as the corruption of one.

De Man calls objects in nature permanent even though it is their Forms which are permanent. By so doing he has forced himself into the poetics of a nominalist. He has given himself no apparatus with which to distinguish between particulars and universals. Thus, what he calls nostalgia for the object, ultimately means, in his essay, nostalgia for things of this earth because he has left himself nothing with

which to describe "other-worldly" things. By the time he turns to Wordsworth he has no choice but to call Wordsworth's "imagination" in The Prelude, something entirely different from that which Hoelderlin is calling for. He quotes:

> Imagination! lifting up itself
> Before the eye and progress of my Song
> Like an unfather'd vapour; . . .
> . . .in such strength
> Of usurpation, in such visitings
> Of awful promise, when the light of sense
> Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
> The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode. . .
> The mind beneath such banners militant
> Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
> That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
> That are their own perfection and reward,
> Strong in itself, and in the access of joy
> Which hides it like the overflowing Nile.
> (1805, VI, 525-548)

On this he comments, "But this 'imagination' has little in common with the faculty that produces natural images born 'as flowers originate.' It marks instead a possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world, without being moved by an attempt aimed at a part of this world" (144). De Man cannot see that the Wordsworthian imagination is the desired outcome of Hoelderlin's hope. By now the object has become entirely earthly for de Man, who seems to have forgotten about its permanence, and what is permanent has nothing to do with this world. Without realizing that in his own terms, "the invisible world" is just as much an "intentional object" as the meaning that language

constitutes, de Man appears interested in this new "possibility" for imagination and wonders what its metaphors would be like. He does not see this eternal realm through the window of the sensual object; he does not see with Wordsworthian vision.

The Romantic has not forgotten the eternity which lies within transience. De Man does forget, for his thought descends from the same positivist assumptions with which Romanticism must quarrel. The error which de Man had initially ascribed to pre-lapsarian man was one of granting authority to this connection of the finite with the infinite where the infinite is the essence which enlivens our world--the metaphysical which is realized in the physical. Now he says a) The Romantic symbol represents a nostalgia for a signification system--a language--which will not point elsewhere but simply mean itself. But b) This literalism is impossible because words have to point in order to mean. The unavoidable conclusion is c) Romanticism is a failed attempt both at pre-lapsarian delusion and at falling because according to de Man the Romantics sought an alternative to a symbolism based on transcendence but at the same time they would not accept the "transcendent signified" as total illusion.

De Man cannot clearly measure or understand Romantic symbolism with his pre- and post-lapsarian schema because, as I have said, he mis-identifies the character of the object and

its Form, and the signifier and its content: to him natural objects are permanent and epiphanic, and artifacts--man-made signifiers--refer to artificial man-made signifieds. Since this is the case, he can never get to universals or eternals by means of words, and Wordsworth's infinite imagination is a seductive but unpossessable hallucination. Most of his problem arises out of characterizing the Romantic symbolic as constitutive as opposed to regulative (see above 16). De Man claims that the presence of constitutive imagery betokens the absence of the power which I claim to be the foundation of the Romantic image. The Romantic, for de Man, uses imagery that might work if only it were not employed in the interests of a re-connection with the divine. De Man would prefer, perhaps, more of the despair of modernism in Romantic literature. The Romantic has fallen but wishes that he had not; he does not realize that he should keep on tripping. For me, the Romantic image does work because I accept the Romantic reach to the "other-worldly," and I do not see that the Romantic symbolic arbitrarily constitutes this "other." I see only that it directs our experiences towards connection to that within and with-out which manifests this power.

De Man has done worse than to imprison himself into the cavern of his senses (cf. Blake Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 39). In his belief that man-made meaning can never refer to the natural world, he has lost himself in a fun-house of false doors and windows--the ultimate non-referential experience. He has made himself an orphan.

PART III.C. DERRIDA

THE ESSENTIAL INVERSION

A standard complaint leveled against the Platonic cosmos is that truth is removed from the sensible world and is thus unverifiable in terms of the laws of scientific observation. Knowledge, our way of relating to the truth, consists not in trusting what is present to our senses but present to our intellects. The distinction between sensibles and intelligibles, as already noted, is an irritating one for the deconstructionist. The source of the irritation, and the source of the great divide between deconstruction and what the deconstructionist calls "Western Metaphysics," is that, as Jacques Derrida would say, something present to the intellect is never really present. In other words, "the loss of presence has always already begun" (Dissemination xi). There is always "Differance," the gap between the signifier, even as it presents itself to the mind in thought, and that which is signified, the eidos or the Form, as long as we inhabit a Platonic world.

A memorable portrayal of this phenomenon, and one which is often cited by deconstructionists, occurs in Jean Jacques Rousseau's Confessions. In Of Grammatology, Derrida quotes Rousseau's observations concerning the differences between autobiographical writing and simply "revealing" oneself in physical "presence" and behaviour:

> I would love society like others, if I were not sure of showing myself not only at a disadvantage, but as completely different from what I am. The part that I have taken of writing and hiding myself is precisely the one that suits me. If I were present, one would never know what I was worth. (142)

Thus, for Rousseau, active presence is not really a presence at all. He is not unveiled in his true form by revealing himself in this manner. However, while he privileges writing as that activity by which he is more honestly revealed, he knows that this activity constitutes a hiding, for writing too is a substitute for presence.

Rousseau, and apparently Derrida, feel the same way about sexual intercourse and masturbation. Rousseau finds intercourse with a living female unsatisfactory for the same reasons that that he finds actual physical self-presentation unsatisfactory. He somehow is not quite himself. (It appears that there is no time to treat the question of who else he could be.) Predictably, masturbation, which is (supposed to be) a substitute for the actual presence of a partner, is more satisfying in terms of Rousseau's self-presentation. But in neither case does "presence" actually occur.

The preceding is part of Derrida's case against the dualisms upon which Western metaphysics is based. The list given in the Introduction to Dissemination includes: "good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul

vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing" (viii). These dichotomies, however, do not represent the dynamic tensions of equal polar forces. According to Derrida, Western thought has had to privilege the first term, and define the second in terms of the first, that is as absence or lack, in order to make sense of itself. When the functioning of a hierarchical structure posits intelligible but not knowable Forms as the basis for meaning (and where knowledge is therefore not empirically knowable), Being must be determined as presence, even though it can never be present. "To mean, in other words, is automatically not to be" (Dissemination ix). This is differance: everything we can think, write, or say, is granted its meaning by something which is absent. In a similar fashion, all we can observe is held in existence by a force which is unknowable, and so the sensible and the intelligible worlds in which we operate are nothing but, as Paul de Man says, systematic error.

We will want to ask questions about the difference between systematic error and truth. If presence, in Derrida's terms, is absolutely impossible, is there not something else we can call by that name? That is, if a difference makes no difference, is it a difference? Is "active non-self-presence" different from presence? But before we can ask these questions we must be sure we understand the implications of what Derrida says for the written word, for it is primarily in this respect that he has attempted to shake the Western world.

As Derrida says, there is no point from which to start. There is only a gap (absence/ lack), within which metaphysics always tries to posit presence by means of logos. (That is to say, there is only a female space which the masculine has made a habit of dominating.) Now it is our turn to wrestle with this space-non-space, or, presence-non-presence/ truth-non-truth: the living death of the written word.

Sadly, perhaps, we must leave sex and Rousseau behind and return to Plato. The best place to discover him at present is in the Phaedrus and a good place to begin our thinking about the Phaedrus seems to be at its end. Towards the end of this dialogue Socrates relates an Egyptian myth concerning the invention of writing. The King of all Egypt, Thamus (who as a god is called Ammon), is approached by Theuth. Theuth's bird, as Joyce reminds us, is the ibis, and he has invented numbers and calculation, geometry and astronomy, dice and draughts, and now writing (grammata). Theuth (or Thoth as he is often called), presents this latest invention to the King saying: "This discipline (to mathema), my King, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories (sophoterous kai mnemonikoterous): my invention is a recipe (pharmakon) for both memory and wisdom" (274c-e, tr. R. Hackforth in Dissemination, 75. The key word, pharmakon, is translated "remède" by Robin, one of Derrida's prime sources, and as the archaic "specific" by Jowett.) Most of what Derrida has to say about metaphysics and Plato can be derived from the

significance he attaches to the word "pharmakon" in this dialogue.

In Greek, the word means a drug, potion, or mixture, which can be either a remedy or a poison. The Protagoras and Timaeus establish Plato's distrust of externally induced remedies which attempt to isolate and excise the ailment in a mechanistic fashion and which thereby run the risk of "aggravating" it and causing it to worsen in response. He favors the more organic potential of various "regimens" which oppose illness by organizing the entire constitution from within (Tim., 89a-d). As Derrida paraphrases, "There is no such thing as a harmless remedy. A pharmakon can never be simply beneficial" (99). Plato's suspicion of the "search and destroy" method of inducing health rests on his belief that a disease has a life of its own with its "specific rhythms and articulations" (100). If this is so, it would be mistaken to think that the introduction of a device contrived on the basis of known symptoms could interrupt the course of such a life and mysteriously restore order to the entire system which has been overpowered. The concept of the pharmakon not only runs counter to issues concerning the totality of the body in question, but it is incapable of addressing the complexities of the life of the disease itself; it goes against natural life in all its forms.

Thus Plato's choice of the pharmakon as a metaphor for exploring the possibilities of writing seems quite

appropriate, although it is not at all clear to me that, in context, this metaphor is as damning for the world of letters as Derrida maintains. But this problem requires a look at the King's response to Theuth:

> . . . since you are father of written letters (patēr ōn grammatōn), your paternal goodwill has led you to pronounce the very opposite (tounantion) of what is their real power. The fact is that this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it because they will not need to exercise their memories (lēthēn men en psuchais parexei mnemes ameletēsiai), being able to rely on what is written, using the stimulus of external marks that are alien to themselves (dia pistin graphēs exōthen hup' allotriōn tupōn) rather than, from within, their own unaided powers to call things to mind (ouk endothen autous huph' hautōn anamimnēskomenous). So it's not a remedy for memory, but for reminding, that you have discovered (oukoun mnēmēs, alla hupomnēseōs, pharmakon hēures). And as for wisdom (sophias de), you're equipping your pupils with only a semblance (doxan) of it, not with truth (alētheian).
> (Phaedrus 274e-275b in Dissemination 102)

Writing, in the myth of Theuth, is introduced as a supplement to memory and wit. Thamus observes, however, that a mechanical device for preserving the lifeless word is likely to be more of a detriment than an assistance. The mind need no longer actively engage and integrate the living complexities of the concepts in question if it is possible to rely on their effigies in the form of writing. Far from aiding memory, writing will enable people to forget. Far from promoting knowledge, these hollow representations will grant the individual only the dangerous illusion that he is the possessor of knowledge; the world of appearances will have

found a new path to power. This constitutes a real threat to Socrates because he believes that it is by means of spoken dialogue that knowledge is brought forth into the minds of men. A text may well be persuasive and yet false, and without the possibility of interaction with it, many an untrained mind may be led astray. Again the mechanistic--the rote or the "by heart-edness" of the mnemonic device, like the scalpel or the cough-medicine--when compared to the larger, organic model of a comprehending mind or a healthy body, is found wanting. The strictly external cannot compare with that which can be internalized. Thus, says Derrida, the oppositions which now dominate philosophy come into play:

> Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of opposition as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply external to each other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition. (103)

Superficially, the problem with Plato's myth as it comes to us is that "pharmakon" is sometimes translated as "remedy" and sometimes as "poison," without the reader knowing that it is the same word in Greek. The dual nature of the pharmakon is lost. But Derrida deems the difficulty to be much greater than this, and he locates it in the Greek itself. In his reaction to this dialogue Derrida is opposing Plato's system

of paired opposites. In so doing, he feels he is opposing the very foundation of Western Metaphysics.

Theuth, or Thoth, is called the father of letters. His genealogy can be connected with that of Hermes and, as Derrida is quick to point out,

> No doubt the god Thoth had several faces, belonged to several eras, lived in several homes. The discordant tangle of mythological accounts in which he is caught should not be neglected. Nevertheless, certain constants can be distinguished throughout, drawn in broad letters with firm strokes. One would be tempted to say that these constitute the permanent identity of this god in the pantheon, if his function, as we shall see, were not precisely to work at the subversive dislocation of identity in general, starting with that of theological regality. (86)

In Egyptian mythology, Thoth calls himself the son of the god-king, the sun-god, Ammon-Ra. "Ra (the sun) is god the creator, and he engenders through the mediation of the word" (87). And what is the accepted sense of the name "Ammon"? It is <u>the hidden</u>. Back we go to another sun which, though hidden, is the source of the world as we know it. From the shadows of the cave we remember that light which cannot be contemplated, which can, in fact, only be known by that which it generates.

> The figure of the father, of course, is also that of the good (<u>agathon</u>). Logos <u>represents</u> what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital, and good(s). . . . <u>Pater</u> in Greek means all that at once. . . . Thus in the <u>Republic</u> where Socrates backs away from speaking of the good in itself (VI, 506e), he immediately suggests

> replacing it with its ekgonos, its son, its offspring: "let us dismiss for the time being the nature of the good in itself, for to attain to my present surmise of that seems a pitch above the impulse that wings my flight today. But what seems to be the offspring (ekgonos) of the good and most nearly made in his likeness I am willing to speak if you too wish it. (81)

Ammon, the hidden, is the father of the living word; he speaks the universe into existence. But if he is father of living creation, he is also the father of Thoth/Theuth, who represents the desire to freeze life, to take the breath from the word so that it is nothing but a monument to, or replica of, what once was. The word has power over death but is also "in cahoots" with it (104). Thus the god of preservation and perpetuation is the god of death. And does Theuth have a demeanor appropriate to one who opposes the dynamic quality of the uttered logos? On the contrary, he is so dynamic he has no presentation at all. We cannot find him when we look. His very presence-non-presence represents all the ambiguity of the pharmakon which he panders. He is also a moon-god, and so while he represents his father's light, he also replaces his father, and in this representation/replacement--night for day, son for father, grammata for logos, death for life--his own true identity is indiscernable. To use Derrida's terms, Thoth both "extends" and "opposes"; in his opposition he "repeats" and "replaces." Therefore he takes his very shape from the thing that he resists and for which he acts as a substitute. He thereby opposes himself, as he constantly passes into his

other:

> . . . this messenger-god is truly a god of the absolute passage between opposites. If he had any identity--but he is precisely the god of nonidentity--he would be [the] coincidentia oppositorum . . . In distinguishing himself from his opposite, Thoth also imitates it, becomes its sign and representative, obeys it and conforms to it, replaces it, by violence if need be. . . . he cannot be assigned a fixed place in the play of differences. Sly, slippery, and masked, an intriguer and a card, like Hermes, he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of joker, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play. . . . This is what numbers, of which he is also the inventor and patron, mean. Thoth repeats everything in the addition of the supplement: in adding to and doubling as the sun, he is other than the sun and the same as it; other than the good and the same, etc. . . . he is also the inventor of play . . . he would be the mediating movement of dialectics if he did not also mimic it, indefinitely preventing it, through this ironic doubling . . . Thoth is never present. Nowhere does he appear in person. No being-there can properly be his own. (93)

Derrida identifies the problem in this dialogue as the tension between mythos and logos. Socrates has introduced a myth to explain the perils of replacing the living word, the dialectic in fact, with the mechanical word that can simply be "learned by heart" without being understood. But in so doing he has introduced (unawares, according to Derrida) a concept--that of a supplement which "adds to" and "replaces"--which cannot be explained in terms of binary opposition. The written word does not simply oppose the spoken, claims Derrida; it does all the things that Thoth does. Plato does not treat this issue to Derrida's satisfaction in the Phaedrus, and neither does Western Metaphysics. What is in

question here is the whole project of philosophy. We come upon Socrates when the oral is being replaced by the written; the mytheme is translated into the philosopheme. Although Socrates argues on behalf of the spoken word, does he have any idea what is being lost when the dynamic of poetic relations is replaced by the static philosophical concept? Derrida thinks not.

** ** **

Derrida maintains that the pharmakon represents the self-contradictory relation between signifier and signified which is re-enacted in myth but which will not yield itself to philosophical conceptualization and evaluation. The pharmakon is not a substance with "occult virtues" and "cryptic depths" whose polysemous levels will yield to analysis. It is "antisubstance itself." It is "that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance; granting philosophy by that very fact the inexhaustible adversity of what funds it and the infinite absence of what founds it" (70). It is the fall with no hope for return. It is the castration of the father which cannot be signified, although the metaphysical "arrest and interpretation" of the concept of castration is the foundation of philosophy as we know it. The pharmakon is a space, a lack, a violence, which cannot be revealed or unveiled as logos. "Dissemination" is the process which, upon finding the "point" where signification would seem to be consistent and meaningful, acts out not the contained polysemy but the concealed delusion. Deconstruction exposes all the false corollaries of the false premise upon which metaphysics is based, that which locates truth in the representation of being as logos.

What is being represented--Ammon or <u>onta</u>--is never present; never known. But its representatives--both the "living logos" and Thoth's grammata--are absent too. The word, by

representing a hidden signified, imitates the signified by hiding itself. It hides/replaces its other, and because it replaces an absent it too absents itself.

In Chapter II, we discussed Plato's defense of the philosophical concept as something enhanced by the possibility of writing. Now he is portrayed denigrating writing as something mechanical and external which does not truly promote our ability to govern ourselves intelligently or, in fact, "philosophically." Is there a contradiction here? Not when we remember what Plato is fighting to preserve. What Ammon symbolically represents, the living word, Socrates is attempting to protect against the encroachments of technology. The advent of writing as a commonplace may have the curious effect of dividing people from themselves; they will believe they are in possession of something valuable--knowledge, in this case--when in fact they are not. The initial division will perpetuate itself until entire social structures and belief systems are built on self-division and the consequent self-deceit. Thus the tyranny of the bureaucratic "priesthood" in charge of the interpretation of truth, justice, and value in general, is being opposed by Socrates even though he is held largely responsible, by Derrida, for precisely that which he here opposes. At the end of the Phaedrus Socrates explains to his foil, much in the manner of Holmes to Watson, the intimations that have structured the preceding investigation in its entirety:

> Socrates: . . . to Homer and other writers of poems, whether set to music or not; and to Solon and others who have composed writings in the form of political discourses which they would term laws--to all of them we are to say that if their compositions are based on knowledge of the truth, and they can defend or prove them, when they are put to the test, by spoken arguments, which leave their writings poor in comparison of them, they are to be called, not only poets, orators, legislators, but are worthy of a higher name, befitting the serious pursuit of their life.
>
> Phaedrus: What name would you assign to them?
>
> Socrates: Wise, I may not call them; for that is a great name which belongs to God alone,--lovers of wisdom or philosophers is their modest and befitting title.
> (278, tr. Jowett)

The preservation of the spoken word, of which Derrida makes so much, is only significant to Plato insofar as it is connected with the spirit of philosophy. Derrida believes that the signifier, whether it is written or spoken or thought, always represents an absence, and hence that Socrates is deluded in his belief that there is such a thing as a "living logos." Derrida interprets Socrates' defense of the living word as a corollary of his confused belief that being is present in meaningful utterances. He does not pay much attention to the fact that Socrates classifies both rhetoric and writing as potentially dangerous if they cannot be sufficiently supported and enlivened in the mind of the perceiver. Socrates defends not speech, but reason. Because Derrida does not believe in presence, however, he cannot believe in reason. This, then, is what we have to lose in a "deconstructed" world; it is a loss that the Romantics feared

in their own time and which the activity of the Romantic symbolic explicitly opposed.

The ultimate attack, and the assertion which informs Dissemination, is that Derrida as much as accuses Socrates of Sophistry. Sophistics does not stand clearly outside of philosophy, just as the mechanical mnemonic device does not stand outside signification itself. At any rate, it is sufficiently difficult to distinguish the Socratic practice from the sophistic for us to say that the outside/ inside opposition--the philosophical foundations of which are mostly Plato's fault, according to Derrida--is inadequate for the complexities of living interaction. Catching Socrates in what he believes to be a sophistic move, Derrida believes he both tumbles Plato's arguments concerning speech and writing, and philosophy's foundations, all at the same time.

Derrida sees well enough that what Plato is attacking in sophistry is "not simply recourse to memory but, within such recourse, the substitution of the mnemonic device for live memory, of the prosthesis for the organ . . . the mechanical 'by-heart' for the active reanimation of knowledge, for its reproduction in the present" (Dissemination 108). In other words Plato is attacking, to reverse Martin Buber's famous phrase, the rendering of the "thou" as an "it" (cf. The Inner Reaches of Outer Space 17). But Derrida's argument is that the line which separates the mnemonic device from living memory ("non-living and living, outside from inside . . .

writing from speech" 108), would seem to be the same line which separates "truth from its sign, being as distinct from types" (108-9). Here lies the problem, for if this is the case, the "inside" cannot merely include the psychic, while the "outside" includes the physical, because the "sign," the mechanical, the physical, if you like, must be present inside. "Memory always therefore already needs signs in order to recall the nonpresent, with which it is necessarily in relation" (109). Here we are again. Nothing can be present to the mind. There is only a pointing of signs to something which is absent. "The evil slips in within the relation of memory to itself, in the general organization of the mnesic activity" (109). And why is the sign evil? It is evil because it is not Truth; it is a representation, or repetition, of truth. As such it can be typed, or rather, it already is a type. Types can then pass for truth, and soon, in a manner perhaps similar to that in the world which we just described as divided by its false relation to truth, types pass for the original and the original becomes lost. This is how the Platonic cosmos works according to Derrida. It works because being can be typed and falsehoods can thus pass for truths, and thus Socrates is a Sophist. The Platonic system generates typoi, the management of which deceives us into the belief that we have some access to truth. The truth is that there can neither be "outer" truth which is susceptible to re-presentation by "inner" sign, nor "inner" truth which is

susceptible to re-presentation by "outer" sign. No "living" truth can be re-presented in signs at all. The dynamic of Thoth, which is allowed free play in myth, defies these "philosophical" categorizations.

> This god of resurrection is less interested in life or death than in death as a repetition of life and life as a rehearsal of death, in the awakening of life and in the recommencement of death. This is what numbers, of which he is also the inventor and patron, mean. Thoth repeats everything in the addition of the supplement: in adding to and doubling as the sun he is other than the sun and the same as it; other than the good and the same. (Dissemination 93)

Plato's system lets the pharmakon in the door; it will not work without it. It relies on the function of the device: the mechanism which masquarades for truth. Number, itself, betrays the Platonic cosmos:

> The unique--that which is not repeated--has no unity since it is not repeated. Only that which can be repeated in its identity can have unity. The unique therefore has no unity, is not a unit. The uniquè is thus the apeiron, the unlimited, the crowd, the imperfect. And yet the chain of numbers is made up of uniqueS. . . . time is as foreign to number itself as horses and men are different from the numbers that count them, and different from each other. (Dissemination 365)

The chains that bind us fast in the cave were wrought by Plato himself.

PART III.D. TOWARDS A BETTER TENSION

It is clear that if everyone thought like Derrida, numbers never would have been invented. It is the concept of the One and the Many which allows us the luxury of the concept of number, and it is precisely this concept which is consistently tortured by deconstruction. The problem seems to lie in the relation of the symbol to the universal, the type to the essence, and the signifier to the signified. Is the relationship mimetic? Does it hang on the mechanical (external) imitation of the metaphysical in the realm of the physical? Derrida's indictment depends on this, but is Plato justly accused?

It is unlikely that the myriad questions concerning mimesis can cleanly be settled here. We can, however, examine their implications and judge which of these seem most prevalent in Platonic philosophy. This, at least, seems fair as it is not at all clear to me that the preference for the spoken word over and above the written, which Derrida insistently attributes to Plato, is a prevalent contention in Platonic texts.

Eric Havelock cites Plato's tendency to use the metaphor of vision in certain discussions of the Forms--where it appears that <u>knowing</u> the Forms is <u>seeing</u> them--as particularly unhelpful for the very reason that it creates the kinds of confusions which necessitate our current discussion. Havelock

points out that the visual metaphor is examined and rejected in the Parmenides (132d ff.), which was written after the Republic. If things imitate Forms and we imitate "ideal" qualities and essences, then we have returned to an attempt at identification which was dismissed as inadequate in Plato's discussion of epic poetry. If "one imitates that with which one enthusiastically consorts" (Republic 500c2-7, in Preface to Plato 268), until one identifies with God, we live in the world of becoming, and the function of the dialectic loses its validity. Plato does seem to be--and this much we must give Derrida--the father of objectivity; he breaks down identification and replaces it with recognition and analysis. John Wild reassures us, however, that while Plato does in fact contribute to the establishment of the subject/ object distinction, it is impossible to blame him for the confusion that we suffer when we misconstrue his mythology. In a sense Wild holds us responsible for the same faulty translation of the mytheme into the philosopheme that Derrida finds so catastrophic in Plato himself:

> . . . the good image [or myth] is self-effacing, eliminating itself, so to speak, in its pointing function. If it fails to lead us on to what is more important than itself, and still persists, either it or we have failed. . . . In the analogy of the sun we are clearly informed that sight is to be interpreted as knowledge. Seeing, in the Cave, therefore, is always to be interpreted as knowing, the object seen as the object known . . . Hence in our interpretation of the myth we must never lapse into the language of sight and perception. To do so is to confuse the image with the archetype.

(Plato's Theory of Man 180 & 189)

Nonetheless, the metaphor of the visual in an explanation of the intelligible has encouraged elaborate systems based on elaborate misconceptions. In his discussion of this sort of misconception--that of things of this world copying, as it were, the Forms--Havelock comments:

> It is this usage, as repeated for example in the Phaedrus and Timaeus, which has encouraged the construction of a Platonic theory of aesthetic, according to which artistic mimesis can be carried out at the metaphysical level. . . . For A. Dies (Autour de Platon, Paris 1927, p. 594), imitation is at the centre of his philosophy.
> (Preface 275, fn. 34)

Derrida refers to Dies in his treatment of this problem so it is not unlikely that he was influenced by Dies' mimetic theory. The imitation that exists in painting and craftmanship, however, is quickly dismissed by Havelock as having nothing to do with the participation of things in Forms and signifiers in signifieds. The question of this relation goes back to our discussion of regulative and constitutive terms and images (see above 16). Derrida says early on, but perhaps pejoratively where we would agree enthusiastically, that "The metaphysical is a certain determination or direction taken by a sequence or 'chain.' It cannot as such be opposed by a concept but rather by a process of textual labor and a different sort of articulation" (Dissemination 6). Thus it would seem that he understands the regulative nature of signs

and objects, the possibility that they are indications of something other. At the same time he wants them to be constitutive. He wants them to comprise meaning in themselves and be present rather than absent. So much we all want and so much we can have. We can have it if we do not insist that constitutive means re-presentational and that unity does not mean sameness, both of which Derrida seems to want to do.

The example of sexuality will help us here. First we must observe that Derrida, in Of Grammatology, and Barbara Johnson in her Introduction to Dissemination, slip the case of Rousseau and his curious sex habits into a discussion of the relationship of signifier to signified. The focus is subtly shifted away from the question of how or if something can signify something else, to the question of how signification can be interpreted by the individual. Rousseau does not feel that he adequately or accurately represents himself in person, sexually or socially. It is interesting that this fact is used as an example of the possibility of absence even in the case of apparent presence. We must note that this is not an example of an absence which, because absent, is not presentable. It is an example of a presence which seems to be unpresentable because "presentation" and "representation," which are conflated here, have somehow been mysteriously promoted to mean "reveal completely." We are inclined to say that regardless of how Rousseau feels, if physical presence does not yield some sort of experience of presence, the word

should be dropped from our vocabulary. It is likely that Rousseau's dissatisfaction arises from not having engaged his "reader" (audience, lover) in any experience that felt genuinely connective. That is, as far as Rousseau can see, his social and sexual intercourse was not meaningful because it did not seem to relate to anything very essential in his own or the other's constitution. Rousseau, as a signifier for his own self, did not engage the sympathies of others.

The phenomenon of orgasm is conspicuously avoided here. Few people who have ever had one would testify that they had just experienced an absence, a lack, or a hollow representation of an illusive other. The same can be said, though it will be said less often, about the mystical or religious experience. Although the nature of the experience itself, as well as the "other" experienced, are much less clearly defined than in any of the encounters we have discussed, there seems to be, in these events, an awareness of a presence which fills the whole being.

With this in mind, perhaps there is something in Platonism that will help us with the presence/absence problem which Derrida has brought to our attention. To use Plato's own terms, the Socratic task is one of midwifery. Connections can be made, however, and ideas brought to light, only where there is life to begin with. Only what is already alive within us can be "brought to life." All of reality can play midwife to the soul who is ready, and receptive. And all of hermeneutics

involves not only the receiving of the living substance of a work of art, but of bringing it into the world in a meaningful way. Hermes did not simply receive the messages of the gods; he delivered them to human hearts. Derrida's point is that Hermes is a trickster. Plato's point is that if Hermes is engaged dialectically, the true will be received into the human heart because "all enquiry and all learning is but recollection" (Meno, 81). There is a pre-established sympathy between the mortal soul and the True, and thus in the living soul there is a living memory or imagination which awaits the liberation of birth that proper exposure to logos can effect. Thus the "dead/mechanical/external/repetitive/supplementary" word can, if skillfully applied, help in the midwife tradition. The word brings to life that which is already alive and awaiting birth. "So much I asked before, and my heart gave/ The response thou hast given; And of such truths/ Each to itself must be the oracle," says Asia to the Demogorgon at the "moment of truth," so to speak, in Prometheus Unbound. To the Platonic conundrum of how we will know what we seek when we find it if we do not know the nature of that which we seek, it can be replied that in Greek, "I know that I do not know," and "I know what I do not know," are expressed with the same words (Buchanan Truth in the Sciences, xv). The knowledge of an absence is the image waiting to be born.

Derrida argues that in Plato's terms evil slips in in the

form of the signs with which the soul must communicate with itself, therefore the pharmakon is not external but already present and poisoning the system. But Plato seems to me to be saying that because there is already life, sympathy, imagination, in the human mind, sign, when rightly applied and apprehended will not be "death-dealing," limiting, and reductive, but, in fact, enlivening and enlightening. In fact, it seems that what exists in the soul is not signs so much as the force of the forms themselves. There is a place ready to receive them as soon as the pharmakon of the living logos helps them into existence. Unsubstantiated rhetoric or writing can sharpen human understanding of the interaction of things of this world, but the best literature concerning Truth and the nature of human knowledge will not necessarily find a home in the human breast until the individual is ready to be moved by the message. Thus it is the job of the philosopher to assist in the infinite task of discerning the True from the illusory and preparing in the human heart and mind a place for the Truth to take root.

The poet, on the other hand, seems instinctively to grasp something beyond the signs in the signs themselves. In his book Fictive Certainties, the poet Robert Duncan says, "Myth is the story told of what cannot be told, as mystery is the scene revealed of what cannot be revealed, and the mystic gnosis the thing known that cannot be known. The myth-teller . . . [mutters] against his willful lips; for this is not a

story of what he thinks or wishes life to be, it is the story that comes to him and forces his telling" (1). As in the cases of the mystical experience and the sexual climax, no one asks, once initiated, if myth is real.

By emphasizing the association of the signifier and signified, and not the signified with the human imagination, Derrida has left himself no way of talking about what Plato is really afraid of losing. Plato is afraid that Truth will get lost, and that reason, the human act of participating in the truth, will become non-functional through lack of use. Derrida cannot talk about a Truth that is very different from the play of signifiers, because, as he says,

> Sophistics . . . and writing would thus [in Plato's system] only be separated from philosophy, dialectics . . . and living speech by the invisible, almost nonexistent, thickness of that leaf between the signifier and the signified. . . But by the same token, doesn't the unity of this leaf, of the system of this difference between signified and signifier, also point to the inseparability of sophistics and philosophy? (Dissemination 111-2)

While we pay attention to the question of whether visible signs can ever be alive, that is, really present, the invisible, the source of all life, slips out of Derrida's work unnoticed. "Who will ever know of such disappearances?" Derrida asks concerning the probability that the hidden interplay of the textual/textural woof and warp will always escape our notice in our dealings with literature (Dissemination 63). It is an odd question for him to ask

since he authorizes one of the greatest disappearing acts of our time, the erasure of metaphysics.

While Plato, on the other hand, seems to authorize the division of the subject from the object, it is nonetheless the case that Novalis' determination of the soul as that place where "inner and outer meet" still seems accurately to describe the within but without nature of philosophical insight. It seems that Platonism itself consciously, and not unconsciously, thwarts binary oppositions as far as their applicability to most "real" situations goes. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out in his discussion of Plato's Lysis, the problem is often quite the contrary: Plato is too often accused of poor logic, instead of being too logically reductive. In Plato's dialogue concerning friendship, Socrates draws out a theory of human nature according to which certain absences are present in us which we long to fill with the friendship of certain individuals. Thus the essence, or parousia, of this "something bad," is a lack; parousia is present as an absence. But this absence is really a false absence because it cannot be filled with a presence. That is, when we see in others qualities which are potentials in ourselves (one does not have to agree with this part of the theory in order to see the significance of what happens to parousia here), we desire the friendship of those who can bring what is already alive, our potential, to full fruition. But our lack does not, to begin with, make us good or evil,

and it cannot be filled as if it were a finite deficit which upon correction will alter a previously evil state to a definitely good state. Therefore we are often in the state of being neither good nor evil, and our lacks are translated by philosophy (Lysis, 218c) into the knowledge that we know that we do not know some things. The aching of our potentialities within us helps us to know and desire what we do not know. Gadamer says,

> One understands what is happening in the exchange only if one does not seize solely upon the inevitable thwarting of this apparently felicitous result when it is pressed by logical counterargument. One must look beyond its logical insufficiencies, which are ultimately to be taken as insufficiencies in the conception of friendship which has prevailed up to this point.
> (Dialogue and Dialectic 15)

As we climb the ladder of means, where the value of what is lacking increases the value or usefulness of the "friend" who could address the lack, we come not to friendship of greater utility but "to a different mode of reality or being" (219c), with which to understand the concept. Ultimately a friend or a lover is not useful as a means to anything but is simply, as Socrates says of oikeion or household goods, "something that pertains to me and to which I belong" (221). This something is somehow the same as me, at one with me, but different. The fulfillment is the desire; the "absence," if we have to use Derrida's word, is both a lack and a fulfillment which eternally perpetuate each other.

> The conclusion now becomes inevitable that neither the lovers nor those loved, neither being the same nor being different, neither being good nor "pertaining" to each other can be said to constitute friendship. One must know oneself what friendship is if one is to grasp once and for all that in it sameness and difference, longing and fulfillment, growing intimacy with others and with oneself, are all one and the same thing.
> (Dialogue and Dialectic 20)

This example is even more "felicitous" than at first seems apparent, for not only is it an example of the non-binary nature of Plato's logic but it also accentuates the interpretive nature of our dealings with the world in our search for "that which pertains to us" which alone can keep alive the qualities in us worth preserving and bringing forth. All the world, by the practice of hermeneutics, is in a sense a friend--an "it" waiting to be transformed into a "thou" by our recognition and identification. Derrida's treatment of Plato turns "thous" to "its" in its emphasis on the death-like signifier, instead of recognizing that the signifier is only the instrument that connects the living within with the living without.

Plato does not acknowledge the "poison" of the pharmakon which is always already in our minds if we are capable of language because he does not view communication in Derrida's frigid terms. He acknowledges the non-binary relation of the inner/outer distinction in his avowal that the recognition of value in the external world rests on experience that is also a

re-membering. We learn that which is with-out us through our connection with it, and this is only possible if the with-out is also with-in. Immanence, after all, can only be defined in terms of connection. But that will be the subject of a later chapter.

** ** **

Derrida asks, "What historical and strategic function should henceforth be assigned to the quotation marks . . . which still make the deconstruction of philosophy into a 'philosophical discourse'?" (Dissemination 4) Can the son who castrates his father be called a son once the relationship within which his designation had meaning is destroyed? I choose to stress a different aspect of the drama.

Derrida draws attention to the faulty logic with which Plato defends the living logos against the pharmakon of undefended speech or writing. Socrates insists on the exteriority and therefore the impotency of the pharmakon only to go on to say that anyway, the pharmakon is dangerous, and then, that if anyone did resort to the pharmakon of writing it would only be because living memory is limited and already riddled with the same kind of poison that's in the pharmakon. Derrida likens his interpretation of Socrates' maneuvers to the "kettle logic" with which Freud illustrates the logic of dreams in the Traumdeutung. Freud's example is, "1. The kettle I am returning to you is brand new; 2. The holes were already in it when you lent it to me; and 3. You never lent me a kettle any way" (1981, 111). Perhaps we all suffer from a certain eagerness to tilt the scales to our own advantage, but certainly Derrida is no exception. Out of one side of his mouth (what is the analogue here in terms of writing, with one pen?), Derrida stresses the violence against paternal authority which, contrary to what traditionally has been

assumed, always operates in acts of signification. With his other pen, or what have you, Derrida reminds us: 1. The funny thing about paternity is that it is never certain (Are Ammon or Thoth the fathers of anything?); and 2. Even where it would seem to be certain, we simply invented metaphysics anyway. The point is, "Differance" (all that castration and violence, etc., etc.), only exists within metaphysics as we have established it, according to Derrida. "Differance" only inhabits the very core of what appears to be immediate and present because of metaphysics. Therefore if one believes that metaphysics is so much "white mythology," that no mysterious "other" "fathers" the symbol or the visible present, and that metaphysical authority for man-made meaning systems represents only our vain hopes for the consolation of significance in an incoherent world, then one does not believe in "Differance." It is important to know whether something is being deconstructed from with-in or with-out, and Derrida will have to forgive my insistence on this distinction because he himself cited the example of "kettle logic" which only makes its point by virtue of the fact that a kettle really was lent to someone. It makes no sense to emphasize "castration or the father" as the salient aspect of our attempts to make meaning in a world that has no fathers.

Furthermore, I think that Derrida's choice of the Joyce quotation, the voice of Stephen Daedalus, undermines and underwrites his position in an interesting way. Daedalus was

not castrated; his fatherness was undercut by his own art ("devovitque suas artes") which killed his only son. This is, in fact, a more suitable emblem for what is going on in metaphysics, as far as I am concerned. Such an emblem, however, brings into play forces which Derrida is either unaware of in Western Metaphysics or unwilling to acknowledge because they also operate in deconstruction and are thus more difficult to criticize when they occur elsewhere.

If Daedalus, the master demiurge, completes his journey and connects with the outer world, Icarus (it just so happens there are Christian overtones here), is ultimately expendable, though this is the tragedy of all tragedies. If the living logos which both commands the word and is generated by the word (as the title of father is generated by the arrival of a son which the father-not-yet begot), is housed safely in the human heart, tragic as it may seem, the words which brought it can fall away if <u>this</u> word, this feeling, lives on. Just as the images received "unawares," or the sounds, heard or heard not, by the versions of young Wordsworth (see above 81), provide continuity in their absence, if something must be sacrificed, let it not be the feelings awakened or remembered in us which respond to the symbols life offers.

A curious Platonic turn of phrase conveniently extends this imagery. At the end of the <u>Phaedrus</u> Socrates concludes:

<u>Socrates</u>: I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing

> is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer. And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not; and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves.
>
> Phaedrus: That again is most true.
>
> Socrates: Is there not another kind of word or speech far better than this, and having far greater power--a son of the same family but lawfully begotten?
>
> Phaedrus: Whom do you mean, and what is his origin?
>
> Socrates: I mean an intelligent word graven in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent. (275-76)

Written and spoken words are often bastard offspring with no one to defend them because their paternity (the "other" which they figure forth as fathers or from which they descend) cannot be discerned. Derrida should really agree with this, at least the part of him that has a foot in metaphysics. But what is the "lawfully begotten son?" Can it be that the marriage that begets such a son is the union of the universal--the Form or whatever unseen principle generates and is generated by the symbol--with the mind of the individual who encounters and is fully affected by it? If such is the case, the symbol is what is created, and the genuine union is not between mind and symbol but between mind and the other beyond the symbol. The symbol may seem to precede the union in time, but that is only to say that what we are dealing with has nothing to do with straightforward causality. After all,

legend has it that logos was there in the beginning. With regard to sublime rhetoric, Longinus says,

> For, as if instinctively, our soul is uplifted by the true sublime; it takes a proud flight, and is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard.
> (Peri Hypsous XIII)

We write the text when Reason has connected us with its principles.

Derrida and de Man, in fact, make a similar error, although they come from opposite directions. De Man conflates the natural and the eternal and consequently has no access to poiesis, or to the vision of the eternal in the poetic event. Derrida, on the other hand, separates the signifier from the signified by only the thickness of a leaf. Thus, while de Man thinks the eternal is in the temporal object in nature, Derrida thinks the signifier is in (or like, or no different from) the signified which stands outside of experience in Western Metaphysics. He believes the transcendentals which we claim grant meaning to our system are the illusory products of Western Metaphysics. Instead of wrestling with unwieldy "eternal truths" of our own invention, he suggests we get back down here with the word itself.

In neither theory can connection take place because there is nothing to connect with. Thus, both scholars represent the way down to the shadow show which Socrates warns us of. Both

want words which resemble nothing but themselves. Both opt for the man-made as opposed to the other-worldly, but the artifact they come up with cannot account for the flash of the eternal shining through the particular. Machines can work with abstractions, as Sacks' Dr. P. could, but they cannot "live into" the world. When the gods thunder, they are present, and that is all there is to it. Let us not short-change Hoelderlin:

> Yet fellow poets, us it behooves to stand
> Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,
> To grasp the Father's ray, no less, with our own two hands
> And wrapping in song the beautiful gift,
> To offer it to the people.
> For if only we are pure in our heart,
> Like children, and our hands are guiltless,
> The Father's ray, the pure, will not sear our hearts.
> (unfinished hymn qtd. in Hamburger Contraries, 17-8)

Many have confirmed Hoelderlin's faith. I will simply cite the most recent reiteration that I have come across. A contemporary Canadian poet, Henry Beissel, states that,

> The poem may wear its art on its sleeves, but its heart is deep inside and will open up only to those who are willing to work at it, quietly, patiently. Too many are too accustomed these days to easy rides and quick gratifications to want to commit themselves to the labours of a genuine, all-encompassing intimacy. . . . [Poetry] unifies feeling and knowing long enough to create bonds that free us from our bondage, distances us from the world it brings inside us. At its best it is celebration and lament, shelter and challenge, an original act of naming that leaves the silence as it finds it, and makes an inhospitable world inhabitable for us.
> (Poems New and Selected 11-2)

Poetry offers its reader the bondage of intimacy with the poetic word, with the image generated by this connection, and, as a result, with his own heart. It is totally predictable that it should be misunderstood in an age which fears relations, or rather, pines after them while fearing them, in a perfect drama of cosmic angst. But reconciliation with our estranged other, that part of ourselves which is greater than we are and which we have somehow lost, does not involve the comfort and restoration of a Christian paradise. Freud himself, so attractive to the deconstructionist because of his theories of interpretation which are blissfully free of absolutes, manages to distinguish Reason as Logos from the controlling power in Christian hierarchies. In The Future of an Illusion, Freud says to the traditional man of the Church,

> You would have the state of bliss begin directly after death; you expect the impossible from it and you will not surrender the claims of the individual. Our God, Logos, will fulfil whichever of these wishes nature outside us allows, but he will do it very gradually, only in the unforeseeable future, and for a new generation of men. He promises no compensation for us, who suffer grievously from life. . . . We shall not on that account lose our interest in the world and in life, for we have one sure support which you lack. We believe that it is possible for scientific work to gain some knowledge about the reality of the world, by means of which we can increase our power and in accordance with which we can arrange our life. (54-5)

The man once so scorned by empiricists speaks out for science, and his speaking out involves logos as the path to the kind of intimacy which will allow us to make our world

inhabitable, bereft as it is of certainty and reward. De Man claims, as we have seen, that, "Critics who speak of a "happy relationship" between matter and consciousness fail to realize that the very fact that the relationship has to be established within the medium of language indicates that it does not exist in actuality" ("Intentional" 138). This marriage, however, of Science with Spirit, of inner with outer, of mind with matter, can only be entered into by those whose reasoning faculties are guided by the poetic spirit. Only those who are in the Spirit know the tragedy of having no lawfully begotten children. Derrida himself knows no tragedy.

PART IV: POETIC REDEMPTION

Poetry is not the other side of the truth . . .
but an aspect of its operation.
-Robin Blaser
"Poetry and Positivisms"

I worship the hidden order of intellectual things.
The mean dances and is not still.
-Synesii, Hymn III
In Biographia Literaria
XIII

PART IV.A. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCLUSION

In Part III.A. we stated that the Romantics believed that "the self-consciousness which somehow both brings about and results from the fall begets a spirit of opposition towards nature which must overcome itself if the fall is truly to yield greater wisdom rather than disaster" (see above 87). Three ideas from this sentence will shape our immediate discussion. 1) "Somehow" the same awareness causes, and results from, the fall. 2) This awareness generates (or is generated by) a spirit of opposition. 3) The process of this spirit overcoming itself is what will render the fall a fortunate one.

In this, our concluding chapter, it is primarily within the context of Romantic poetry that we will be working, but it is my contention that we will here discover many of the devices of the deconstructionist put to excellent use, as well as deconstruction's own positivistic, reductive and self-defeating aspects recognized and dismissed long before they came to be dressed up in postmodern clothes. I have concluded that the Romantics were able to entertain and discard strands of an idea which is currently masquerading as new (or post-new), precisely because their insights were funded by the Classical wisdom we have attempted to outline in this essay. The Romantic imagination was great enough to be liberated by knowledge of the past, not shackled by it. This ability to

grow, and to transform the energy of decaying orders into new orders, stems primarily from the Romantic ability to work in contraries as opposed to negations (see above 9). The negation is the device of a closed system; it occurs in logic and in machines. The contrary is a living tension; it is the principle of every kind of growth. "Without Contraries," says Blake in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "there is no progression" (34). And Coleridge elsewhere observes, "grant me a nature having two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity, and I will cause the world of intelligences with their whole system of representations to rise up before you," (in Barfield What Coleridge Thought, 28). The contrary defies the stasis of dualism and the barren opposition of binary distinctions.

An example of a negation, and a useful point to keep in mind when reading any of the Romantics, is the opposition of the soul to the body which has become ossified in Christian dogma and which Blake cites in his Marriage where he first introduces the "contrary." The church equates soul with good and body with evil, and consequently, as Derrida complains, Western thought has always privileged one term and defined the other in terms of its superior (see above 110). Hazard Adams succinctly explains that a "contrary" would be: "an opposition in which the distinction itself (or the reasoning that creates it) is on one side, and on the other is the denial of the

distinction in favor of the identity of the two things in the term 'energy,' with neither side negated" (Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic 7).

Despite the deconstructionist's claim to be the herald of the evils of the binary proposition, Romantic contrariety defies deconstructionism. The deconstructionist, in his attempt to oppose the dualisms of the West has settled, perhaps not entirely consciously, for materialism instead. Thus he has not come as far as Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge or Blake. That is what this chapter is about. In typical Romantic fashion, however, each of the three points of our "Introduction" contains the other two; each part contains the whole and is present in all of the poets we shall now consider.

IV.B. DEFIANCE AND FALL: SHELLEY

Towards the end of our last chapter we indicated that the union which takes place when the imagination encounters the symbolic in any of its modes, is between the mind and that "other" which is both beyond the symbol and generated by the imaginative interaction (see above 129 & 143). One of the ways of describing this event is to say that the symbol itself is a by-product of the union. This is analogous to our point above in which we say the same consciousness which causes the "fall" results from it. The symbol is the cause and the result of the union of the imaginative faculty with the beyond, and fallen consciousness is both the cause and result of the fall. This a-causal, self-fulfilling process is our subject.

In our present discussion of Shelley, we will be focusing on the spiritual condition or state of consciousness that brings about and results from the fall. In our ensuing discussion of Wordsworth we will attend more explicitly to the counter-causal and a-temporal nature of this process, but as we have noted, it is impossible to separate these conditions, and little attempt will be made to do so. In "A Defence of Poetry" Shelley says,

> [Poetic] language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which

> represent them become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thought instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. (532)

In "On Love" he says,

> Thou demandest what is love? It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. (473)

Shelley specifically notes that the relations which poetry brings to light (and life) are not created by the poet; they were already there. The hitherto "unapprehended relations" in our universe are the life and the substance of "vitally metaphorical" language. These "relations" are the metaphysical foundations of the universe. They are "always already there," to put Barbara Johnson's unhappy description of "differance" to a happier use. We create our access to these connections whenever anything in this world moves us. In other words, we create our own symbols.

The experience of these symbols is really an awakening of our awareness of our unity with the world at the most essential and primal level of universality; it is an awareness of the sun outside of Plato's cave or of that which is represented at the top of the divided line (see above 55-57). Shelley also says, "Reason is to imagination as the instrument

to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance" ("Defence" 480). I liken the "shadow" to the words and things of this world, shadow shows both, and the substance to the "other" which is both created and revealed by our experiences of our individual signs and symbols.

The term "archetype" is currently used to refer to symbols which, in my opinion, are in danger of becoming signs "for portions or classes of thought" instead of pictures of "integral thoughts," or thoughts processively combining in the manner of a vortex which will lose its meaning (definition, function, form, life) if it is stopped. My attitude towards the archetype is that we should struggle to preserve it from this stasis, or as Shelley says, "disorganization" (etymologically dis-organic-ization, to make not work or not be organic, from Gr. ergon). It can only have meaning as a process; it belongs to a processive organization or system. Signs are granted "archetypal" status because they have historically had great powers to move us. Within different cultural spheres predominant symbols always seem to emerge. But archetypal is the name given to "types" of objects and words and configurations which most successfully refer us to the "archai," to the commanding first principles of the non-material realm. Their power is in their ability to evoke in us a resonance with the unseen. The use of the word "refer" above, however, gets us into trouble, and indeed there are few words which would not. These signs cannot "refer" us in any

traditional sense to the imponderable, precisely because it is imponderable. (Augustine's unspeakable God comes to mind, see above 52) The etymology of imponderable takes us to the "unweighable," and reminds us of measure. The poetic "measure" is to allow the imponderable its sacred distinction. We cannot constitute it. Here is where de Man, and sometimes even Derrida are wrong (see above 100-103): the Romantics never believed that the unseen could be constituted in language or referred to as an "object" beyond our scope. Kant's distinction between regulative and constitutive language is critical in our effort to understand analogy as it functions for the Romantic mind (see above 16). We can only regulate our thoughts in the direction of the unknowable; we can only be referred to a referent which cannot be objectified and therefore is no referent. The "object" is the very process of our turning; it is our wonder at the thunder; it is the experience of wonder. Thus something that already exists can be generated, and transcendence and immanence can meet. The "archai" transcend the particulars of the moment. Our receptivity to the symbol makes its effect on us immanent. Words do not imitate the "other"; they mediate our experience of it. And as Shelley says, "the imitative arts become at once the representation and the medium" ("Defence" 531). In terms of our analogy in the last chapter, it is the messenger--the mediator (the symbol, Icarus, Christ)--which is so often sacrificed (forgotten or denied), even as we recognize the

greatness of the wonder which it confirms in us. Our turning towards the object of wonder is analogous to the love of, and need for, the friend in Plato's "Lysis." The need is the fulfillment (see above 133-136). The Romance of the Imagination with the "archai" is the nineteenth century's version of Plato's pre-established harmony between the mind and the Forms. The marriage of the imagination and the "archai" is Plato's "learning as remembering."

In the terms we have set out in this paper, "logos" is the ratio of the sign to the unseen (Heidegger's "being to Being," see above 44). It is that part of the unknown which can be articulated. But now we see that it is articulated not so much by the sign as by our experience of wonder when the sign affects us with its full force. Metaphor employs the universal to reveal new aspects of the particular to us as well as vice versa. Again, Shelley says, "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar" ("Defence" 487). Analogy is the mapping of this process, it is the "occasion and the principle" for metaphorical thinking (see above 79), and like the archetype, in its truest form, it is on the endangered species list. Kant's discussion of analogy is a step towards the understanding we need if this process is to be recognized for the part it plays in the poetic imagination. What is important about Kant's statement is his assertion that philosophical analogy can call the unknowable into play while

allowing it to remain unknowable. The relations within which we become aware of the unknowable form the significant content of philosophical analogy, and these are the relations which guide the poet as well.

Again, the phrase "object of wonder," in the above discussion, gets in the way. The cyclical nature of this problem is acted out in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." This poem is generally considered to be a companion piece to "Mont Blanc," but the specific nature of their camaraderie is important. It is as if "Mont Blanc" is the experience and the "Hymn" is the attempt to account for it. "Mont Blanc" is the poem and the "Hymn" is the poetics: it is the gloss not just for its companion but for Romantic poetry in general.

If we read the first stanzas of the two poems together there are obvious similarities. The poems take the same interaction for their start: that of the "everlasting universe of things" which "flows through the mind" ("Mont Blanc" lines 1-2), and of "The awful shadow of some unseen Power" which "Floats though unseen among us" ("Hymn" lines 1-2). The "Hymn" tends strongly towards abstraction; so, one is not inclined to "locate" its inquiry. It is, in fact, an inquiry into the question of location. For in "Mont Blanc" we first "locate" ourselves in the mind, but by the second stanza we feel ourselves to be "readers" of the "Ravine of Arve" and we are not quite sure whether the Ravine is with-in or with-out us,

and so we ask the fatal question "Where are we?" The "Hymn" takes up the necessity of this question. The experience of "Mont Blanc" attempts to deny dualism: the inner is the outer; the transcendent is the immanent. But the human necessity of naming and of knowing prompts us to locate ourselves in this mystery, and as we ask "where?" dualism flaunts once again its divisive powers. And where is the "object" of wonder? Same problem.

In the "Hymn" Shelley is wearying of the mutability of the world of becoming and the inscrutability of the realm of being. He wants some answers. He is tired of approaching the greatest truths with the greatest lies: not only the terms "Demon, Ghost, and Heaven" (line 27), but the very words of his own poetry. In the sixth stanza Shelley, rather peevishly, goes so far as to call the Unseen to account: "I vowed that I would dedicate my powers/ To thee and thine--have I not kept the vow?" This is the voice of a fallen consciousness, the act of demanding knowledge causes the fall, and the result is a consciousness which believes that "knowing," that is, certainty, is important. Shelley's ego speaks, and why should not a "voice from some sublimer world" respond? (line 25) Shelley is like Prometheus stealing fire. Prometheus thinks that his gift for mankind, although won by force, will still be a blessing. His curse against Jupiter falls on his own head, in Prometheus Unbound, and his apparent blessing for mankind is, by the same token, a curse until he

surrenders his righteousness to a larger vision.

There are moments in the "Hymn" where Shelley attempts the same heroic thievery. He opposes the "Unseen" with his own demands: he asks that the Infinite may be made clear to his mortal mind; he asks that his own limitations may be allowed to shape the universe; he asks the Eternal to answer to mediocrity. In these moments Shelley represents our lowest postures and our darkest hours. "Grace" is not certainty: certainty is at the expense of "Grace." In these times of need, when the "messenger of sympathies" has fled, fundamentalism and materialism conquer the world. Shelley is confessing to the desire to have his intuitions confirmed. It is not enough that there are "moments" when the "inconstant glance"--"the shadow of some unseen Power"--visits us with a sense of certainty. The certainty fades and we are alone again with the universe outside of ourselves as something foreign and threatening. The fallen consciousness then creates the fallen symbol. It does not wed the mysterious beckoning "other" which can never be totally possessed, but instead betrays the human heart and marries the "symbol." This ultimate denial of the Great Romance is our current fate. We are wed to literalism, to the reification of myth, and to materialism.

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"Materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking" says a sage twenty year old Shelley ("On Life" 476). And indeed he recovers in the "Hymn" (I should say "re-opens"), as he always knows he must, because he has known a Love so great that he cannot suffer its degradation for long and he cannot settle for less:

> Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within [man] at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. This is the character of all life and being. Each is at once the centre and the circumference; the point to which all things are referred, and the line in which all things are contained. Such contemplations as these, materialism and the popular philosophy of mind and matter alike forbid; they are only consistent with the intellectual system.
> ("On Life" 476)

Shelley is well aware that our natural aversion to nihilism does not equal a natural confirmation of the material realm. On the contrary, what the nihilist annihilates is the possibility of a non-material realm. "And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea," he asks "the Power" in the form of Mont Blanc, "If to the human mind's imaginings/ Silence and solitude were vacancy?" (lines 142-43) What would the universe be if abandoned by the imagination? What would it be if the material was all? This is what Shelley asks, for his better self knows that this Power is "dearer for its mystery" ("Hymn" line 12), and that we must love it on its own terms, terms that will not submit to the laws of evidence and

therefore are no terms to the materialist (or deconstructionist). The materialist will force location; he will oppose himself to the mystery, and when he sees only the material world he will make this bear a burden of significance which it cannot honestly support. "Reality" will be located outside of our circumference and we will observe and analyse it as lifeless, alien matter causally affected by, and affecting, other dead matter.

The difference between the fallen consciousness (the spirit of opposition), and consciousness which successfully opposes itself until the tension of the conflict becomes a self-perpetuating internal balance, is displayed at the end of Prometheus Unbound. Prometheus' total union with Asia (or successful re-union) basks existence in an unmediated experience of Love. This coincidentia oppositorum reminds us of the tension which must be kept alive. Jupiter's union with Thetis, on the other hand, is forced and seems to be utterly destructive for her and hence, it is no union at all. Jupiter never grows beyond disjunctive, dualistic perceptions. He believes himself vanquished by his enemy Prometheus and recedes, as evil often does in epics, to return again some other day. He is ignorant of what existence could mean without domination and imposition and is unwilling to learn the lesson of self-lessness. Prometheus, too, brings on his tragedy by his own action and initially sees it, as does Jupiter, as an external stroke of fate. Prometheus, however,

comes to throw down the righteousness that had obscured his awareness of his complicity with his destiny. The recognition of this complicity corrects not only his internal fragmentation but also his isolation from the external world. Life floods back into him and the external and internal alter simultaneously because their boundaries have become blurred. Now Shelley's last line in the "Hymn," which always sounds a little too self-denying for comfort, begins to make sense:

> Thus let thy power, which like the truth
> Of nature on my passive youth
> Descended, to my onward life supply
> Its calm--to one who worships thee,
> And every form containing thee,
> Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
> To fear himself, and love all human kind.

We must fear ourselves because if we love ourselves, qua individual ego, we will demand, as Shelley has in this poem, fallen forms of the infinite and the eternal, just so we can have <u>objects</u> to name, and know, and dominate.

The consciousness that causes the fall, the desire to impose the self on the world, results in the fallen spirit of opposition. But symbols exist for both fallen and redeemed mental states. In the fallen state, the mind finds the sign or symbol only to institutionalize it, to reify it, and to throw it in with other symbols which fit under the general category of whatever archetype has currently dominated the value-system. This corruption of the relation of the "One" to

the "Many" is the only interpretation of this relation that Derrida knows. In the fallen world which this system creates, reactionaries will attempt to tear down the authority which has gained power, and here we can place Derrida's activity. Unfortunately, Derrida, perhaps unconsciously, promotes the binary opposition which structures this fallen world. Clearly the project of infinite negation leads to little enlightenment as each inversion or cancellation is, by its very nature, trivial in terms of the advance it can offer.

Hazard Adams characterizes this struggle as the "uncreative reactionary institutionalization of reading" and the "uncreative stance of the Oedipal rebel ("Dizziness of Freedom" 443). The key word here is "uncreative." Neither of these groups "creates" the symbol when it is found. In fact the experience of the individual falls out of these two ideologies completely; the experience of the sign as something other than itself, <u>by the individual</u>, does not signify. In Shelley's poetry the Promethean act of thievery can be seen as the "Academy's" persistent attempt to limit the infinite potential of the symbolic to comprehensible human terms. Conversely those who, in "The Triumph of Life," rose "like shadows between Man and god/ Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven,/ Was worshiped by the world o'er which they strode/ For the true Sun it quenched" (lines 189-292), may be considered to be early practitioners of deconstruction, until we notice that usually these activities are interpreted the

other way around. It is the power of the papacy that Shelley is explicitly addressing in these lines, and it is against "the Priesthood," as Blake would call it, in general that he is railing. These masters of interpretation blot out the sun, and do not teach men: "to know themselves; their might/ Could not repress the mutiny within,/ And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night" ("Triumph" lines 212-14). Thus all institutionalized interpretation becomes ossified into a power structure which grants authority only to its priests. Within this system the aesthetic experience can no longer be liberating for the individual because his experience is no longer important. It is only important that he match up with the dictates of his culture, institution, or party. This is why the Sun is blotted out in Shelley's poem. The light within us is no longer important. Since this is the case, the light outside the cave is not important either since without both, there is no marriage, there is no correspondence of breezes. The apparatus of priestly doctrine holds us in the cave with meditations upon the shadows.

In this light Prometheus is the deconstructionist who "castrates" the authority that keeps us in darkness. But, as this whole discussion shows, neither stealing fire, nor blocking it, works. The ease with which we can exchange the roles of these two ideologies indicates the value of their offerings and why something beyond the binary is called for.

The redeemed consciousness creates the symbol as it

experiences it, if the experience involves the mystical marriage to which we have referred. Hans-Georg Gadamer in his book The Relevance of the Beautiful, supports our thesis: "for our experience of the symbolic in general, the particular represents itself as a fragment of being that promises to complete and make whole whatever corresponds to it" (32). Shelley, as a translator of Plato's Symposium, would have been familiar with this interpretation of the symbolic activity which Gadamer develops out of the symbolon tou anthropou of which Plato has Aristophanes speak in his famous myth. Furthermore, the idea of the fall and the idea of creativity which we are discussing both involve a cause and effect relation which cannot be represented in linear time; this is to say that both experiences fly in the face of the notion of strict causality.

It is easy to misconstrue what we are saying here and to believe that the "other" with which our soul becomes wed is an "idea" (and therefore an object of some sort) and that ideas are all that is really important. Hazard Adams cites a passage in Blake that helps to clarify the fact that this is not what we are about:

> I have heard many People say Give me the Ideas. It is no matter what Words you put them into & others say Give me the Design it is no matter for the Execution. These People know Enough of Artifice but Nothing of Art. Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words nor Can a Design be made without its minutely Appropriate Execution.

("Dizziness" 437)

"This is all the more important," Adams goes on to say, because this is the creativity that "gives new life to language." Shelley's statement about the death of language comes to mind, for the two sides of this ideas-vs.-something-else confusion are indeed both represented in his prose. In his earlier essay, "On Life" (conjecturally dated 1812-14), he discusses what is accomplished by the removal of metaphysical foundations. He could be discussing the results of deconstruction:

> It reduces the mind to that freedom in which it would have acted, but for the misuse of words and signs, the instruments of its own creation. By signs, I would be understood in a wide sense, including what is properly meant by that term, and what I peculiarly mean. In this latter sense, almost all familiar objects are signs, standing, not for themselves, but for others, in their capacity of suggesting one thought which shall lead to a train of thoughts. Our whole life is thus an education of error. (477)

Earlier in the essay he declares, "How vain is it to think that words can penetrate the mystery of our being! Rightly used they may make evident our ignorance to ourselves, and this is much" (475-476).

However, in "A Defence of Poetry" (1821), Shelley characterizes the activity of the imagination, in a manner remarkably reminiscent of this earlier description of error. The imagination (<u>to poiein</u>), "has for its object those forms

which are common to universal nature and existence itself." The imagination contemplates the relation of thought to thought "so as to color them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity" (480). When thoughts arise in response to poetry, we are reminded that, "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth" (485). The necessity for the particularity of the poem is that the relations which are embodied by the tensions in the poem are enactments of the relations which bind our thoughts to each other and to all of the universe. The poem is a model, but like the analogy which is its occasion and principle, it is a dynamic model. It enacts connection which both creates and reflects that of our mental process upon encountering it.

Thus there are several levels of universality at which we can experience a poem. To universalize terms beyond their grammatical referents--to see ourselves, for instance, as "dying flames" fed by darkness in Shelley's "Hymn"--is to universalize the poetic "message" to a point. But, in the light of a higher level of poetic interaction, this approach looks like a "fall" into particularity. Shelley concedes to the Power that will not reveal itself in the "Hymn":

> Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
> Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
> Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.

(lines 39-41)

The essence being praised here is really "whate'er these words cannot express" (line 72). And so we wander in and out of our desire to particularize and personalize this mystery and the realization that our efforts are really short-sighted attempts to limit and to define the ineffable. If, however, we back away from thrusting ourselves into a poem, we see ourselves reflected in a less particular way. It is as if we see ourselves reflected, not in the images of a poem, but in its process. With the ebb and flow of meter and rhyme, the "waxing and waning" of a sense of connection that the images build and dissolve, we feel the "inconstant glance" of that spirit which is within ourselves, but "greater than ourselves." Thus it is not our individuation process, but the relaxing of our sense of individuality that provides our poetic "redemption" by "Expanding" our "Eyes" to "behold the depths of the Wondrous World" (Blake, The Four Zoas, 406).

The poetic task has been called "a refinement of fraud" (J. Michael Yates The Completely Collapsible Portable Man, 7), but Shelley endeavours to evade, or optimally, to transcend the distinctions that make this danger real. He does not ultimately want to limit the limitless, freeze process, or pretend to reveal mystery. In the Prometheus Unbound, Prometheus asks "What can hide man from mutability?" (III.iii.line 25) Indeed, it is a riddle with no answer, for

mortality finds its definition in the mutable. Thus, Shelley acknowledges in his "Hymn" that we must make do with darkness and dying flames and the loneliness and despair of an essentially partial vision. Our glory is our desire to pursue an ever receding vision of "love" that will repair our partial sight and help us to find our connection with the "other" with-out us and with-in us. This is the "putting together" of poiesis: it connects us with what we already know. Thus the prophet, as Asia learns from the demogorgon, can only tell us what is in our hearts.

PART IV.C. THE A-CAUSAL/ A-TEMPORAL NATURE OF THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND THE CONTINUUM OF LIFE: WORDSWORTH AND WHITEHEAD

Shelley's "everlasting universe of Things" in "Mont Blanc" calls to mind Wordsworth's looming landscapes, only to dispel the image with a protean picture which we can place neither with-in nor with-out ourselves. But just as Shelley's "feeble brook" reflects and echoes the surrounding waterfalls in the woods, we find expression "with a sound but half [our] own." It is when we see the workings of our own minds reflected in the process of the brook's connection with the waterfall, or the poem's connection with the universe, that we begin our return to belonging to life's processes instead of opposing them. Our reflection casts us back, and bends our way homeward, not to a safe shelter but to an acceptance that these moments of fear and desire, openness and closure, selfishness and selflessness, will always struggle with-in us and with-out us and that herein lies the only mortal peace.

> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.
> (Prelude VI, lines 605-609)

We must reiterate that whatever it is that infinity makes us aware of, and whatever it is that we hope for and expect and

desire, it is not an idea. We are often not even explicitly conscious or cognizant of the events that make us feel "at home" in the universe. Such a consciousness would require our ability to "locate" the event which has so affected us in the spatio-temporal flux which contains (enables) our experience of the world. Such a location would imply that all of "reality" is reducible to discrete units of time which follow each other in an orderly fashion, and discrete units of space which occupy our attention or affect us while their neighboring units do not. The fact that this is an extremely inadequate description of reality, for the Romantic, and for any scientist, philosopher, or artist, who understands the limitations of materialism, subjectivism and idealism, forms the subject of this section. The a-causal, a-temporal nature of our experience, which we emphasized as an aspect of creative (symbolic, aesthetic) interaction in our previous discussion (161), is an inseparable part of Wordsworth's attention to the often unconscious but profound effect of the natural world upon our minds and spirits. It is also implied in his insistence upon the complicity of indefinable "moments" of upheaval or revelation, with the continuous flow of our historical selves. Lee Johnson, in his book, Wordsworth's Metaphysical Verse, makes both these points simultaneously in his discussion of "Tintern Abbey": ". . .the constant deformations--or, rather, the growth and development--of Wordsworth's life show that the influence of the forms of

nature is constant throughout and preserves the transcendental dimension of his mind even when his worldly experiences 'know it not'" (70). In light of our discussions of poiesis, in its capacity of connecting the material realm with the "other" ("the forms of nature with those of mind" 118), it is interesting to note Johnson's assessment of the Prelude as a "metaphysical" work which "emerges from a series of challenges to the poet's ability to bring together his individual and poetic selves" (68).

Goethe's statement concerning symbolic activity--to which we have previously referred (see above 80)--encompasses questions concerning the role of the conscious and the unconscious mind in this process, as well as a distinction regarding the nature of abstractions which cannot be insisted on too often in a discussion of Romantic aesthetics and poetics. Therefore, we turn to him again:

> It is a great difference whether the poet searches for the particular to go with the universal or whether he sees the universal in the particular. From the former there arises allegory where the particular is only an example, an instance of the universal; the latter is actually the true nature of poetry: it utters a particular without thinking the universal or indicating it. Whoever now vitally grasps this particular acquires the universal at the same time, although not then aware of it, or only later. (maxim 279)

The "universal" as an idea searching for a poem, becomes a mere abstraction. The idea of creating a show-piece for an element or fragment of the flux of the real, runs counter to true poetic instinct in its highest form. As Alfred North

Whitehead says in Science and the Modern World, "Wordsworth opposes to the scientific abstractions his full concrete experience." When Wordsworth, in "Resolution and Independence," describes the vicissitudes of his day's meditations, he speaks of a moment of ease in which he "heard the woods and distant waters roar;/ Or heard them not, as happy as a boy." We remember the boy of Winander (see above 81) and we recognize that this unconscious mingling is desirable, but again we fall prey to wanting to locate something that can be called a "concrete experience" here, and we worry how the "other" can be experienced so profoundly that it alters forever the quality of one's life's experience, when no clear "cause/ effect" relationship is being claimed.

This is the condition we have inherited and since we have given Plato his fair share of credit for his positive contributions, we must acknowledge the manner in which his thought made it necessary for the Romantics to insist on the primacy of a poetic and experiential process. To say the very least, the Platonic theory of Forms does not naturally generate an awareness of such processes. Eric Havelock succinctly summarizes the heritage to which we refer:

> [J]ust as poetry itself, as long as it reigned supreme, constituted the chief obstacle to the achievement of effective prose, so there was a state of mind which we shall conveniently label the "poetic" or "Homeric" or "oral" state of mind, which constituted the chief obstacle to scientific rationalism, to the use of analysis, to the classification of experience, to its rearrangement in

> sequence of cause and effect. That is why the poetic state of mind is for Plato the arch-enemy . . . . He is entering the lists against centuries of habituation in rhythmic memorised experience. He asks of men that instead they should examine this experience and rearrange it, that they should think about what they say, instead of just saying it. And they should separate themselves from it instead of identifying with it; they themselves should become the "subject" who stands apart from the "object" and reconsiders it and analyses it and evaluates it, instead of just "imitating" it. (Preface 47)

Poetry is the contrary to dualism--that is why its form is true for the Romantic. Whereas in our previous section we saw Shelley's recognition of the poetic as the contrary to materialism, we now witness Wordsworth's poetic correction of dualism. The dualistic universe can only be understood in terms of negations, and negations dictate absolutes: the either-or-ness of cold reason. This is the home of the subject who locates the world "out there" and forgets to include himself in it.

Whitehead, who often seems to be writing a gloss on Wordsworth, is very explicit about clearing "space and time from the taint of simple location," since for him, "nature is a structure of evolving processes" (Science 72). His characterization of a moment in an act of perception describes the Wordworthian interfusion of all things perfectly. A subject at "standpoint A" ("a region of space-time; that is to say . . . a volume of space through a duration of time" 70), becomes aware of a "sense-object," the color green, for instance. This and other sense objects have "ingression" into

space-time. The standpoint is a "unit of realized experience": it unites in perception various modes of various objects. "Modes" involve the location of sense-objects. Sense-objects are not at stand-point A, but they are present in A with the mode of location B. They are not simply at B, nor are they simply at A, but there is an awareness at A of a sense-object at location B. However, "the difficulties of philosophy in respect to space and time are founded on the error of considering them as primarily the loci of simple locations. Prehension is simply the cognition of prehensive unification; or more shortly, perception is cognition of prehension. The actual world is a manifold of prehensions, and 'prehension' is a 'prehensive occasion'" (71). Whitehead's proposed "provisional realism," conceives nature "as a complex of prehensive unifications" (72). Space and time are only abstractions from these unifications. In reality, the relations of the prehensions of this event--and it is "the most concrete finite entity" (71)--are so interlocked that we cannot "tear any one of them out of its context" (72).

> Yet each [prehension] within its context has all the reality that attaches to the whole complex. Conversely, the totality <u>as</u> the same reality as each prehension; for each prehension unifies the modalities to be ascribed, from its standpoint, to every part of the whole. A prehension is a process of unifying. Accordingly, nature is a process of expansive development, necessarily transitional from prehension to prehension. What is achieved is thereby passed beyond, but it is also retained

> as having aspects of itself present to prehensions which lie beyond it.
>
> Thus nature is a structure of evolving processes. The reality is the process. (72)

Of Wordsworth, Whitehead notes,

> It is the brooding presence of the hills which haunts him. His theme is nature <u>insolido</u>, that is to say, he dwells on that mysterious presence of surrounding things, which imposes itself on any separate element that we set up as an individual for its own sake. He always grasps the whole of nature as involved in the tonality of the particular instance. That is why he laughs with the daffodils, and finds in the primrose thoughts "too deep for tears." (84)

Bringing all of this back to the aesthetic event, where our interests lie, Whitehead confirms that, "Both Shelley and Wordsworth emphatically bear witness that nature cannot be divorced from its aesthetic values, and that these values arise from the cumulation, in some sense, of the brooding presence of the whole on to its various parts" (89). Furthermore,

> In being aware of bodily experience, we must thereby be aware of the whole spatio-temporal world as <u>mirrored</u> within the bodily life. . . . In a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times. For every location involves an aspect of itself in every other location. Thus every spatio-temporal standpoint <u>mirrors</u> the world. . . . [I]f you think in terms of our naive experience, [this] is a mere transcript of the obvious facts. You are in a certain place perceiving things. Your perception takes place where you are, and is entirely dependent on how your body is functioning. But this functioning of the body in one place, exhibits for your cognisance an aspect of the distant environment, fading away into the general knowledge that there are things beyond. If this conveys

> knowledge of a transcendent world, it must be because the event which is the bodily life unifies in itself aspects of the universe. (93)

The Romantics needed to develop an epistemology which would move us away from the notion of linear time and spatial location, which Kant ultimately crystallized for Western philosophy, for several reasons. In Kantian terms "fact" is an event in the objective world which perception makes us aware of. Fact is not our perception, but the objective event itself. Therefore the causal efficacy of an event or fact upon a subject will be determined by a) the vividness of the event and b) our cognitive acuteness at the time of the event. The universal principles which Kantian philosophy associates with particular facts can only be explained by imputing universal categories of thought to independent events in the world as we become aware of them in our own sense data. Thus Kant accepts Hume's notion of simple occurrence, which Whitehead and the Romantics deny, for simple occurrence implies simple location and time as pure succession. In Kant's theory we must "constitute" the world; we construct the world rather than apprehend it. In Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect, Whitehead claims, "Universality of truth arises from the universality of relativity, whereby every particular actual thing lays upon the universe the obligation of conforming to it. Thus in the analysis of particular fact universal truths are discoverable, those truths expressing

this obligation" (39). For Kant and Hume conscious experience precedes "causal efficacy" (the effect of an event on our lives), since this efficacy arises out of our later judgements with regards to our experience. It is at this point that we construct the world, according to these theories, rather than discovering it in our experience. Consequently "causal efficacy" is something which gains force with higher-grades of intelligence, and effects such intelligences in their best moments. Furthermore, events need not conform (echo, mirror, relate), to other events more remote in space or time than the immediate proximity and the immediate past or present. "Haunting presences" and "unseen Powers" therefore, are not very efficacious.

To this Whitehead counters that, in fact, it is lower-grade organisms which relate to the world profoundly in terms of immediately present stimuli. Our experience of the immediate is that which we can understand in a fairly uncomplicated way. And "Understanding" is indeed the term which attaches to these data, as Coleridge would hasten to point out. Objects can be isolated and events described in a straightforward but "barren" fashion when we refer to this "handy" experience (Whitehead Symbolism, 44), and this is the function of Coleridgean Understanding as distinct from Reason. The other kind of experience is, "heavy with the contact of the things gone by, which lay their grip on our immediate selves" (44). This latter experience is what Whitehead considers truly to

possess "causal efficacy," whereas the former is merely "presentational immediacy." Causal efficacy, the awareness of the vague and the distant, is generally not associated with cognitive acuity, but on the contrary, with the emergence of our more primitive selves. When primitive human functions are aroused, such as anger, hate, fear, love, hunger, etc., or when some aspect of our general sense-perceptions is temporarily non-operative, this sort of efficacy is most likely to occur.

This is surely the secret of "seeing into the life of things" as we meet it in Wordsworth. Indeed, in his poetry there is always a dialectic between the concrete, sensuous experiences of childhood and the spiritual, almost mystical, experiences of the adult who has learned how to be moved by what he perceives. Childhood is characterized by "An appetite; a feeling and a love,/ That had no need for remoter charm,/ By thought supplied, nor any interest/ Unborrowed from the eye" ("Tintern Abbey" lines 80-83). The adult who has been formed by these appetites, however--the individual who has been "fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (Prelude, I.line 302)--while he is still capable of such innocent interaction, can also allow nature to become his mandala. In such instances,

> . . . the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
("Tintern Abbey" lines 43-49)

But this dialectic is inextricably bound up with another: that of incredibly vivid instants of connection with the continuum of life's processes. For the concrete experiences of childhood, whether they involved happy interaction, or an awful, inarticulable awareness of Nature's unseen powers, so affect the life of a sensitive individual that they are responsible not only for the profoundness of the "blessed mood" described above, "In which the heavy and the weary weight/ Of all this unintelligible world,/ Is lightened" ("Tintern Abbey" lines 39-41), but also for a sense of continuity which carries the individual through life's harshest vicissitudes and deprivations. Thus, the "conformation" of all things is a major theme in Wordsworth. The Moment suffuses the lifetime; the distant and vague suffuse the present and vivid; and the unconscious grasping of universals and eternals fuels momentary intimations of that which we cannot know. If we will allow it, these glimpses will grace the entire flow of our existence:

. . . And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.
("Tintern Abbey" lines 94-102)

IV.D.1. BLAKE: INNER AND OUTER

The primitive frame of reference which seems to contribute so significantly to Wordsworth's visionary powers calls to mind the naming power of the ancient poets which we noticed in our earlier discussions of the poetic spirit (see above 62). This "naming" process, which is part of the activity which Blake attributes to the "Prolific" aspect of human nature, arises out of our un-mediated experience of the world rather than our abstract analysis of it. In connection with this experience we suggested that the concrete "means" differently for the Romantic than it does for the deconstructionist (see above 73). We also suggested that the "return" to this Prolific interaction with the world was achieved in Romantic poetry through a synthesis of the experiential with the philosophical (61-62). Romantic poetry <u>enacts</u> the inseparability of these two, contrary-wise.

Now we can more clearly identify the "primitive" nature of the operations of the ancient poet with that awareness of the distant and the vague to which Wordsworth and Whitehead have awakened our sensitivities. "Concrete experience" is also now more clearly comprehensible in terms of its essentially <u>poetic</u> nature. Now it is Blake's turn to help us demonstrate the gravity of the deconstructive error by illustrating the extent of its inability to account for the experiential, and therefore, the poetic. (Or, vice-versa.) Blake is often

considered, of all the Romantic poets, to have the most in common with the deconstructive outlook. An examination of the Prolific and the Devourer alone, however, reveals the extent to which he has surpassed them.

> . . . one portion of being is the Prolific, the other is the Devouring: to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains; but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence & fancies that the whole. (Marriage 40)

The Blakean notion of naming the world holds that our first perceptions are not rational but mystical in nature. Our experience of wonder--generated by the particularity of each perceptual event--designates the objects of perception in the primitive mind far more powerfully than a process involving the abstraction and systematization of attributes. The sense of an invisible but infinite "other" is experienced directly through the object without the need of abstract, rational thought. The presence of the whole in each of its parts--the distant in the near, ourselves in everything we see, and everything we see within ourselves--results, in this rare and wonderful visionary state, in the experience of the non-physical (because not explicitly present) in the physical. In short, we experience the metaphysical nature of all existence, although metaphysical was never Blake's word for it.

Blake believed that our ability to be Prolific in our dealings with the world was being radically endangered by the

ever-increasing representations of our devouring tendencies in the arenas of Art, Science, Politics and Religion. This tendency interprets the splendor and complexity of the linguistic or worldly event into a fixed definition and then subsumes the definition into a hierarchy which is structured by arbitrarily assigned values. Hence, initial decisions with regard to desired objectives feed all future decisions; the "priesthood" perpetuates its own authority, and the recognized efficacy of experiences which hold no place in the canon is disregarded in the best of times, and prohibited by law in the worst of times.

Joseph Campbell, in The Inner Reaches of Outer Space, cites the interesting example of the question as to whether Mary had literally "immaculately" conceived of God or had given birth in the normal fashion to a child who had then been ordained, as it were, by heaven:

> It was only in the year AD 431, at the church council held in Ephesus (which at that time was the greatest temple-city in the Near East of the Great Goddess of Many Names: Artemis, Ishtar, Astarte, Anahit, Aphrodite, Isis, and so on) that the earthly mother, Mary, of the historical Jesus was authoritatively declared to have been literally Theotokos, ("God bearer," "mother of God"). (60)

Campbell also refers to passages in the recently discovered Gnostic Gospel According to St. Thomas, which reflect a much more Blakean attitude towards the physical world than that which the Church has traditionally handed down to us: "Cleave

a piece of wood, I am there; lift up the stone and you will find me there" (Logion 77:26-7); or again, "The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it" (Logion, 113:17 in Inner Reaches 61).

The deconstructionist also believes that the systematization or bureaucratization of the "value" and "meaning" (e.g., the formal sanctioning of the Sacred and the Beautiful, etc.) of our perceptions has seriously straight-jacketed creativity and expression in the Western world, and he blames the illusory transcendental realm for lending itself so well to the authorizing and sanctifying of the bureaucracy in power. Therefore, while deconstruction advocates a return to the experiential, the experiential does not yield an awareness of anything apart from the visible present. The signifier is only content; the object is simply what we see. As Blake says in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "Man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (plate 14). Or as Wordsworth says of his juvenile self crossing the Simplon Pass, "Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,/ Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state/ Of intellect and heart" (Prelude, VI, 541-543).

I am accusing the deconstructionist of materialism which I liken (as does, I presume, my lofty company) to unripeness. But much is made in deconstruction of the "trace," which opposes "syntactical relations"--meaning generated out of grammatical components themselves--to metaphorical relations--

the symbolic value of linguistic components which obtains from "beyond" the mere grammar of a statement. Is it not the case that "syntactic relation" is another way of describing the presence of all objects in each object? I fear that the deconstructionist has not adequately determined the implications of all his positions. Consequently his stance is not only embarrassing (see above 25), but self-defeating.

In the first place, the possibility of the significant presence of absent (distant, vague) entities is ruled out by Derrida's lengthy tirade on "differance." He seems to say that absences can only be present as absences which would posit a vacancy (perhaps the one which Shelley fears at the end of "Mont Blanc") just where we are calling for presence, affect, or what Whitehead calls, "conformation." Much of what Derrida says sounds as if he too were demonstrating the implication of the "sensible" with the "nonsensible." This cannot be the case, however, because Derrida (usually) does not believe in the nonsensible. Susan Handelman cites Derrida's plea for less attention to the "<u>be</u>-ing of nouns and predicates" and more emphasis on "what is <u>between</u> the significant members of speech, the conjunctions, articles, the joints of speech between the nouns, substantives, and verbs" (<u>Slayers</u> 20). Thus <u>ousia</u>, the <u>is</u>-ness behind the word, is overthrown; there is nothing but the word.

This condition is only distressing to us. Like Dr. P., the deconstructionist does not have the apparatus to perceive his

own lack (see above 71-2). While Derrida, et al., may be happy to be liberated from the constraints of philosophy, they represent what is in our perspective a "fallen" condition. Deconstruction is trapped in mere phenomena--in the world of becoming--and our Blakean consciousness tells us that liberation (salvation) requires a vision of the "identification of the features of time with eternal life" (Campbell Inner Reaches, 61.)

All things considered, it is mysterious that Derrida can believe in metaphor. Susan Handelman's summary of his position is that for Derrida, "the metaphysical realm is at bottom metaphorical" (20). This seems to mean that the only way metaphysics can work is by things standing for things, and so philosophy's error is either its mistaken belief that at some point there is some-thing which all else variously signifies, or, its mistaken belief that the noumenal, metaphysical, ideal, or unseen, can be in any meaningful way mimicked in the material or linguistic world. I have tried to show that the Romantics have avoided throwing out philosophy with the bath water of dualism, or positivism; they have taken a more constructive and dynamic view of their Classical heritage. They hold that the concept of the transcendental is useful to discuss what appear to be eternal verities, and that awareness of this consistency in the universe's fabric helps us to come to terms with the sameness in the differences of our experiences. Their departure from the rigors of Classical

metaphysics, and it is a departure that was anticipated by Plato himself, entails that: a) there is no object or referent in any strict sense to which signifiers and objects refer for their meaning, and b) the relation of the object or the word to its essential self is not a mimetic one. Of the Romantic poets, Blake is the least interested in transcendence. Through Urizen, however, he keeps alive the ratio (of being to Being); he sees the necessity for logos.

One of the more serious proposals of this paper has been that metaphor is not conceivable without metaphysics. However, Derrida's misconstrual of metaphor, which renders his position in some sense, I suppose, tenable to himself, is dramatized for us by Susan Handelman's parallel misrepresentation of Plato. In a truly distressing manner Handelman pronounces that, "according to Plato, language is not truth, but only 'imitative sound'" (Slayers 4). She then quotes Plato's Cratylus: "A name is a vocal imitation of any object and a man is said to name an object when he imitates it with the voice" (423b). Handelman then skips to the concluding passages of the dialogue and quotes Socrates' statement of agnostic respect concerning the goals of epistemology and metaphysics: "He who follows names in the search after things, and analyzes their meaning, is in great danger of being deceived . . . How real existence is to be discovered is, I suspect, beyond you and me--we must rest content with the admission that the knowledge of things is not

to be derived from names" (436a & 439). The problem here is that this dialogue deliberately moves to explode the mimetic theory of language which is being isolated and attacked by Socrates in the previously cited passage. Nothing could be further from the truth than what Handelman asserts concerning Plato's beliefs here. Not two lines after the statement quoted above concerning imitation, Socrates--having gained the reserved approval of poor Hermogenes--characteristically rescinds the mimetic theory, announcing reasonably enough, "Nay, if we have [reached the truth] we shall be obliged to admit that the people who imitate sheep, or cocks, or other animals, name that which they imitate" (tr. Jowett, 423). Much of the remaining seventeen pages of the dialogue is dedicated to a demonstration of the further shortcomings of the word-as-imitation theory and to the admission that not enough is known about language to enable them to relate it successfully to epistemology.

This mis-casting of the mimetic relationship (and not incidentally of Western Metaphysics and Classical language theory), illustrates once again the tenuous theoretical existence of "differance." This passage does urge the ultimate necessity to turn to something other than words for the attainment of meaning, since in the Platonic corpus it is really a preliminary introduction to the concept of the Form. It does not, however, urge a mimetic theory of meaning. It is this sort of misinterpretation that permits Derrida's

unforgivable censure of the transcendental and metaphysical which is unforgivable precisely because he thinks that he knows what he means when he says all language is metaphorical. He means that since nothing has any "proper" meaning anyway, all transferences of meaning are equally valid. This, of course, has nothing to do with the metaphorical process as we have come to envision it here.

Under the aegis of Western Metaphysics, according to Derrida, we are in the shadow of "differance," the gap that makes non-sense of our attempts at sense. Liberated from this "white mythology," however, there is no "differance" and no gap; "the claims of the letter are vindicated" (Slayers 20). Within the metaphysical realm the gap between signifier and signified is both too huge to contemplate, and at the same time, because of Derrida's mimetic theory, the two are like the opposing side of a single leaf. Outside of metaphysics the two are the same.

Blake would seem to be staked in the outside-of-metaphysics-camp. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, he rails against the metaphysicians who have contributed to the "priesthood's" project of sanctifying certain symbols and codifying every aspect of human value. In one of the "Memorable Fancies" of the Marriage, the speaker/ Prophet/ Bard is visited by an "Angel," that is, a representitive of the soul divorced from the body, which is to say the "good," which is to say reason, restraint, passivity, and prohibition (which is to say that

the goodness of the angel is false). The Angel shows our speaker the perils of Hell which await his poor misguided spirit. On the way down to their vantage point the two pass through a Church and then through a mill. This is a significant juxtaposition in Blake. In "There is no Natural Religion," (b)I and IV, Blake says "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception, he percieves more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover," and "The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a universe would soon become a mill with complicated wheels" (2). The limitation of the infinite by sense-bound empiricism and by reified (literalized) myth are parallel worries; both of these activities create the closed systems of logic and machines of which we spoke in our Introduction to this section. Both of them operate in terms of negations.

The Angel shows Blake's persona the appropriate horrors and eventually leaves him to the attack of Leviathan, who advances towards him with "all the fury of a spiritual existence" (41). After the Angel departs, however,

> this appearance was no more, but I found myself sitting alone on a pleasant bank beside a river by moon light, hearing a harper who sung to the harp, & his theme was: 'The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind.' (41-2)

When the Angel expresses his surprise at the escape of this "pitiable foolish young man," our protagonist replies, "All

that we saw was owing to your metaphysics" (42).

The priesthood's power comes from static definitions of good, right, and just, etc., and this fixity is generally traced, as we have noted, back to Plato. Plato put value "out there" for us to analyse and measure ourselves against; he turned the richness and beauty that the "ancient poets" had perceived with-in themselves "with their enlarged numerous senses" (Marriage 38), into eternal and external objects, thus starting the Western philosophy off on its abstract foot instead of its experiential foot. This sort of sentiment in Blake has linked him with the deconstructive project, but I believe that to dwell on this aspect of his work alone is to be over-simplistic in our reading of Blake's activity. I hope by now that it is also clear that it is not quite fair to Plato either.

By suggesting that we "recollect" what we know when the skill of the philosopher brings to life the visions of the world which are potential within us, Plato is paving the way for a philosophical conception of an "outer" (eternal, archetypal, ideal) which is also "inner": a meeting of the transcendent and the immanent. Plato is beginning to grasp something like what we find in the marriage/war of the Prolific and the Devourer in Blake. Plato, to be sure, stresses logos too much for Blake's taste, but Blake is wise enough to acknowledge the Urizenic, whereas Derrida does not seem to be.

The question of models, which has come up frequently in the course of this paper, is relevant here. We have talked about measure and we have talked about mimesis, and we have called analogy the "mapping" of metaphor, all in an attempt to demonstrate that there is a way of understanding these ideas which is not anathema to the poetic spirit. Blake opposed the concept of models because they were employed in Newtonian physics to freeze the world into something it was not. By analysing this still life, the new science pretended to know the flux of infinite universal processes. In the opening of Donald Ault's book Visionary Physics we find an examination of Blake's "Newton" which illustrates this very point. Ault comments on the curious relation of the figure of Newton with his background: "Clearly Blake's suggestion is that the figure's foot is part of the rock or vice versa; that is, the rock is crystallizing into the human form or the human form is dissolving into the indefinite form of the rock" (4). The arc within the triangle that Newton is drawing, Ault points out, is very clear against the blurry indeterminate backdrop of the entire engraving, and it also mimicks the curve of Newton's back; it is an abstraction of himself.

> The human figure is constructing a limited, fixed, and unchanging model of his fundamental bodily experiences to stave off the sense of the dissolving quality of the outer world. Yet--and this is the most crucial point of all--it is the very act of constructing the model that separates the world into inner and outer, definite and indefinite, action and background, symmetry and asymmetry. The

> background is both cause and effect of the central action. (4)

Here recurs our theme concerning the conflation of cause and effect: the same activity which causes the fall results from it. The background is strange, indefinite, and external because it has been made an object of analysis and because it has been asked to yield its essence to methods of measurement which demand a precision incompatible with its nature. So the scientist measures, and the world looks blurrier and blurrier because it is being treated with the wrong instruments. The blurrier it looks the more it becomes "other" and the more we oppose it with instruments which by now have become weapons against the environment.

How bad are models? How dangerous is this activity? If one sees philosophy as an aspect of the operation of poetry, and both of them--chasing each other's tails--as the life of truth, the activity cannot be all bad. To retain its value, however, philosophy cannot be divorced from poetry. Los and Urizen need each other; the Prolific and the Devourer generate each other. The fear is that those who fancy a "portion" of existence to be the whole will rule the world. "Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two" (Marriage 40), says Blake, and such a reconciliation involves the destruction of the power of this Blakean tension. "I came not to send peace but a sword" (40), is the Christian voice which is most meaningful to Blake's stance.

This is not incompatible with his belief that the Christian tradition has erred against its true essence by living on a legacy of sacrifice. The Christian "reconciliation" of the Prolific and the Devourer has involved the sanctifying of the Devourer--the analysing priesthood--which perpetuates its position of authority by always raising one side of life's essential tensions and negating the other. Thus, earnest followers of Christianity are left with appetites, energies, and all sorts of creative (Prolific) passions which are unaccounted for in Christian prescriptions concerning virtue and good deeds. These "evil" wayward sparks in human nature are then to be sacrificed, as Christ was, in order for the symbolic sanctity of the spiritual to continue its stifling reign.

The same human force which dominates religion in this manner, dominates science in the form of empiricism. The "Spirit" of Church dogma is really just an abstraction which is so old that by now it barely attaches to anything at all. Furthermore, as we have taken pains to point out, the Church cites as "evidence" for its views, its own literal-minded limitations of the wealth which exists in religious mythology. In a similar fashion, empirical science often does not study nature "in process" (Coleridge's "natura naturans"), but abstractions of ever-shrinking fragments of process. Thus it stands in danger of authorizing the same error: soon all will forget that the findings of these studies are only significant

insofar as they can be referred back to the process whence they came (see above 19-20). "Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (Marriage 38). Hence the thrust which Blake fears in Newton is the same as that which has spoiled Christ's true message. The "corporeal" world is left accounting for the delights of the infinite, and the claim of the imagination on truth stands to be entirely lost: "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,/ Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (35) If the answer can involve neither the abolition of models nor the raising of their authority like a banner over the universe's stubborn secrets, where shall we look for our direction?

In Blake's Jerusalem, the "Satanic Mills" which rape England spiritually and physically suggest, and are suggested by, the "Starry Wheels" of the Newtonian universe. In Chapter One we witness starry wheels rolling over the fiery furnaces countless times, always with images of division and opposition and war acting themselves out in their midst. We meditate on how cogs operate. Cogs, we realize, make distinctions. Two wheels turn towards each other and then push each other away. They oppose. They create action in another that is contrary to their own action. But is this not also the activity of contraries? Do they not perpetuate their opposing essence? The solution must be in the vision which perceives them. After all, the energy of the furnaces is still energy; it must

be redeemable. It is only that our essential selves have to involve the eternal war, or eternal marriage, of philosophy and imagination; of Urizen and Los. With-in us, Los's vision must include the Urizenic and Urizen's must include Los. Let either blink in their vigilence (or "cease from mental fight"), and the balance is overthrown into a new victory for a new faction representing an old party and a small portion of existence.

The point needs to be reiterated that what is being discussed here is not two-fold opposition. That is the stagnant opposition of Christian dualism, formal logic, and the fallen sexual encounter. What is called for is the tetra-polarity of Adams' exposition on contrariety (see above 147-148). On one side two distinct positions push each other away; on the other side they pull towards each other, each generating the need for the other's existence. Los and Urizen push each other away, but the vision each has of the other--which occurs in their redeemed moments--pulls them back together again. Later in Jerusalem we are told,

> . . . Rivers Mountains Cities Villages,
> All are Human & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk
> In Heavens & Earths; as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
> And Earth, & all you behold, tho it appears Without it is Within
> In your Imagination of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow. (225)

While "as a man sees, so he is," we need the experiential to

gain access to all that we carry in our bosoms. We need a way to give shape or meaning to our connection with the inner/outer phenomena which shape our awareness of existence. Limitation is the essential condition for the formation of what Whitehead has called concrete fact: our experience of the world with all its echoing and resonating constituents. "Realization [of any segment of reality] is in itself the attainment of value. But there is no such thing as mere value. Value is the outcome of limitation. The definite finite entity is the selected mode which is the shaping of attainment; apart from such shaping into individual matter of fact there is no attainment" (Science 94). Models, then, are attempts to understand the grammatical constituents of matters of fact. Like any other symbol, they can generate our awareness of a hugeness to which they "refer." But this reference can only be a happy one for science and man-kind if models simultaneously evoke our awareness of that to which they cannot refer. This is true because the noumenal, or the invisible, or the spiritual, cannot be modelled, and because models, by their very nature, are not revolving planets, whirling vortices, or flowers which make us weep. We must not, therefore, ask them to behave as if they were.

PART IV.D.ii. THE FORM OF PROCESS

The question of models cannot be considered without reference to the concept of the One and the Many. Our attitude towards models and abstractions, that is, our ability or inability to use them well when we need them and to go beyond them when they have served their purpose, depends on our interpretation of this concept. The theory of Forms was one of the first systems to employ "unity and multeity" in a thorough-going epistemology. As we have seen, however, it was necessary for the Romantic to devise a method of accounting for the dynamic quality of natural process, since in Plato's observations, there is only a nascent awareness of this problem. In order to understand the implications of their own epistemological stance, it is useful to turn once again to Whitehead.

Arithmetical processes such as that which can be stated as "twice three is six" are not really tautological in nature. The statement "twice three is six" says that the objects being multiplied have maintained their discrete identities through a process of multiplication so that unlike some things, drops of water for instance, they have remained individuated in such a way as to make six when their number is doubled. In Modes of Thought, Whitehead claims that there is no such thing as a static number: "There are only numbers playing their parts in various processes conceived in abstraction from the world-

process" (93). The later Plato realized this, but as is the case with all great philosophers, Plato's realizations went beyond the capacity of his own system. The theory of Forms initially lent itself to "a barren tautological absolute, with a dream of life and motion" (Modes 93). In later dialogues, however, the Form of process, and the implication of transcendence with immanence in our experience of the world is realized. For instance, the Eleatic Stranger in the "Sophist" says, "I hold that the definition of being is simply power. . . . [B]eing, as being known, is acted on by knowledge, and is therefore in motion . . . Can we imagine being to be devoid of life and mind, and to remain in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture?" (247-249, tr. Jowett) Thus the mode in which we perceive aspects of reality--the nature of our connection to our world--becomes the Form of the real. This is not a subjectivist doctrine, although the experience of the subject remains crucial. It is not subjectivist because it insists on honesty in our dealings with the "real" and the "conformity" of all events with all events. That is, each actual object is obligated to all other actual objects. David Bohm reiterates this in his discussion of the attempts of the Ancients to deduce truths concerning an unwieldy world:

> . . . measure is a form of insight that has to fit the overall reality in which man lives, as demonstrated by the clarity of perception and harmony of action to which it leads. Such insight can arise properly only when a man works with seriousness and honesty, putting truth and

> factuality first, rather than his own whims or desires. (Wholeness 22)

There is a consistency in the fabric of the universe which guarantees a correspondence of the Forms of process which are generated by the immanent power of certain objects and events when we "connect" profoundly with them. These Forms then transcend our particular experience and through the power granted them by the consciousness of the culture in which they occur; they give rise to archetypal experience. Through the incredible complex of unifications which occur in these moments we feel connected in a very "essential" way with the process of the universe. We are completed, in a sense, because we are no longer a fragment but a part of a greater whole.

In the Timaeus Plato discusses the fact that in order for two objects to connect, a third is required:

> But two things cannot be rightly put together without a third; there must be some bond of union between them. And the fairest bond is that which makes the most complete fusion of itself and the things which it combines; and porportion is best adapted to effect such a union. (31c, tr. Jowett)

This third term is the experience of connection and it is this which is linguistically modeled in analogy and metaphor. This is what was meant when we said that for the Romantic, poetry was the contrary to dualism. For the human consciousness genuinely to belong to and participate in the

natural world--and it is sheer perversity to try to demonstrate that it cannot--we need a discursive or linguistic device with which we can enact the implication of everything in everything else. Analogy and metaphor alone suffice; language and cosmos meet.

Of course it is this which the deconstructionist denies. We have cited Paul de Man's claim that the artificiality of language demonstrates the lack of real value in the human experience of nature. This becomes of particular interest in light of de Man's recently uncovered sympathies with the Nazi movement and his collaborationist efforts in the past. In one of the many rehearsals of the implications of these findings, a former student of his, believing herself to be extolling his virtues proclaimed: "De Man provided his students with a set of tools for reading, the most important function of which may be the unmasking of ideology. What we call ideology, he showed, entails taking a linguistic construct for a natural reality" (The Nation, Jan/9/88, 23).

Of course for de Man a poem does not represent an eternal truth as it does, for instance, for Shelley. This is because, for him, the relations enacted in the poetic process are false because there is nothing really "there" to connect with; there is only a void to fill with "intentional constructs." But since this is the case, there is no "reality" to be "honest" to. Obviously, under such circumstances Nazism, or any other nihilistic blight on the soul of humanity, can easily find

enough spiritual orphans to support itself. Fragmentation will always open the door to totalitarianism.

In neither the work of Derrida nor de Man is there a tension to be kept alive. There are no polarities to wed each other; there can be no Romance. What I find attractive about the terms of the fall/ redemption mythology to which we have so frequently referred in this essay is that it provides a framework (a structure for a process) for all conceivable dialectical tensions. When Derrida says that the ever prevalent "differance" is the fall with no hope of return (even though the possibility of a return is what philosophy has arrested and called metaphysics), and when de Man attributes qualities of the binary proposition to Romantic contrariety, they are operating, ironically, as subjects who think in terms of linear time and simple spatial location. The Romantics do not hope for a return; they sense connection. The "salvation" such connection offers is immanent in every kind of experience in every moment of our existence if only our own potentials can be opened to it.

Speaking of the contrariety of the dualistic and the poetic mode of relation Hazard Adams says, "To sustain a proper intellectual struggle between these forms of knowing is to provide ourselves with what cultural and spiritual harmony we can . . . achieve" ("Blake and the Postmodern" 17). "Christ came with a sword," and our Blakean heritage is never to cease from "mental fight." The fight is the Marriage of Heaven and

Hell. The embrace of the two figures--one from the clouds, the other from the flames--on Blake's frontispiece of the Marriage may just as well be seen as the embodiment of mental fight.

In moments impossible to locate in space-time, we lose ourselves in the immediacy of the presentation of events, only to find ourselves moved by a presence that the actual event cannot account for. In fits of philosophical and spiritual peevishness we account for the world in static abstractions, only to find ourselves suddenly jarred into another kind of relationship with reality which seems more fulfilling even though it is overwhelmingly less explicit. The profound experience of the primitive--or open--mind, it is true, will not yield itself to "typing" and remain meaningful, as Derrida has pointed out. But the Romantics themselves are not guilty of this crime. They have not become obsessed with the process of abstracting and naming particles of reality; they oppose this process with every line they write. What they insist on is the primacy of the eternal process of the universe, which becomes the heart of the archetypal experience: the act of identification and connection by which poetic language enacts life and growth. This does not have to be thrown out with the bath-water of static abstractions. It is a disgrace that postmodern nihilism should have a greater hold on the human heart than the possibility of meaningful self-expression and self-realization within the infinitely open cosmic system

which Plato first attempted to invite into our "bosoms," and with which the Romantics have so profoundly connected.

PART IV.E. COLERIDGE AND CONSUBSTANTIALITY

We turn to Coleridge last because his thought brings such precision to the issues which we have addressed that he simultaneously summarizes and goes beyond what we have found in our discussions of Shelley, Wordsworth, and Blake. By no means do I wish to claim superiority for Coleridge over his literary contemporaries as a poet or as a thinker; such a distinction would be impossible to demonstrate. It is only that Coleridge, of all our contributing poets, is the one most directly involved with formal philosophical issues. He was profoundly influenced by the writings of the philosophers of his day, particularly, as it has often been pointed out, by the Germans. The deconstructionist, on the other hand, often blames the Germans, notably Hegel, for rather too enthusiastically perpetuating the reign of an Absolute which is all too reminiscent of that which Plato introduced. Thus, we have the eerie feeling as we look now to Coleridge, of time collapsing and different ages conversing, as it were, over ideas that are still important and still misunderstood.

Coleridge found a language for expressing the distinctions that concern us in this paper. Perhaps without the philosophical foundation which we have attempted to establish here, these distinctions, which are so central to much of Coleridge's thought, seem slightly trivial and of questionable relevance to anything. Indeed, this may well be why his ideas

did not gain a wider currency in his own day. Within the context that this paper has sought to provide, however, Coleridge's philosophy can be seen as forward-looking and insightful, while at the same time, what may have appeared to be "straw-splitting" and "picky" in our own undertaking, may now be seen more clearly in its central position in poetics and philosophy. What we have finally come to, in our current investigation, is a defense of the Romantic thinker, not only against the accusations of the deconstructionist, but against anyone who may still believe that they were "sensitive only to daffodils" (see above 71), and that they simply projected order and beauty when and wherever they wanted. The Romantics were directly involved with questions which are still central today. Their thoughts about these questions (and here I think we may even say their answers) clearly and profoundly informed their poetry, and if more readers were aware of this, deconstruction and other forms of nihilism might not have gained the force they have today.

** ** **

In our discussion of Derrida we ultimately found fault with his implication that the connection between signifier and signified, or the object and its form, was a mimetic connection. We claimed that it was out of this wrong-headed foundation that he developed "differance" with all its attending problems concerning the impossibility of presence (see above 109 & 128). In our treatment of Paul de Man, it was his insistance that language is always constitutive, and that the relationship between consciousness and matter "does not exist in actuality" because it "has to be established within the medium of language," that we found problematic (see above 101, 107 & 144). It is of great interest to us, therefore, that both of these subjects are addressed in Coleridge's essay "On Poesy or Art."

With ease and clarity, Coleridge begins by making a distinction that illuminates Derrida's misunderstanding of mimesis:

> The impression on the wax is not an imitation, but a copy, of the seal; the seal itself is an imitation. . . . [I]n all imitation two elements must coexist, and not only coexist, but must be perceived as coexisting. These two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all creations of art there must be a union of these disparates. (492)

In our Introductory chapter, we began our discussion of analogy with Coleridge's famous statement that the primary Imagination is essentially "the living Power and prime Agent

of all human Perception, and . . . a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (see above 13). The nature and function of analogical process has been one of our main themes in this essay, and therefore it is appropriate that we should end with another aspect of the truth of Coleridge's great observation. Coleridge has said enough else-where on these matters for us safely to suggest that the "infinite I AM" represents all existence. It is as if God's way of existing is by imagining the universe into being. "In the beginning was the logos," would then mean that we started with the aspect of the universal which is susceptible to articulation (see above 48), and that the articulations which make up God's imaginings are his "I AM."

Our way of being, our "I am," is finite. We are born and we die. Likewise, our creations do not endure eternally. But Coleridge defines art as "the figured language of thought" ("Poesy" 492), and as such it imitates God's art, which is all of Nature. Thus, the claim is that things exist in a manner appropriate to their nature. And this claim is not trivial. If it were easy to understand we would not have Jacques Derrida telling us about "differance."

In Coleridge's distinction between copy and imitation, imitation is inherently more complex than mere copy because it is based on the assumptions that a) the imitation is formed out of material different in nature from the substance of the original, and that b) given this difference the imitation will

not be the same as the original, but will relate to it in a manner appropriate for its own substance. This is also the claim of analogy: although all things are constituted differently, there can be a pattern in the relation of parts in one object that may be said to resemble the pattern of internal relations of an otherwise completely different object. With respect to our four-term equation a:b::c:d, "a" is the relationship of parts to "b," the whole within which they occur, which may in turn be said to resemble the same relation in the case of "c" and "d."

The premise of Derrida's position is that under the dictates of Western Metaphysics, words copy ideas, and objects copy Forms. Therefore meaning can never be present, only lifeless copies of absent mysteries. When Coleridge uses the term imitation, however, he avoids this error by granting that there is a difference of substance involved between imitator and imitated, and hence that the sameness in their essence will occur or present itself differently according to the manner in which they exist. Here is our hope for some kind of order in the universe and in our perceptions of it.

There are many observations, both by and about Romantic writers, which, perhaps because of their attachment to the significance of concrete particulars, sound misleadingly as if various Romantics shared Derrida's mimetic theory. Coleridge's discussion of the vivid power of the scriptures as opposed to contemporary histories which abstract and

generalize, and therefore present only "a shadow fight of things and quantities," is such an example:

> [Scriptural histories] are the living educts of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors.
> (The Statesman's Manual, 28-9)

While the word "consubstantial" certainly conjures up something like Derrida's version of mimesis, it also turns our minds back to his description of the pharmakon as "antisubstance itself" (see above 119). The "Pharmakon" is the term he has chosen to represent the questionable value of the "word" as he understands it to function in our current problematic language theories. As a re-placement and a re-presentation of whatever absent entity it relates to, the word has dubious signifying force. It cannot be that which it re-presents, so it must be a lie.

Again, because of the Romantic understanding of the implications of metaphysics for metaphor, it is unnecessary for them to make these reactionary statements. Yet it is necessary to ask how this can be so, since the term "substance" itself, in Coleridge's comment on scriptural histories, seems to be the product of exactly the same kind of metaphysical error that we are finding Derrida guilty of.

"Substance," after all, means that which "stands below." Instantly we envision a model of a hierarchical structure in which essences are "typed," and all the earthly instantiations of them stand below their Form. Coleridge's use of "consubstantiality," however, does not mean "standing below <u>together</u>"--thereby representing all tokens of the same type. Instead, he claims it means the standing <u>together</u> of the truths which are made present (or imitated), <u>with</u> the worldly manifestations of them. But this sounds even more suspiciously like the imitation-as-copy error that we are accusing Derrida of, in what we claim to be his wrong-headed accusation against Western Metaphysics. Again, if we adhere to a theory in which the truth can be "typed," according to Derrida, then all we ever encounter are copies: things that are like the truth, but as they are stand-ins, they are false.

It is appropriate at this point to turn to Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp," which very explicitly searches for a way of thinking about the question of the presence of the unknowable in the realms of experience. The poem depends from an unexpected juxtaposition of particular things with the universals which they contain and thereby "symbolize" ("meet emblems they").

> My Pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
> Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
> To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown

With white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leav'd Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of silence.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caress'd,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong!
. . .
O the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere-
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so fill'd;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.
. . .
And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

The speaker is part of a union; in fact, he is physically connected with his beloved, the "pensive Sara." From this vantage point, by which I mean his "connected" mental condition as well as his actual position, he moves outwards. Cautiously, at first, he parenthetically notes the relation of Jasmin and Myrtle with Innocence and Love, as well as that of the "serenely brilliant" star of eve with Wisdom.

In the second stanza his caution takes the form of the playfulness with which he likens the "desultory breeze" and

the Harp to an ardent lover and a "coy maid." But the projection of the concept of union--incipient with his relation to Sara--seems to inspire (quite literally) the direction of the rest of the poem. The love--the sense of connection--with which he is filled regarding Sara, now blossoms into a confidence that the whole world might be "so fill'd." By this he does not simply mean populated with things in love, although this is certainly part of it. He also means that apparent emptiness is not empty, nor is silence silent. What the "stilly murmur of the distant Sea" tells us about silence is that it is "Music slumbering on her instrument." Even silence and vacancy are filled with presence.

It is possible that the whole universe vibrates with resonances created by the sameness in its myriad difference. These harmonies, which resonate with the "intellectual breeze" of God, are the way in which we know God. We are sung/ played into existence; we are the music that "meets all motion." Just as we say "It is the wind," when we hear or see branches of a tree moving, we can say "It is God," when we see connections between the internal relations of different objects. This is what the possibility of existence "meeting all motion" means; each entity in the universe is alive with the possiblity of infinite correspondences which, far from rendering our experience of it meaningless, creates meaning by virtue of our belief in the integrity and value of internal

relations (natura naturans, as Coleridge calls it) in the first place. Thus, the intellectual breeze is the sameness in the differences of things of this world. God is the harmony of the world's unities. The particular contains the universal insofar as it is the universal particularized. A symbol, therefore, is characterized,

> . . . above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative. (Statesman 30)

For Coleridge "reality" very clearly includes not only the "temporal" but that other that is made intelligible by the temporal. Thus, we can see the unfolding of the "Eolian Harp" as a search for an attitude towards his initial parenthetical remarks. The ultimate scope of the poem--the one Life within us and abroad--causes us to take these incipient comments very seriously. It is one thing to say that as a lover is to his coy mistress, so the breeze is to the harp. To make such an observation is surely to be sensitive to correspondent patterns in our world. But to say that Jasmin and Myrtle are "meet emblems" of Innocence and Love, and that the brilliant serenity of the star of eve is as Wisdom should be, is to observe a different order, and Coleridge seems to be ready to accept all that this order entails.

The untainted purity and fragility of the white-flowered jasmin and the heady, intoxicating sweetness of myrtle, instantiate (or imitate, in Coleridge's sense of the word) Innocence and Love. They are not copies. The whole poem works to show us that because there is a living logos, there is as much Truth in this observation as in any that could be clearly demonstrated in the world of observable fact. Jasmin and Myrtle make Innocence and Love present in a manner appropriate (that is, "meet") to the nature of their own existence. Again, they do not copy Innocence and Love, in Coleridge's sense, and he would never claim that they did. To copy them would be to attempt to create the impression that there is no difference between the original and the presentation of it. For the Romantics it is clearly impossible to copy Innocence, Love, or Wisdom, because these things are only present in the world's imitations of them. Thus, we need the intellectual concept for all that language signifies in order to enable us to recognise the actual presence of these concepts in our experience of the world. To do this is to achieve symbolic literacy, and to create works which deal with these essences is to create art.

The presence of both sameness and difference that characterizes the imitative process is essential to the Romantic vision of contrariety. It acts itself out, as we have tried to show, in the form of the analogy. Another way of saying this is that the universe is structured

analogically, and it is the function of Coleridgean "Reason" to recognize this. It is man's Reason that "feels as if it ached to behold and know something _great_--something _one and_ indivisible" (Coleridge to John Thelwall, 14 Oct. 1797). Thus, perception of and interaction with a _greater_ is often the explicit or implicit subject in Coleridge's poetry.

Derrida has, in a sense, fallen into the same trap as the foremost Neo-classicists, which is to be over-literal with the Platonic theory of Forms, and with the Aristotelian description of drama as an imitation of life. Coleridge even comments that his distinction between copy and imitation, and his belief that art imitates nature, "would be barren truisms if all men meant the same by the words 'imitate' and 'nature'" ("Poesy" 492). In so saying, he anticipates what is now nearly two centuries of confusion. Hans Georg Gadamer reminds us of the persistence of this misinterpretation and finds it necessary to make something very like Coleridge's distinction once again:

> In every work of art we encounter something like mimesis or _imitatio_. Naturally mimesis here has nothing to do with the mere imitation of something that is already familiar to us. Rather, it implies that something is represented in such a way that it is actually present in sensuous abundance. In its original Greek sense, the _mimesis_ is derived from the star-dance of the heavens. The stars represent the pure mathematical regularities and proportions that constitute heavenly order. In this sense I believe the tradition is justified in saying that "art is always mimesis," that is, it represents something. . . . Whatever comes to speak to us through representation cannot be grasped or even come to be "there" for us in any

> other way. . . . However different from our everyday experience it may be, [the artistic] creation presents itself as a pledge of order. (Relevance of the Beautiful 36)

We remember Gadamer saying that when we "correspond" to a symbol, we are completed by it. Thus we are made whole by our encounter, as Aristophanes' divided man or symbolon was in Plato's Symposium. At the same time that the symbol completes itself, it is brought into the world of fact, for we create the symbol when we recognize our correspondence with it. The pledge of order that art represents is really tantamount to our claim that metaphor is impossible without metaphysics. Our ability to correspond, the possibility of completion (if only for an instant), pledges correspondence as fact, and therefore presents the transcendent pattern of human creativity that works through the immanence of moments of experience.

Thus, the inaccessible can be "mimicked" in the realm of the accessible without doing violence to either (see above 39). For Coleridge, the term "Reason" itself encompasses both the mechanics of simply Undertanding differences (locating events logically in space-time) and the connecting powers of the Imagination, to which he grants prime responsibility for analogical--that is, poetic--thinking. To believe that language is constitutive, as de Man does, is to apply the thought processes appropriate to the Understanding to entities which do not belong to linear time or simple location. To

constitute the inaccessible is to attempt to reify it--to objectify that which does not belong to the realm of objects. However, regulative thinking, which we have consistently opposed to the theory of symbol as constitutive, places the emphasis on the process of our turning; we see jasmin and we turn towards the truth with which it is consubstantial. Before we find (locate, constitute) it, however, we realize that our turning <u>is</u> the truth; our actions participate in the Form of process and we are made whole, for a moment, because our imaginative faculties have perceived the sameness (in difference) that holds the universe together.

To de Man's lament that the relationship between consciousness and matter "does not exist in actuality," Coleridge replies,

> If the artist copies the mere nature, the <u>natura naturata</u>, what idle rivalry! If he proceeds only from a given form, which is supposed to answer to the notion of beauty, what an emptiness, what an unreality there always is in his productions . . . Believe me, you must master the essence, the <u>natura naturans</u>, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man. ("Poesy" 493)

Such a presupposition arises, for the Romantic, out of a state of grace; that is, the ability so to presuppose is a kind of grace. Redemption is the condition of this realization. Coleridge believed that "a true system is neither grounded in a thing nor an abstraction" (Barfield <u>What Coleridge Thought</u>, 24). But, since most believe that all of creation is either

one or the other, his position on these matters has been obscured. What is involved, however, is really the power generated through the universal force of active "limitation," by which all phenomenal events occur in our perceptions, and through the force of connection, by which every object, event, and perception, conforms to all others.

Coleridge speaks of the necessity of the artist absenting himself from nature in order to learn to "create forms according to the severe laws of the intellect" ("Poesy" 494). The laws which he learns to abide by, however, are not anathema to natural process. On the contrary, they are to the workings of his mind as nature's laws are to her own workings. Without this education, therefore, we would only learn how to <u>copy</u> natural form without any comprehension of the life within. Thus intellectual order is the order of life itself. Again Plato's "living logos" is reaffirmed. It is reaffirmed by the reality of the relation which de Man claims to be artificial. As Coleridge tells us,

> Yes, not to acquire old notions--lifeless technical rules--but living and life-producing ideas, which shall contain their own evidence, the certainty that they are essentially one with the germinal causes in nature,--his consciousness being the focus and mirror of both,--for this does the artist for a time abandon the external real in order to return to it with a complete sympathy with its internal and actual. ("Poesy" 494)

The struggle to refrain from limiting our account of experience, and therefore our account of art, to a conceptual

framework involving isolated particulars, instead of returning intellectual thought to the dynamic of essential correspondences which stretch off into the infinite unknown, is one of the major operations present within Romantic poetry. Let us consider an image in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan":

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover!

"Savage"? We think of Whitehead's primitive state of mind, the psychological circumstance conducive to the profound sort of connection we have been talking about. But this is not a mind; this is a place. Or is it?

Obviously savage and holy are not usually very closely associated. But holy, in its truest form, speaks of wholeness, complicity, interpenetration. Its true form also despises dualism, as Blake endeavored to show us. Thus, the promise of "holy" is really very similar to that of "savage." They both pertain to a condition of sensitivity regarding the wildness of the unknowable and the inexpressible essence of things, as well as to the interpenetration of the visible with the invisible, and of confining form with energy. We cannot abstract the Good from the evil (the spirit from the flesh, the reason from the passion) and expect something meaningful to come of it. The poem within which these lines fall tells us this in a thousand ways. The "twice five miles of fertile

ground/ With walls and towers . . . girdled round" does not make a paradise. It is a mere abstraction, a stasis, an attempt to find life in death. Our lines do not come from this false garden. They come from the possibility of Grace which natural process holds even for those who attempt to close it out. They come from a deep romantic chasm which tears into the garden's stability. They come from the place that the poem longs to tell us about just as the sacred river longs to erupt through earth's visible, measured surfaces. It is enchanted because it is sung into the poem, and it sings into the garden its possibilities. What are they? They are wails. "A woman wailing for her demon lover." Coleridge is offering us the possibility that hope is the recognition of lack, and that this painful realization is the potential for something beyond fixture: the meaningful interpenetration with a processive universe. This is not initially very enticing compared to "incense bearing trees" and "sunny spots of greenery." But Coleridge opposes the pain of growth and realization to stasis and death. The pain is as beautiful and terrible as the mad poet at the end of the poem.

We meet the moon again, and it tells of incompletion: the incompletion of the garden and the fragment of our general state of being (cf. Coleridge's subtitle: "A Vision in a Dream/ A Fragment").

And woman wails. Not a woman, but generic woman. The moon is not whole and neither is she. Or are they? The moon is

changing though changeless; it is really all there, but we are not in a position (condition) to notice this just now. Woman wails for her demon, her daimon. She longs for her spiritual completion. She is the Romance. She is humanity longing for its reflection in the "other." She wails to the symbol of reflection, of oneness and manyness, of change and stability, of similarity and difference, of the possibility of connecting with the sun. Her wholeness is present too. It is in her condition. She is haunted. Her lover is present in her wailing. Her wailing, her singing, her poem, speak of her recognition of the other and her need for it, and the need is the fulfilling. Like Asia, her heart tells her all she needs to know; she is her own prophet. She is haunted with her own redemption; her state is her redemption; her haunting is her self-redemption and she haunts the "place" with its contrary--with its own possibility for completion.

In the terms of the poem, and in the terms of this paper, the making of paradise entails the destruction of the sanctity and security which the garden's walls represent. In the poem, the motion of the sacred river connotes this destruction/hope: it is force, creativity, life, connection, and power. Our woman foretells salvation. She foretells that what looks like destruction is really salvation. She tells us not to fear the "other." She is another ancestral voice prophesying war, and this war is the marriage that will save us all from what Blake calls "Single Vision and Newton's sleep" (722). Her wailing

precedes our awareness of the river's destruction/ salvation of Kubla's attempt at paradise. The ancestral voices precede our awareness of the shadow of the pleasure dome floating midway on the waves.

It is possible that the shadow is the pleasure dome's long-awaited arrival. It has finally been achieved. For a moment all of nature corresponds to our position/ condition as we simultaneously view and think and feel the poem's motion and witness the brief life of this spectral event where fountain (motion) and ice (stasis) glitter in the sun, outside of the caverns measureless to man. The pleasure dome is the poem; it is the wail; it is the singing of the damsel with the dulcimer. But it is also the cause of the wailing and the cause of war, loneliness, and fragmentation. It is the physical--but not physical--reminder that things can come together only for a moment and then we are alone again. The rainbow fades, the inspiration is lost, and we forget what's important.

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In a beautiful passage over which "yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane" presides as the changing-though-changeless centre of all human thought, Coleridge puts logos to this extraordinary use:

> I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and for ever exists, than observing anything new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. It is still interesting as a word - a symbol. It is Logos the Creator, and the Evolver! (Anima Poetae 136)

Logos as creator can only be that sense in which being partakes of Being (see above 44). As evolver it can only be the progress from Understanding to Reason which occurs in moments of insight. His evolution is repeated in every symbolic event as the mind journeys from the particular to the looming unseen source and goal of the symbolic process. It is Reason that enables this connecting, upward glance. It is in the nature of logos that the glance is self-referential.

The focus is not the beings, but the Being. This is what Coleridge is defending, and it is what Plato was defending when he advocated attention to the "living Logos" (see above 120, 130, 133 & 139). However, as we saw, Derrida cannot understand the operation of Reason because he does not believe in presence (see above 119-20). Without Reason, man is a creature who feels "himself, his own low self the whole" (Religious Musings, line 152). It is interesting to juxtapose

this statement with an observation of de Man's which brings to light the corollaries of this philosophy of fragmentation. First, let him remind us of the primary goal of the deconstructive project: "A deconstruction always has for its target the existence of hidden articulation and fragmentations within assumedly monadic totalities" (Allegories, 249). As we have pointed out, de Man consistently extols the virtues of separation and estrangement (see above 92). But our point here is that once the parts in a whole are no longer thought of as owing some portion of their identity to their function in terms of that larger whole--once they become fragments rather than constituents--we are not protected from the authority of "monadic totalities." Quite the contrary, the parts are granted their autonomy by virtue of the fragmentation, and thus a new power struggle begins.

A corollary of the deconstructive theory of reading, in which we liberate ourselves from the "monadic totalities" which have for so long dictated our critical responses, is, for the deconstructionist, the self-sufficient reader. Self-sufficiency results from the "deconstruction of the self" which occurs when the unities that cement our personalities together are dissolved by the practice of deconstructive reading. It is curious that through such a process, however, the "self" stands to gain so much. De Man is one of the authors of this practice:

> The recuperation of selfhood would be accomplished by the rigor with which the discourse deconstructs the very notion of self. The originator of this discourse is then no longer the dupe of his own wishes; he is as far beyond pleasure and pain as he is beyond good and evil or, for that matter, beyond strength and weakness. His consciousness is neither happy nor unhappy, nor does he possess any power. He remains however a center of authority to the extent that the very deconstructiveness of his ascetic reading testifies to the validity of his interpretation. (Allegories 173-4)

The ends justify the means. The fact that things fall apart when we stop believing in them and believe only in ourselves seems to mean for the deconstructionist that they were meant to fall apart and that it is right and good that they should do so.

We have a choice, however. No amount of life's more felicitous collisions will make our lives meaningful if we do not correspond to them and recognise that the lines of their significance stretch as deeply into our hearts as they do off into the measureless heavens. The difference is only everything.

For Coleridge, the power of the self--our authority--is not to be derived from the stance of independence, but from the recognition of the world as the mirror of the self and of the self as a felt reflex to our perception of the world. We have a responsibility both to the world and to ourselves. Separation, far from granting him authority, robs him of his art altogether. For art arises from our power to connect; take this away and our low, mean selves are lost.

My genial spirits fail,
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth-
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
("Dejection: An Ode" III & IV)

Both positions have possibilities. I leave the reader to choose.

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