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TOWARDS A MODERNIST AESTHETIC: DIALECTICAL MODES OF REPRESENTATION IN THE EARLY MODERN NOVEL

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There was no quarrelling, owing to the nature of the gift, for blessed is the man who confers it on another, he imitates God. And those "imitations", those "substitutions", continued to flicker through the assembly for many hours, awaking in each man, according to his capacity, an emotion that he would not have had otherwise. No definite image survived, at the Birth it was questionable whether a silver doll, or a mud village, or a silk napkin, or an intangible spirit, or a pious resolution had been born. Perhaps all these things! Perhaps none! Perhaps all birth is an allegory!

A Passage to India

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contests the widely-held view that literary modernism is a late manifestation of the romantic-symbolist tradition, arguing that the modern novel's self-reflexive preoccupation with the materiality of language is incompatible with the essentialist premises of romantic-symbolist aesthetics. It also takes issue with the critical argument that modernism is the product of a conflict between the logocentric modes of symbolism and literary realism. Its central contention is that in its early stages modernism is defined by a deconstructive dialectic between a logocentric symbolist mode which gestures to a realm of meaning beyond language, and an ex-centric allegorical mode, which has its home in differential structures of representation. Chapter one discusses the origin of the symbol-allegory dialectic in the domain of romantic aesthetics; distinguishes modernist allegory from romantic and pre-romantic allegorical modes; and transposes the symbol-allegory dialectic into a post-structuralist theoretical framework. It demonstrates the affinity of symbol with the philosophical paradigms of Hegelian Erinnerung, the Lacanian Imaginary, and the presencing mode of the sign in Western metaphysics; and the affinity of allegory with the paradigms of Hegelian Gedächtnis (de Man's disjunctive "thinking memory"), the Lacanian Symbolic, and Derridean archi-écriture. Building upon this theoretical ground, the next three chapters examine the representational features of three seminal early modern novels: Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, Marcel Proust's Swann's Way and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, demonstrating in each case how a discursive allegorical mode implicitly demystifies a symbolist rhetoric of "pure figuration" supposedly divested of referential function. Each chapter also represents a variation on the symbol-allegory problematic. Chapter two explores the relation of Conrad's early work to the aesthetic tradition of the sublime, arguing that in Lord Jim Conrad moves beyond a traditional literary sublime predicated on an elusive realm of meaning beyond language to an infinitely textual modernist sublime which exposes the discursive status of meaning and subjectivity. Chapter three demonstrates the affinity of Proustian voluntary and involuntary memory with the Hegelian categories of Gedächtnis and Erinnerung, and further, with the Lacanian concepts of Eros (Imaginary) and Law (Symbolic). It shows that involuntary memory is always already inhabited by the differential structures of voluntary memory, always already caught in the temporal predicament that is for Lacan and Derrida the definitive condition of desire and writing. Chapter four focuses on the relation

between allegory, irony and authorial subjectivity in A Portrait. It demonstrates that the allegorisation of the autobiographical subject in A Portrait crucially affects the modality of irony in the text, rendering obsolete a conventional rhetoric of irony predicated on a coherent, non-discursive authorial subjectivity. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the representational issues involved in the shift from early to high modernist aesthetics. It cites Joyce's Ulysses and Finnegans Wake as exemplary high modernist texts, and demonstrates that in both novels the dialectic between symbol and allegory falls away, and the sublime, intertextual form of allegory predominates.

CHAPTER ONE

THE JANUS-FACE OF EARLY MODERNISM

Modernism and the romantic-symbolist tradition

> If the spectator could enter into these Images in his Imagination, approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought ... or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder ... then would he arise from his Grave, then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy.
>
> BLAKE

> He has made, after the manner of his kind,
> Mere images.
>
> YEATS

Literary modernism, a controversial period of literary history spanning the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has generated in the past, and continues to generate, varied modes of critical response. One has only to read through a random selection of essays from Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's collection Modernism 1890-1930 to appreciate the sort of disparity that characterises critical commentary in the area. There is significant consensus in one respect, however. Modernism, at least as a literary phenomenon, is broadly recognised as having an integral relation to the romantic-symbolist tradition, whether this relation is perceived as a continuous flow or as a reactionary ebb of the same tide.

More often than not the relationship is identified as a continuous one. Hence, for example, in his essay "The Symbolist Novel: Huysmans to Malraux," Melvin Friedman writes:

> When the Symbolist poets declared an end to the notion of genre tranché, and opened the door to the cohabitation of prose and poetry in the same work, a new kind of novel came into being. The novels of James, Proust, Joyce, Conrad, Faulkner and Virginia Woolf are in some sense fictional inheritances from French Symbolist poetry.[1]

Frank Kermode's understanding of modernism is likewise predicated on symbolist aesthetic grounds. In his influential text Romantic Image he argues that modernist poets such as Yeats, Pound and Eliot all in some way transform the romantic aesthetic of the "Image" or sensuously apprehended "Idea" into a distinctively modern symbolic, and that the term "romantic" therefore applies not only to the organicist aesthetic of the late eighteenth century, or to the esoteric and allusive forms of French symbolist poetry, but also to the imagistic modes of modernist writing. Although the "romantic Image" has its origins in the literature of romanticism, for Kermode it resurfaces as a means of artistic expression whenever in the course of post-romantic literary history a positive valuation is attached to "mythopoeic," "non-discursive," and "organicist rather than mechanistic" modes of representation. Throughout this period, Kermode argues, the symbol retains its mystical status as a "radiant truth out

of space and time,"[2] giving the work of art a superior, distinctly metaphysical quality[3]:

> [T]he work of art is symbol, "aesthetic monad"; utterly original and not in the least sense "imitated"; "concrete," yet fluid and suggestive; a means to truth, a truth unrelated to, and more exalted than that of positivist science, or any observation depending on the discursive reason; out of the flux of life, and therefore, under one aspect, dead; yet uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of existence, and because it is analogous not to a machine but to an organism; co-extensive in matter and form; resistant to explication; largely independent of intention, and of any form of ethical utility; and itself emblematised in certain recurring images.... These formulae involve certain contradictions.... Yet some such conception of the image ... animates much of the best writing between Coleridge and Blake at the outset and Pound and Eliot in our own time.[4]

Kermode's privileging of a non-discursive symbolist mode clearly depends upon an evaluative system of binary oppositions: the symbol is conjunctive rather than disjunctive in form; original rather than imitated; organic rather than mechanistic; an expression, not of a worldly realm of reasoning intellect, but of a higher realm of intuited metaphysical essences. Within this dialectical context the literary symbolic is then distinguished from - and accounted superior to - its secular, non-symbolic Other: the discursive, the derivative, the dissociative.

The oppositional terms which sustain Kermode's argument are grounded in a literary-critical ideology which systematically devalues the non-symbolic. The source of this aesthetic bias in the twentieth century is not hard to

find. Anyone familiar with T.S. Eliot's critical discourse would recognise at once in Kermode's argument the same literary values that led Eliot to hark back to a Golden Age of "un-dissociated sensibility," prior to the seventeenth century scourge of Miltonic rhetoric and Drydenesque affectation. For Eliot the representational triumph of the late Elizabethans and early Jacobeans consisted in an extraordinary poetic synthesis of the mechanistic and the organic; of thought and feeling, sense and intellect, matter and form. With Dryden and Milton, however, there came a preference for "feeling and thinking in turns"; a preference for "intellect over imagination,"[5] bringing to an end the harmoniously undissociated sensibility of the sixteenth century where a vital organicity of meaning miraculously transformed the materiality of the image. Against this background Ezra Pound fashions his theory of the modernist image as "an emotional and intellectual complex in an instant of time,"[6] once again transforming the discursive into the non-discursive, the materiality of the signifier into a living medium of the poetic imagination.

For our present purposes Kermode's modern image requires closer attention. However, Eliot's theory of dissociation adds to an understanding of the relationship between symbolic and non-symbolic modes of representation by providing a useful conceptual distinction between dissociated and undissociated modes of sensibility. From now on I use these formulations in conjunction with

Kermode's binary terminology.

Symbol and allegory

The aesthetic bias evident in Kermode's description of the symbol has particular historical significance in the domain of representational theory, and is by no means a salient feature exclusively of twentieth century literary-critical discourse. The prominence of the symbol has its roots in the aesthetics of romanticism, when the philosophy of the symbolical evolved in direct contradistinction to an established allegorical tradition. The marginalisation of allegory, its exclusion from the metaphysical realm of the symbol, was a means of defining aesthetic boundaries, of justifying a preference for one mode of representation (regarded as poetic) from another (its non-poetic inferior). Hence, throughout the critical discourse of the romantics, an almost exclusively positive valuation is placed on symbolic modes of representation, while a negative valuation is attached to allegorical representational modes. As Walter Benjamin writes:

> It is ... legitimate to describe the ... [romantic] concept of the allegorical as speculative because it was in fact adapted so as to provide the dark background against which the bright world of the symbol might stand out.[7]

Although allegory is constituted in negative relation to symbol in romantic aesthetics, its aesthetic history antedates the romantic theory of the symbol, and a brief

exploration of the rhetorical origins of the figure will serve to contextualise the romantic definitions of allegory and symbol which I discuss below. The term "allegory" is historically ascribed to Plutarch, and comes into being as an oxymoronic composite of the Greek words allos, meaning "other," and agoreuein, meaning "to speak openly." As the aetiology of the word suggests (note how the declarative sense of agoreuein is paradoxically inverted by the prefix allos), allegory identifies a disjunctive mode of "other-speech" or "inversion," a rhetorical form which says one thing and means another. Quintilian, in The Institutes of Oratory, provides the earliest formal definition of the term: "Allegory, which is translated in Latin by 'inversio,' either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words."[8] Edward Phillips, in 1678, reiterates Quintilian's definition, identifying the mode as "inversion or changing: in Rhetorick it is a mysterious saying wherein there is couched something that is different from the literal sense."[9]

Significantly, the original sense of the rhetorical term inversio for allegory is "translation," while translatio is the Latin equivalent of the Greek "metaphor."[10] Accordingly, allegory is often characterised as the effect of a single metaphor introduced in a continuous series. As George Puttenham writes, "[B]ecause ... inversion of sense in one single word is by the figure 'Metaphore,' ... and in this manner extending to whole and

large speaches, it maketh the figure 'allegorie' to be called a long and perpetual Metaphore."[11] The classical rhetoricians typically dismissed such metaphorical amplification or "ornament" as a defect of rhetorical excess, more likely to confuse than to illuminate the reader or auditor. The same prejudice re-emerges in the romantic period when, as we have seen, allegory is relegated to the realm of the other to make way for the philosophy of the symbol. Hence, for example, a prominent eighteenth century critic, Lord Kames, argues that "a metaphor drawn out to any length, instead of illustrating or enlivening the principal subject, becomes disagreeable by overstraining the mind."[12]

Coleridge, who is heavily indebted to the theoretical writings of German Romantics such as Goethe and Schelling, is the only English Romantic poet who expresses himself explicitly on the relationship between allegory and symbol. His evaluative marginalisation of allegorical modes of representation is clearly demonstrated in the expositions below, the first from The Statesman's Manual and the second from Miscellaneous Criticism:

> Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions in a picture language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike insubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot. On the other hand a symbol ... is characterised by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; 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. The other are but empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter, less beautiful, but not less shadowy than the sloping orchard or hillside pasture seen in the transparent lake below.
>
> The Symbolical cannot perhaps be better defined in distinction from the Allegorical than that it is always itself a part of that, of the whole of which it is a representative - "Here comes a sail" (that is a ship) is a symbolical expression. "Behold our lion" when we speak of some gallant soldier is allegorical. Of most importance to our present subject is this point, that the latter, (allegory) cannot be other than spoken consciously - whereas in the former (the symbol) it is very possible that the general truth may be in the writer's mind during the construction of the symbol; and it proves itself by producing itself out of his own mind - as the Don Quixote out of the perfectly sane mind of Cervantes - and not by outward observation or historically. The advantage of symbolic writing over allegory is, that it presumes no disjunction of faculties, but simple dominance.[13]

Significantly, the system of oppositional terms which serves to distinguish Kermode's transcendent Image from its non-symbolic Other coincides precisely with the Coleridgean dialectic between symbol and allegory. While symbol, a product of the intuitive Imagination, transfigures matter and form into a transcendental unity, allegory, a product of the discursive intellect, is marred by an ugly materiality: unlike symbol, it cannot disguise its disjunctive, derivative, temporal nature. Hence, where symbol is "essential," "a living part" of a transcendental, atemporal realm of significance, allegory is the apparitional trace of an always anterior meaning: "an

arbitrary translation of abstract notions," "empty echoes," "phantom proxy." In rhetorical terms, while the symbol transforms signifier and signified into a synecdochic identity (there is a shared essence of part and whole: the symbol "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible"), allegory fails to disguise its fractured, differential structure. Devoid of immanent meaning, the allegorical image is no more than an abstract residue of form, its "true" meaning even more shadowy and insubstantial than its "phantom proxy," the allegorical representative. Finally, whereas the synecdochic structure of the symbol ensures that no temporal disjunction of the perceptual faculties takes place, the material perception and the symbolic Imagination being co-extensive, the differential structure of allegory foregrounds the arbitrary, mechanical nature of the process by which discursive meaning is attributed to the material image. Hence, where the significance of the (non-discursive) symbol emerges naturally and fluently from its organic core, the meaning of allegory must be clumsily extrapolated "by outward observation or historically"; its significance is ex-centric, derivative, non-essential.

Formulations of the symbol-allegory dialectic in European romanticism similarly counterpoint the supratemporal vitality of the symbolic moment with the abstract, temporal, mechanistic attributes of allegory. Hence, for example, where symbol is "Warm, Full, Sensuous, Substantial," allegory is "Cold, Empty, Non-substantial."

Similarly, the "laconic density of significance" of the symbol is opposed to the "discursive expansiveness of allegory," while the "penetration" of the symbol and the "profound joy of reaching the inner significance of things" is contrasted with "the cold and superficial pleasure" experienced by the reader in the "deciphering of an enigma." Finally, symbol is "unmediated vision," the "instantaneous totality of a light-ray falling from heaven," while allegory is merely mediated representation, "progression in a series of moments."[14]

Allegory and modernist literature

Thus far it might seem that I have paid an inordinate amount of attention to a dialectic which has only an indirect relation to Kermode's modern symbolist reading of literary history. Allegory, for Kermode, has no part in a modernist aesthetic in which the symbol is restored to its pristine wholeness. Yet my emphasis is in keeping with my aim. Although modernism, as a chronological outgrowth of late nineteenth century symbolism, undoubtedly bears an integral relation to the romantic-symbolist tradition, it is a relation fraught with dialectical tensions and contradictions. Indeed, in my view, early modern literature does not reflect that unproblematical symbiosis of sense and signification which for Kermode signals a direct continuity with a romantic-symbolist aesthetic. Rather, it reveals the same representational disjunctions, the same preoccupation with the materiality of the signifier, that

defines the modality of allegory. For this reason many prominent critics of the modern period identify the phenomenon of literary modernism entirely with a crisis of representation at the turn of the century. Roland Barthes, for instance, argues that "the whole of literature, from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language,"[15] suggesting that language per se somehow ceased to be luminous and grew opaque: allegorical rather than mimetic or symbolically expressive. In the next section I therefore contest Kermode's conclusions, arguing, to the contrary, that a self-reflexive dialectic between symbolic and allegorical modes of representation plays a crucial role in the transition to a modern aesthetic.

Dialectical tensions: logocentric and ex-centric modes of representation

The perception of a representational dialectic in early modernism is common to those theories that do not postulate an unproblematical continuity between symbolism and modernism. However, this is usually identified as a conflict between an allusive symbolic mode of representation on the one hand and a mimetic realist mode on the other. James McFarlane in "The Mind of Modernism" (Modernism 1890-1930), Michael Bell in The Context of English Literature 1890-1930, and Edmund Wilson, in Axel's Castle, all subscribe, in one way or another, to the notion of a conflict in modernism between symbolism and literary realism. Wilson concludes, for example, that "[t]he

literary history of our time is to a great extent that of the development of Symbolism and of its fusion or conflict with Naturalism."[16] Although I, too, have long been aware of a dialectical tension between two incompatible modes of representation in the works of early modernist writers such as Conrad, Proust, Woolf, Lawrence, Joyce and Forster, I have been unable to account for it in these terms. This is primarily owing to my identification of both symbolism and realism as "centripetal" (logocentric) rather than "centrifugal" (ex-centric) representational modes, each in some sense invoking a realm of reality superior to mechanisms of representation.[17] In the case of realism, language functions as an unobtrusive medium of reference (reality is simply there to be referred to by discourse, and so discourse must make itself transparent so that it can refer), while in the case of symbolism language bodies forth a superior organicity of meaning which at once transfigures its material status. In both cases, therefore, there is an illusion of logocentrism: a sense that reality is being perceived as natural presence without the mediating artifice of the sign. In my opinion the dialectic consists, not in the relationship between two logocentric modes, but in the deconstructive relation between a logocentric symbolic mode on the one hand, and on the other, a self-reflexive allegorical mode, preoccupied with the thwarting materiality of signification. For if the language of modern literature "reveals" anything, it is a revelation of concealment, a folding back upon itself such

that it gestures toward the Real only in the act of establishing its inaccessibility.

On the basis of these observations I have chosen to focus on the dialectic between symbol and allegory in the early modernist novel, and on the implications of this dialectic for the representation of the modernist literary subject. I propose that while the modernist writer rejects, for the most part, the imitative mode of nineteenth century realism, romantic-symbolism is similarly recognised as "inauthentic," or, in Paul de Man's terms, "mystified," in its proposal of a transcendent poetic meaning and selfhood constituted by the symbol. I therefore contest the view that modernism constitutes an unproblematical extension of the romantic-symbolist tradition, and conclude that allegory rather than symbol emerges as the hallmark of literary modernity.

Allegory, symbol and contemporary critical theory

Before going on to distinguish modern allegory from romantic and pre-romantic allegorical modes, it is necessary to transpose the romantic distinction between symbol and allegory into a contemporary theoretical framework, as it is only in this context that the distinctive identity of modernist allegory comes to light.[18] Paul de Man's well-known essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" provides a comprehensive deconstructionist analysis of allegory and symbol, and deserves closer attention. Focusing on the theme of temporality, de Man

argues that the semiological structure of allegory, contrary to that of the symbol, is one of infinite anteriority:

> In the world of the symbol it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories. Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas in the world of allegory time is the originary constitutive category.... [I]t remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. The secularised allegory of the early romantics thus necessarily contains the negative moment which in Rousseau is that of renunciation, in Wordsworth that of the loss of the self in death or in error.[19]

De Man's emphasis upon the experience of self-loss which accompanies the fall into the secular, differential mode of allegory signifies a typically post-structuralist concern with the implications of temporal difference for the transcendent subject of romantic symbolism. De Man reiterates and develops this theme in another formulation of the relationship between allegory and symbol immediately after the paragraph above:

> Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its

> language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognised as non-self.[20]

Thus, in de Man's terms, while the fusion of signifier and signified and the abolition of time as difference and separation in symbolical discourse offers a synchronic totality of subject and object, self and Other, experience and the representation of experience, the differential constitution of allegory destabilises the imaginary coherence of meaning, representation and subjectivity, and the subject "dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning."[21] Allegory signals not identity, the self-presence of a symbolist logos, but absence, the disappearance of the subject into the deconstructive play of écriture.

The literary-theoretical opposition between symbolic and allegorical modes is frequently conflated with other dialectical formulations in post-structuralist discourse, and directly or indirectly implicated whenever the binary structures of western philosophy are subjected to critical scrutiny. In "The Rhetoric of Temporality" de Man demonstrates the mutual implication of the essentialist mode of the symbol and the disjunctive, temporal modality of allegory, denying the symbolic the theoretical/aesthetic primacy it is typically granted in romantic discourse. Similarly, in his essay "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's

Aesthetics" de Man conflates the terms symbol/sign (allegory) with the Hegelian dialectic Erinnerung/Gedächtnis and deconstructs the Hegelian rhetoric which attributes an inferior status to the second mode. While Erinnerung represents unmediated, intuitive recollection (Proustian involuntary memory), and is for de Man synonymous with the immanentist, atemporal mode of the symbol, Gedächtnis designates the mechanical mode of voluntary memory; a mode associated, like allegory, with the disjunctive, temporal abstractions of the intellect: "Compared to the depth and beauty of recollection [Erinnerung], memory [Gedächtnis] appears as a mere slave of the intellect, just as the sign appears shallow and mechanical compared to the aesthetic aura of the symbol...." But, de Man argues, "[b]efore allowing Hegel's dismissal [of Gedächtnis] to dismiss the problem, one should remember that in a truly dialectical system such as Hegel's what appears to be inferior and enslaved (untergeördnet) may well turn out to be the master."[22]

Where de Man focuses predominantly on the theme of temporal disjunction in his deconstructive reading of allegory and symbol/Gedächtnis and Erinnerung, Derrida reconstrues temporal difference as différance, and implicitly subsumes the distinction between symbol and allegory within a broader representational dialectic between the inferior trace-structure of writing (archi-écriture), in which "the [signified] thing itself always escapes,"[23] and the superior presence-structure of the sign

(not to be confused with the de Manian sign), in which signifier and signified merge in a coherent metaphysical totality. In Derrida's terms, both writing and allegory (writing as allegory/allegory as writing) are relegated to second place as Other in a hierarchy based upon a phallogocentric privileging of the logos. As Spivak argues, "It is this longing for a center, an authorising pressure, that spawns hierarchised oppositions. The superior term belongs to presence and the logos; the inferior serves to define its status and mark a fall."[24] Thus writing, like allegory, "has had the negative privilege of being the scapegoat whose exclusion represents the definition of the metaphysical enclosure."[25] Significantly, Derrida describes the "metaphysical enclosure" - the logocentric notion of the sign in Western metaphysics - in terms that apply directly to the romantic conception of the symbol:

> The notion of the sign ... remains within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning. We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as "presence", with all the sub-determinations which depend on this general form ... (presence of the thing to the sight as eidos, presence as substance/essence/existence (ouisia), temporal presence as point (stigmè) of the now or of the moment (nun), the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth.) Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence.[26]

Derrida's "archi-écriture" deconstructs the ideology of the logos by exposing the illusion of "absolute proximity" that gives both symbol and sign (symbol as sign) the texture of immanent meaning. Instead of the presencing mode of the sign he posits the trace-structure of writing: the endless "différance" or displacement of meaning in relation to signification. For Derrida, as for de Man, the displacement of meaning is one with the displacement of the transcendental subject posited by the sign/symbol; in Derrida's terms, "the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self." For in a typically Lacanian gesture, Derrida's subject is always hidden behind itself, always an allegory of its own meaning, interminably traced and effaced in writing: the differential structure in which and by which it is constituted.

The distinctly Lacanian overtones of Derrida's discourse point towards another contemporary transposition of the symbol-allegory dialectic: the Lacanian opposition between the pre-linguistic Imaginary (Eros), which in psychoanalytic terms signifies the sensuous unity of primary narcissistic identification, and the Symbolic (Law), which signifies the subject's accession to language and the substitutive displacements of Oedipal identification. (I draw attention to Lacan's alternative formulation, Eros/Law, to prevent confusion between the extra-discursive modality of the symbol and the discursive modality of the Lacanian Symbolic.) While the fantasied

oneness of self and (m)other, real and imaginary, desire and gratification associated with the Lacanian Imaginary recalls the unmediated wholeness of the romantic symbol, the experience of psychic loss/castration associated with the differential Law of the Father recalls the sense of separation and self-loss evoked by disjunctive allegorical modes. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan's formulation of the relationship between Imaginary/Eros and Symbolic/Law clearly conveys the affinity of Lacan's psychoanalytic categories with the aesthetic categories of allegory and symbol: "At the unconscious level there is reference to a unitary impossibility, and at the conscious level, substitutive displacements. Law enters the picture as Thanatos, then, the scourge of an idealising unitary Eros. Law provokes fragmentation insofar as it is a divisory principle that repetitively teaches the subject the impossibility of I: a permanent or final peace."[27] Hence, whereas Eros/symbol invokes an imaginary recuperation of pre-Oedipal wholeness and plenitude, Law/allegory signals an irreducible alterity and precludes the possibility of a return to maternal origins. Its structure, like that of writing and Hegelian Gedächtnis, is always already a structure of distance, desire, and loss.

For Lacan the linguistic subject is therefore constituted by lack, inscribed in and as a circulating system of substitutions for the desired object in the realm of the Other:

> Where is the subject? It is necessary to find the subject as a lost object. More precisely, this lost object is the support of the subject.... The question of desire is that the fading subject yearns to find itself again by means of some sort of encounter with this miraculous thing defined by the phantasm. In its endeavour it is sustained by that which I call the lost object ... which is such a terrible thing for the imagination. That which is produced and maintained here, and which in my vocabulary I call the objet petit a is well known by all psychaoanalysts as all psychoanalysis is founded on the existence of this particular object. But the relation between the subject and the objet petit a is the structure which is always found in the phantasm which supports desire, in as much as desire is only that which I have called the metonymy of signification.[28]

Joel Fineman's definition of allegorical literature clearly derives from Lacanian psychoanalysis, and in structural terms reinvokes the psychic schism which marks the subject's entry into language and precipitates that "metonymy of signification" which is synonymous with Lacanian desire:

> In terms of literary response, the structurality of the [allegorical] text holds out the promise of a meaning that it will also perpetually defer, an image of hermeneutic totality martyred and sacralised by and as the poetical. This is the formal destiny of every allegory insofar as allegory is definable as continued metaphor. Distanced at the beginning from it source, allegory will set out on an increasingly futile search for a signifier with which to recuperate the fracture of and at its source, and with each successive signifier the fracture and the search begin again: a structure of continual yearning, the insatiable desire of allegory.[29]

Although the disjunctive, metonymic structure of allegorical representations is taken for granted by

contemporary post-structuralist critics, the aetiology of an endlessly regressive, ex-centric allegorical form is crucial to an understanding of modern representational modes, and, moreover, explains why allegory rather than symbol should have emerged as the hallmark of a literary era obsessed with the problematics of language. As shall be shown, the ideology of the free-floating signifier that defines not only the modernist crisis of representation but, for many critics, modernism itself, has its earliest roots in the breakdown of theocentric structures of meaning and the emergence of a secular allegorical form occasionally identified as "substitutive" allegory in romantic aesthetics. It is to these philosophical questions that I now turn.

The evolution of a secularised allegorical form

In Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode Angus Fletcher describes the exegetical activity of interpreting the opaque allegorical language, or "difficult ornament," of medieval scriptural texts in the following terms:

> Medieval theory ... termed the kosmos of Scripture "difficult ornament". Difficulty implies here a calculated obscurity which elicits an interpretive response in the reader. The very obscurity is a source of pleasure, especially to the extent that the actual process of deciphering the exegetical content of a passage would be painfully arduous and uncertain. Obscurity stirs curiosity: the reader wants to tear the veil aside.[30]

Although the medieval privileging of a complex exegetical mode seems at one level to contradict the basic analogism of medieval thought (the belief in a universe constituted by a system of architectonic correspondences between, for example, the material and the metaphysical, secular and sacred history, and God and the human subject made in his image), it is precisely because God, as supreme Artificer, is somehow immanent in the natural artefact of the Creation that an intimate correspondence between secular appearance and sacred meaning is finally guaranteed. Indeed, what is distinctive about medieval exegesis is its logocentric assurance of a transcendent and superior interpretation, a final accession to a meaning intact and resonant behind its allegorical disguise. As Fletcher suggests, obscurity is not an end in itself, but a means of intensifying the supreme moment of elucidation, of finally guaranteeing the proximity of the sacred object in such a way that semantic polysemy is structurally constrained. If the obscurity of the Scriptures is attributed to the clouding of human insight as a consequence of the Fall, the redemptive mediation of Christ will always ensure a totalising recovery of the prelapsarian Image. As Augustine writes, "The more [the Scriptures] seem obscure through their use of figurative expressions, the more they give pleasure when they have been made clear."[31]

Gabriel Josipovici's compelling image of the medieval world as a book with an enigmatic, but structurally decipherable, surface is particularly apt in this context.

The medieval author, Josipovici argues, writes about and in a world which is already a divine artefact, constructed according to rules which analogously govern the construction of the worldly artefact. The medieval artist is thus a scribe or copyist rather than an inventor, and the purpose of art is to instruct others to read the text - and, by implication, the universe - in such a way that understanding becomes tantamount to salvation, the triumphant overcoming of the Fall from Truth.[32] Edward Said says something similar when he argues that the Koran constitutes the founding referential principle of the secular artefact in Islamic literature, and that every work of art is therefore a recitation of Scripture rather than an aesthetic invention. In his essay "The Novel as Beginning Intention" he writes, "[N]o action can depart from the Koran; rather each action confirms the already completed existence of the Koran and, consequently, human existence." For

> the desire to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing ... is inimical to the Islamic world view. The prophet is he who has <u>completed</u> a world view; thus the word "heresy" in Arabic is synonymous with the verb "to innovate" or "to begin." Islam views the world as plenum, capable of neither diminishment nor amplification. Consequently stories ... are <u>ornamental variations</u> on the world, not completions of it [emphases added].[33]

This sense of the text as allegorical ornament is still influential in Islamic culture. Said refers to Taha

Hussein's three-part autobiography Al Ayam (sometimes translated as Stream of Days and published in 1929) and remarks that almost every childhood occurrence narrated by Hussein is in some sense related to the Koran, not as a doctrinal reference, but as a fact of everyday life. "Thus," Said writes, "the boy's father is happy when he does his recitation well and angry when he does not."[34] Life - and literature - is merely an allegorical extension of the "long and perpetual" Koranic metaphor.

The Arabic sense of the world as a text resonant with metaphysical significance has its Western counterpart solely in the anagogical system of medieval philosophy. For in the late middle ages there is a loss of confidence in the notion that the world is made in God's image, and the structures of meaning attendant upon the concept of an all-powerful Deity recede from view, leaving behind an opaque and indecipherable signifying surface. In Josipovici's terms the world is still a script, but an uninterpretable one. Instead of the redemptive illumination of Authorial omniscience - and with it the promise of meaning - there is increasingly only absence, aporia, signification without significance.

The gradual loss of confidence in the old structures of belief coincides with the devolution of metaphysical analogy and the emergence of a decentred, indeterminate allegorical mode, no longer predicated on univocal, metaphysically sanctioned meanings. Cut loose from a stable system of reference, the allegorical image becomes what

Benjamin calls "a signature, only the monogram of essence, not the essence itself in a mask,"[35] a form, in other words, which can no longer disguise its arbitrary representational status. The disruptive effect of this transformation is evident in the surreal fragmentariness of the Baroque Trauerspiel, where, as Benjamin writes, "word, syllable, and sound are emancipated from any context of traditional meaning and are flaunted as objects which can be exploited for allegorical purposes. The language of the baroque is constantly convulsed by rebellion on the part of the elements which make it up."[36] Similar aesthetic effects are apparent in early romantic poetry, which often demonstrates a self-reflexive preoccupation with representational excess and disorder. Supposedly revelatory symbolic scenes are frequently allegorised to a point of non-reflective opacity. The famous description of a London crowd scene in Wordsworth's "Prelude" is a particularly striking example of this tendency:

> Rise up, thou monstrous Ant-hill on the plain
> Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
> Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
> Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes -
> With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe -
> On Strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
> Of colours, lights and forms; the deafening din:
> The comers and the goers face to face,
> Face after face; the String of dazzling wares,
> Shop after Shop, with Symbols, blazoned Names,
> And all the Tradesman's Honours overhead:
> Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
> With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;
> Stationed above the door,like guardian Saints;
> <u>There</u>, allegoric shapes, female or male,
> Or physiognomies of real men,
> Land-Warriors, Kings, or Admirals of the Sea,
> Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton or the attractive head

Of some Quack-Doctor, famous in his day.[37]

Although these sublime moments suggest irreversible semantic breakdown, romantic allegory is ultimately recuperative, predicated (ironically) upon the same idealist assumptions which sustain the romantic philosophy of the symbol. Hence, even when the possibility of a transcendent accession to allegorical meaning is excluded, the very fact of incomprehension is conceived as evidence of the mind's relation to a metaphysical realm.[38] The spiritualising impulse therefore permeates and redeems "post-lapsarian" romantic allegory, which acquires a charged and intensified meaning in its fragments. As Benjamin writes:

> Ultimately ... the direction of allegorical reflection is reversed; on the second part of its wide arc it returns, to redeem.... This solves the problem of the most fragmented, the most defunct, the most dispersed. Allegory, of course, thereby loses everything that was most peculiar to it: ... the arbitrary rule in the realm of dead objects, the supposed infinity of a world without hope. All this vanishes with this <u>one</u> about-turn, in which the immersion of allegory has to clear away the final phantasmagoria of the objective and, left entirely to its own devices, re-discovers itself, not playfully in the earthly world of things, but seriously under the eyes of heaven.[39]

The hierophantic bias of romanticism is revealed over and over again in the aesthetic maxims of the romantic poets. Schiller, for example, invokes a transcendental realm in his demand for a poetry of allegorical <u>Idea</u> rather than

sense experience: "We must, of necessity, go beyond the physical order", he argues, "and seek the principle of conduct in quite another world."[40] Blake's definition of sublime poetry likewise reveals the transcendent, ideational cast of romantic allegory: "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual Powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding,is my definition of the Most Sublime Poetry."[41]

However, there is an obscure allegorical mode, referred to occasionally in romantic theory as "substitutive" allegory, which does not reveal the transcendental, logocentric structure of the more typical modes of romantic allegory.[42] While the dominant forms all gesture in one way or another to a higher realm of Truth or Reality, the secular form of "substitutive" allegory completely displaces the notion of an originating Logos. Its tropological structure is intertextual, for instead of invoking extra-discursive meanings, the allegorical text refers derivatively to the representations of an anterior text, which refers to another text in its turn, and so on, in the manner of an endlessly receding horizon. Thus, while other modes of romantic allegory all promise some form of semantic restoration, "substitutive" allegory confines the reader ineluctably to the fallible, interpretative realm of the signifier. It is undoubtedly this mode which Paul de Man has in mind when he says that "[t]he secularised allegory of the early romantics ... necessarily contains the negative moment which in Rousseau is that of

renunciation, in Wordsworth that of the loss of the self in death or in error."[43]

"Substitutive" allegory as a contemporary literary-theoretical mode

While the intertextual "substitutive" mode seems incongruous in the idealist context of romantic aesthetics, it is wholly compatible with a secular modernist aesthetic, for it points to a fundamentally modern preoccupation with the loss of the origin and in formal terms anticipates the regressive textuality of modern allegorical modes. Indeed, there is a striking affinity between "substitutive" allegory and the tropological constructs of Lacanian "desire," Derrida's "trace" or "supplement," and de Man's allegorical "thinking memory," all of which are predicated upon the disappearance of the logos and exhibit a substitutive tendency toward relentless displacement. Gayatri Spivak's "reading" of deconstruction demonstrates this quite clearly:

> By inaugurating the open-ended indefiniteness of textuality - by thus "placing in the abyss" (mettre en abîme), as the French expression would have it - [deconstruction] shows us the lure of the abyss as freedom. The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom.[44]

Within the context of this wholly secularised, infinitely regressive interpretative mode, I move to the literature of the modernist period, and in the following

chapters demonstrate how a theory of modern intertextual allegory can be put into practice to explain the unusual strategies of narrative and characterisation in the early modern novel. I focus specifically on Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, Marcel Proust's Swann's Way, and James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In each instance I draw attention to a self-reflexive dialectic between symbolic (logocentric) and allegorical (ex-centric) modes of representation, demonstrating how a discursive allegorical mode implicitly demystifies a symbolist rhetoric of "pure figuration," supposedly divested of every last taint of referential function.

While the representational dialectic between symbol and allegory is the central thematic thread running through the chapters, each chapter represents a particular variant of this problematic. In chapter two, for example, I explore the relation of Conrad's early work to the aesthetic tradition of the sublime, arguing that Conrad's modernity is inseparable from his inauguration of a distinctively modernist sublime in English fiction. I demonstrate that in Lord Jim Conrad moves beyond a traditional literary sublime predicated on an elusive, but nevertheless intact and resonant realm of meaning beyond language, to an infinitely textual modern sublime which draws the subject inexorably into the web of an interpretative existence.

In the chapter on Proust's Swann's Way I demonstrate the affinity of Proustian voluntary and involuntary memory with the Hegelian categories of Gedächtnis and Erinnerung

(symbol and sign) and, further, with the Lacanian concepts of Eros and Law. Within this framework I demonstrate how the declared symbolist intention of the work (the expression of desire) is controverted by a deconstructive allegorical praxis (the desire of expression) in such a way that the narrator is (de)constituted in a discourse which negates its own representations. I argue, contrary to the narrator's claims, that involuntary memory/Erinnerung/Eros is always already inhabited by the differential allegorical structures of voluntary memory/Gedächtnis/Law, always already caught in the temporal predicament that is for Lacan and Derrida the definitive condition of desire and writing.

Finally, in chapter four I focus upon the relation between allegory, irony and authorial subjectivity. I demonstrate how Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man brings about the fragmentation of the transcendent, non-disjunctive self of romantic-symbolism into a scattered or disseminated self constructed in/as writing: an alterable entity caught up in alterable structures of signification. I show, moreover, how the "allegorisation" of the autobiographical subject in A Portrait in turn affects the modality of irony in the text, rendering obsolete a conventional rhetoric of irony predicated on a coherent, non-discursive authorial subjectivity.

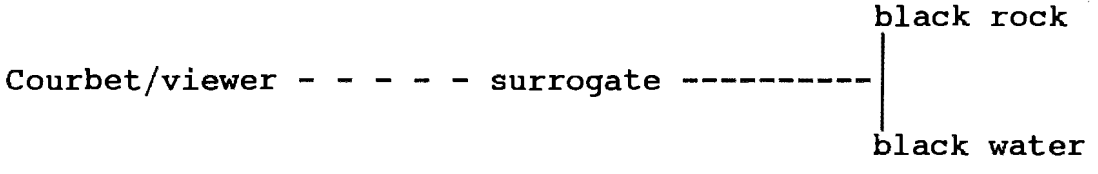
CHAPTER TWO

CONRAD'S **LORD JIM** AND THE INAUGURATION OF A MODERN SUBLIME

> My task ... is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything.
>
> Joseph Conrad, in the Preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus"[1]

In the concluding chapter of The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime, Neil Hertz uses a pictorial illustration to focus the representative concerns of the preceding chapters. The illustration is a reproduction of one of Courbet's views of the source of the Loue, "La Grotte de la Loue," c. 1865, with its disorientating obfuscation of the boundary between the dark rock walls of the cave and their gloomy reflection in the waters of the Loue below:

Significantly, as Hertz points out, the picture is almost identical to Courbet's "La Source de la Loue," the crucial difference being that the later composition depicts a human form, that of a young man or boy, standing on a wooden pier that projects into the river from the left, facing the dark and indistinct space of the cave and its watery reflection with his right hand raised. Hertz remarks: "[T]he painting-in of that figure ... locates - hence thematises - a position that was implicit in the other canvas, that of a surrogate viewer, or, if one chooses to read the figure as an oblique self-representation, a surrogate painter."[2] (The latter choice is justified by the presence of a rod, suggesting a painter's brush, projecting beyond the uplifted right hand towards the black paint at the centre of the canvas.) On this basis, and in a typically de Manian gesture, Hertz goes on to identify the indeterminate and disorientating "blind spot" of the canvas, where darkness and absence overwhelm visual presence and detail, as the emblem of a radical semantic displacement formally represented in the mediatory role of the viewer/painter surrogate. He represents this pattern of displacement diagrammatically,



arguing that the self-reflexive status of the painting, its

shift in orientation from product to process, signified to signifier, exemplifies what Kenneth Burke identifies as the "to-the-end-of-the-line" mode of the sublime:

> [W]hat one is drawn to is not a clearly oriented reflection ... of the artist's representational project, but an engagement with the act and with the medium of painting ... condensed almost to the point of non-reflective opacity. That expression may be taken quite literally to describe the centre of Courbet's canvas; figuratively it can serve to indicate whatever resists the reader at equivalent moments in written texts - difficulties of syntax or of figuration, apparent irrelevancies of association, any verbal play that shadows the referential appeal of the work - whatever keeps reading from being reducible to seeing [emphases added].[3]

Reading/seeing: Conrad and the romantic-symbolist tradition

Against this background I would like to turn to Conrad's famous pronouncements on the fundamental nature and purpose of art in his 1897 Preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus." Bearing in mind that a number of critics have noted significant rhetorical and philosophical similarities between Conrad's Preface to "The Nigger" and Wordsworth's Preface to "The Lyrical Ballads,"[4] the statements below might justifiably be taken as corroborating evidence of Conrad's allegiance to a visionary romantic-symbolist aesthetic:

> ... [A]rt itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its

> form, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential - their one illuminating and convincing quality - the very truth of their existence.[5]

And, towards the end of the Preface:

> My task ... is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything.[6]

Conrad's indebtedness to a romantic aesthetic is particularly striking in the first statement, where a sustained metaphorical theme of illumination, reminiscent of that Wordsworthian "light divine" which simultaneously suffuses the visible world and empowers the poetic imagination, is associated in typical romantic-symbolist form with a redemptive recuperation of Logos (essence/being) as immanent and substantial presence. For Conrad, as for the romantics, the supreme function of the work of art is the <u>manifestation</u> of that which in nature and, by extension, the self, is "fundamental, ... enduring and essential": "[Art] is an attempt to find in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life what ... is fundamental, what is enduring and essential - their one illuminating and convincing quality - the very truth of their existence."[7] Similarly, the word "see" in the second extract suggests not merely a naturalistic perception of visual impressions, but that more probingly inward, supernatural experience of

visionary apprehension which in romantic aesthetics is associated by definition with a superior reconciliation of mind with nature, word with world, and image with meaning. As Ian Watt argues, "[T]he richly persuasive connotations of the word 'see' ... include the perception ... of spiritual truths, as in 'a seer.'"[8]

Yet if, on the basis of the statements I have isolated in the Preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus," Conrad's aesthetic seems entirely consistent with the logocentric tenets of a visionary romantic-symbolism, in the context of Conrad's modern aesthetic practice the theoretical pronouncements of the Preface seem quite misplaced. For what is most distinctive about Conrad's fiction is the sense it conveys of a monumental <u>failure of vision</u>, a blurring of forms and outlines, a persistent obfuscation of symbolic meaning behind a dark and indeterminate representational or scenic surface. Indeed, quite contrary to the promises of the Preface, we are relentlessly precluded from seeing, constantly obstructed in our interpretative efforts by the literary equivalent of the shadowy centre of Courbet's canvas: that self-reflexive heart of darkness which Hertz identifies as a typical feature of Burke's "to-the-end-of-the-line" mode. Hence, while Conrad's relation to romanticism remains indisputable, it is a subversive and dialectical relation, for his fiction demonstrates not a passive endorsement but an interrogatory redefinition of romanticism's traditionally charged precepts.

As in Courbet's "La Grotte de la Loue" the obfuscatory effect in Conrad's novels operates for the most part at both formal and thematic levels. We noted how the indistinctness of the cave scene (the conflation of dark rock and dark reflection) becomes an emblem of formal representational problems foregrounded in turn by the self-conscious representation of a surrogate viewer/painter. The dark and indeterminate natural scene, far from being a site of symbolic wholeness and presence authorising the belief in a transcendental reference, serves only to emblematise an absence, for as a deconstructive simulacrum of the artist's ill-fated representational project, it exists in/as yet another site of signification.

The Conradian landscape is similarly sublime, similarly devoid of that spiritual essence which permeates and redeems the transfixed face of nature in romantic-symbolist representations. Instead of the visionary clarity of the symbolist landscape, postulating a divine reconciliation of mind and nature, self and other, substance and representation, we witness in Conrad a consistent reduction of natural scene to opaque and indeterminate signifying surface. Consider the following descriptions in Lord Jim and "Heart of Darkness," where, more obviously than in any of Conrad's other texts, a dark and despiritualised nature becomes an allegory of semantic absence:

> A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if

> into an abyss. The land devoured the sunshine; only far off, along the coast, the empty ocean, smooth and polished within the faint haze, seemed to rise up to the sky in a wall of steel. [Lord Jim][9]

> ... [T]he gloom of the land spread out under the sunshine preserved its appearance of inscrutable, of secular repose. [Lord Jim][10]

> I ... noted distinctly the gradual darkening of the river; of the air; the irresistible slow work of the night settling silently on all visible forms, effacing the outlines, burying the shades deeper and deeper, like a steady fall of impalpable black dust. [Lord Jim][11]

> I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness. ["Heart of Darkness"][12]

> The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky - seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. ["Heart of Darkness"][13]

In each of these descriptions nature, unresponsive to human desire, becomes an allegorical site of otherness and difference negating the romantic-symbolist possibility of identity or identification. But, more importantly, as in Courbet's painting the dark and impenetrable natural scene in each case is an emblematic pretext for a specifically formal aesthetic strategy: a self-reflexive foregrounding of the act and medium of representation which irrevocably obstructs the referential aspect of the text, irrevocably "keeps reading from being reducible to seeing." That is to

say that opacity in the typical Conradian text is always a rhetorical issue also, so that the characteristic indeterminacy of "Heart of Darkness" and Lord Jim has to do not only with the thematic or descriptive opaqueness in the texts, but with the formal opaqueness of the texts as constructs in language. Hence Courbet's self-conscious depiction of a surrogate viewer/painter, holding what appears to be a brush poised above the black paint at the canvas' centre, finds a literary equivalent in Conrad's employment of Marlow as a surrogate author/narrator, his pen figuratively poised above a textual heart of darkness and semantic absence which he seeks, unsuccessfully, to comprehend and communicate.

This strategy is particularly well demonstrated in Lord Jim, where Marlow's obsession with words and meanings (or sublime absences of meanings) provides the impetus for a narrative which circles endlessly and disjointedly about the mysterious figure of Jim. As David Thorburn writes, "[R]epeatedly as we hear about Jim we are forced to attend to another and essentially separate story, the story of Marlow's attempt to communicate"; "Like Tristram Shandy, but with a more austere melancholy, Lord Jim is a novel about itself: its (partial) subject is the drama which created it."[14] While the classic realist text typically supplies an omniscient authorial metalanguage to smooth away textual contradictions and recuperate meaning, Lord Jim constantly foregrounds the mechanical process of Marlow's narrative, denying an ontology of knowledge and

authority as it does so. "I put it down here for you as though I had been an eyewitness," says Marlow. "My information was fragmentary, but I've fitted the pieces together, and there is enough of them to make an intelligible picture."[15] Yet the simulated "eyewitness" account, darkened by doubt and speculation, remains incomplete:

> End! Finis! the potent word that exorcises from the house of life the haunting shadow of fate. This is what - notwithstanding the testimony of my eyes and his own earnest assurances - I miss when I look back upon Jim's success.... He was not - if I may say so - clear to me. He was not clear. And there is a suspicion he was not clear to himself either.[16]

Towards a modern sublime

Interestingly, those critics who situate Conrad's fiction in relation to the logocentric traditions of nineteenth century Realism (F.R. Leavis) or, more recently, French Symbolism (Ian Watt) struggle to account satisfactorily for Conrad's persistent reliance on strategies of obfuscation, particularly in the earlier texts, "Heart of Darkness," Lord Jim, and "The Nigger of the Narcissus." Hence, while Ian Watt devotes an entire chapter to Conrad's allegiance to a symbolist aesthetic, arguing, for example, that "Heart of Darkness" demonstrates Conrad's supreme effort to reveal, in Baudelaire's phrase about Delacroix, "the infinite in the finite,"[17] he cannot account for the "incompleteness of utterance" or "indeterminacy of meaning"

in Conrad without undermining the symbolist notion of a founding logos. Confronted with this paradox he is forced to conclude that "[i]f Conrad belongs to the symbolist tradition it is only in a limited, eclectic, and highly idiosyncratic way; even if one accepts in some very general sense the view that modern literature is mainly a continuation of the symbolist tradition, and waives the until now insuperable difficulties of definition, there seems to be little gained by categorising Conrad, along with Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Mann, and Faulkner, as a symbolist novelist...."[18] Leavis, on the other hand, invokes critical standards implied by the "Great Tradition," and accounts for this feature of Conrad's fiction simply by dismissing it as a failure of imagination. In The Great Tradition he writes, for example: "[Conrad] is intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means.... Hasn't he, we find ourselves asking, overworked "inscrutable", "inconceivable", "unspeakable", and that kind of word already? - yet still they recur." More revealingly perhaps, he praises Nostromo for what he calls its "firm and vivid concreteness," but is puzzled that "for all the rich variety and tightness of the pattern, the reverberation of Nostromo has something hollow about it; with the colour and the life there is a suggestion of a certain emptiness."[19]

It has been my contention that some of these difficulties might be resolved if we situate Conrad's earlier fiction in relation to the aesthetic tradition of

the sublime, a context which remains almost entirely unexplored in Conrad criticism. Barton Thurber and Wendy Faris are to my knowledge the only critics who have dealt explicitly with this problematic, and my identification of Lord Jim as a representative case of the "Conradian sublime" is in many respects consistent with their interpretations of Conrad's obfuscatory strategies in the same novel.[20]

Yet my reading of Lord Jim as a text in the sublime tradition differs in one crucial respect from theirs, and, as I will demonstrate shortly, this difference bears heavily upon my understanding of Conrad's modernity. For both critics the sublime - as an aesthetic category - is ultimately predicated on logocentric tenets. Hence Faris describes Conrad's "indistinctness" as an impulse toward a form of abstraction similar in nature to "traditional allegory": "[T]he referent of the sign is an abstract idea; we are drawn to the realm of abstractions." This kind of abstraction, she argues, "leads the perceiver from the concrete to the abstract and is related to the movement from the particular to the general and the finite to the infinite - and, as Watt has pointed out, allies Conrad more with Symbolism than with Impressionism."[21] Thurber hints tentatively at more radical possibilities when, describing the quality of the darkness in a passage from Lord Jim, he remarks: "The darkness is clearly ominous, clearly potent, but it is unspecified; it is overdetermined, or perhaps it is not determined at all." Yet instead of pursuing the

distinctively modernist implications of such radical indeterminacy, Thurber invokes a realm of meaning outside and beyond language, arguing that Lord Jim, like "Heart of Darkness," "The Nigger of the Narcissus," some of the shorter tales, and sections of Nostromo, constantly "gesture towards cultural, symbolic, and even mythological vistas the text itself can scarcely contain," so that "like Yeats or Baudelaire Conrad tries to use his text to transcend his text, to allude to what his language can never fully say no matter what it says."[22] Hence, for both Faris and Thurber, the languid gloom that pervades the earlier novels, and Lord Jim in particular, is related not to the potential absence of a transcendent realm of meaning, but to the difficulty of locating or representing it. Both readings are therefore predicated on the same logocentric assumptions that lead Watt and Leavis into interpretative difficulties when they encounter the characteristic "incompleteness of utterance" and "indeterminacy of meaning" of Conrad's earlier works.[23]

My aim in the pages that follow is to argue, against Thurber and Faris, and with specific reference to Lord Jim, that Conrad's modernity is inseparable from his inauguration of a distinctively modern sublime in English fiction. I will demonstrate that in Lord Jim Conrad moves beyond a traditional literary sublime predicated on an elusive, but nevertheless intact and resonant realm of meaning beyond language, to an infinitely textual modern sublime which draws the human subject inexorably into an

allegorical web of discourse and interpretation.[24]

The Fall

> In the very fall of man the unity of guilt and signifying emerges as an abstraction. The allegorical has its existence in abstractions; as an abstraction, as a faculty of the spirit of language itself, it is at home in the Fall. For good and evil are unnameable; outside the language of names, in which man, in paradise, named things, and which he forsakes in the abyss of that problem.
>
> Walter Benjamin[25]

Since Conrad's concern in Lord Jim is with the wider philosophical implications of an individual moral crisis, the transgressive leap which forms the pretext for Marlow's interrogatory narrative signifies more than a fall in the literal sense. Jim's abandonment of the sinking "Patna" has the typological status of a Fall also, and yet, far from being an authenticating, exemplary emblem of its biblical prototype, its purpose is to undermine the very notion of authoritative, engendering origins. Hence, although Jim's fall refers back to the theological Transgression upon which the binary system of Western morality is based, it does so ironically and subversively, calling into question the notion of an extra-discursive Logos "naturally" authenticating the moral categories of pre- and post-lapsarian, good and evil, truth and falsehood, innocence and guilt. For the loss of the self in error in Lord Jim is represented unambiguously as an allegory of that fall which

Benjamin refers to in terms of a "unity of guilt and signifying," and which in post-structuralist philosophy is co-extensive with the displacement of meaning and subjectivity in linguistic structures. That is to say that the moment of transgression in Lord Jim coincides with a fall into signification, and the dawning of self-consciousness and the knowledge of evil which we associate with "original" Error reappears in Lord Jim as a wholly secular and distinctively modern recognition of the moral subject's reified, linguistic relationship to a fundamentally amoral reality.

Construed thus, the fall emerges as a crucial metaphor for the establishment of a demystified sublime aesthetic in Lord Jim, and it is significant that the moment of error in the narrative should coincide not only with Marlow's sublime portrayal of the protagonist, but with a corresponding textual movement into a polysemic narrative mode in which inconclusive interpretations of Jim's action are superimposed one upon the other within Marlow's narrative. (Although these conflictive interpretations seem at first to be "contained" by and secondary to Marlow's authoritative narrative, Conrad's emphasis on the rhetorical status of Marlow's representations serves to undermine such hierarchisation, as I demonstrate later.)

The aesthetic significance of the fall becomes even clearer when we realise that Jim's transgression marks not only a fall into a sublime mode, but the disruption of a state of specifically romantic mystification. As early as

the first chapter of the novel, we are told that Jim's heroic dreams have their origins in the literature of a debased romanticism:

> On the lower deck in the babel of two hundred voices he would forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea-life of light literature. He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shell-fish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men - always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book.[26]

What is to become a sustained dialectic between mystification and demystification in the novel emerges here in the ironic relation between Jim's confidence in a clichéd romantic script which attests to a transcendent subjectivity (denying the possibility of error or transgression in the same way that symbolic discourse seeks to efface the arbitrary relationship between sign and meaning), and the demystified, ironic tone of the narrator who exposes the derivative, literary basis of the protagonist's heroic subjectivity. Moreover, the direct association of Jim's romantic dreams with his reading allows us to reconstrue the dialectic between mystification and demystification in terms of an ironic relation between two fundamentally opposed ways of reading: a mystified romantic mode associated with Jim's ("pre-lapsarian") failure to distinguish between literary signification and

"real" meaning in the world, and a demystified, intertextual mode associated pre-eminently with Marlow's ("post-lapsarian") sublime and inconclusive narrative, but already implicit in the ironic subtext of the first four chapters. After the fall meaning is neither immediately reducible to seeing, nor temporarily effaced behind an opaque and indeterminate signifying surface, but, as a function of signification, exists in/as that which is read and re-read and can never be seen.[27] However, while the fall marks a decisive formal transition into a sublime narrative mode, Jim himself does not progress from a mystified to a demystified mode of reading. His faith in a debased romantic script survives the lapse into sublimity after the "Patna" episode and reasserts itself in the form of the escape to Patusan in the second half of the novel. The ironic discrepancy between the two modes of reading again comes into play at this point. While for Jim life on the remote island of Patusan serves to salvage and redeem the earlier fall into sublimity, within the context of Marlow's demystified, intertextual narrative it clearly represents a secondary fall into the discursive realm of romantic adventure fiction.

It is not merely contingent that until the "Patna" incident Jim is repeatedly depicted in the authoritative position of the viewer: with the elevated perspective afforded by his station in the ship's foretop, he sees with a clarity which makes for a fluent transition from fantasy to reality, reading to seeing/being:

> His station was in the foretop, and often from there he looked down, with the contempt of a man destined to shine in the midst of dangers, at the peaceful multitude of roofs cut in two by the brown tide of the stream.... He could see the big ships departing, the broad-beamed ferries constantly on the move, the little boats floating far below his feet, with the hazy splendour of the sea in the distance, and the hope of a stirring life in the world of adventure.[28]

The implications of this description are echoed in a later passage describing Jim's sojourn in the hospital of an Eastern port where the protagonist is once again privileged with a view which reflects and reaffirms the integrity of his imagination. Looking out through the open windows of his room, Jim sees what he dreams and is reassured of the authenticity of his literary visions:

> The hospital stood on a hill, and a gentle breeze entering through the windows, always flung wide open, brought into the bare room the softness of the sky, the languor of the earth, the bewitching breath of the Eastern waters. There were perfumes in it, suggestions of infinite repose, the gift of endless dreams. Jim looked every day over the thickets of gardens, beyond the roofs of the town ... at that roadstead which is a thoroughfare to the East ... lighted by festal sunshine ... with the eternal serenity of the Eastern sky overhead and the smiling peace of the Eastern seas possessing the space as far as the horizon.[29]

In each of these descriptions Jim contemplates a scene whose very luminousness signifies an unproblematical fulfilment of his early reading. Yet the irony which pervades each description serves to undermine Jim's complacency, foregrounding the clichéd, derivative nature

of his perceptions, and "exposing" the deceptive, metaphorically obfuscatory quality of the light which suffuses every scene of imaginary projection: "that glitter ... which is only a reflection of his own glances full of fire."[30] Significantly, the irony implicit in Jim's mystified conflation of reading and seeing becomes more pronounced, and more ominous, just prior to the foundering of the "Patna." From the bridge of the boat Jim "reads" the surrounding seascape in terms which demonstrate a comprehensive failure to distinguish between reality and a debased romantic typology which systematically idealises the natural world by ascribing to it a significant essence congruent with imaginary desire:

> A marvellous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars ... seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security.... The propeller turned without a check, as though its beat had been part of the scheme of a safe universe; and on each side of the "Patna" two deep folds of water, permanent and sombre on the unwrinkled shimmer, enclosed within their straight and diverging ridges a few swirls of foam bursting in a low hiss, a few wavelets ... that, left behind, agitated the surface of the sea for an instant after the passage of the ship, subsided splashing gently, calmed down at last into the circular stillness of water and sky with the black speck of the moving hull remaining everlastingly in its centre.
>
> Jim on the bridge was penetrated by the great certitude of unbounded safety and peace that could be read on the silent aspect of nature like the certitude of fostering love upon the placid tenderness of a mother's face.
>
> ... "How steady she goes," thought Jim with wonder, with something like gratitude for this high peace of ease and sky. At such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality.[31]

If, from one point of view, Jim's complacent "reading" seems to invoke an unproblematical continuity between self and other, dream text and immanent meaning, from another, demystified, point of view, it can be seen to parody the romantic tendency to unify the world and the self organically with respect to a generative and transcendental logos. Indeed, it becomes increasingly clear as the moment of collision approaches that we are to read Jim's soporific immersion in a world which authenticates literary meaning and subjectivity ironically: as a dangerously mystified denial of the arbitrary relationship between fiction and reality, self and other, being and signification. It is significant, for example, that Jim's self-assurance should so readily shade into a condition of real sleep: "The life was easy and he was too sure of himself.... The line dividing his meditation from a surreptitious doze on his feet was thinner than a thread in a spider's web."[32] His complacent assumption that the illuminated representations on the maritime chart testify to the safety of the "Patna's" passage across a sea as smooth and shiny as the sheet of paper portraying its depths likewise signals a dangerously mystified perception of the relation between signifier and signified. (These depths, as we shall see shortly, are as much linguistic and allegorical as they are empirical.) From the earliest stages of the novel, therefore, we are led to distrust the atmosphere of placidity which Jim takes for granted, and to anticipate

the moment of betrayal and demystification which radically redefines Jim's relation to nature and marks a fall from a naïve romantic aesthetic into the treacherous depths of the modern sublime.

From "prefall paradise peace" into the "waters of babalong"[33]

> "A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns - nicht wahr? No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up."
>
> Stein, in Lord Jim[34]

> "How wonderful and new and yet how gruesome and ironic I find my position vis-à-vis the whole of existence in the light of my insight! ... I suddenly woke up in the midst of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish...."
>
> Nietzsche[35]

As I have noted, the transition from a mystified perception of organic immanence which denies the textuality of meaning and subjectivity by positing an unproblematical continuity between self and world, into an alienated linguistic self-consciousness which "knows" the world only as a reified site of otherness and difference, coincides with a breakdown of the reading-seeing equation which sustains Jim's romantic vision. Hence the shimmering seascape which, prior to the jump, Jim reads/sees as a reflection of an

inviolable order and subjectivity, is represented after the jump as an alien and unreadable scene of darkness and indeterminacy: "'You couldn't distinguish the sea from the sky; there was nothing to see and nothing to hear. Not a glimmer, not a shape, not a sound.'"[36] The effect is akin to Benjamin's - definitively modern - "disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock," for, as Benjamin argues, the perception of the aura of the inanimate presupposes the potential of the inanimate to look at us in turn.[37] Confronted with a nature that no longer returns his gaze, Jim is precipitated into a sensation of self-annihilation, a typically sublime loss of the self to the self recalling Decoud's schizophrenic experience on the Golfo Placido in Nostromo:

> '"Everything was gone and - all was over ..." he fetched a deep sigh ... "with me."'
>
> Marlow sat up abruptly and flung away his cheroot with force. It made a darting red trail like a toy rocket fired through the drapery of creepers. Nobody stirred.
>
> 'Hey, what do you think of it?' he cried with sudden animation. '.... His saved life was over for want of ground under his feet, for want of sights for his eyes, for want of voices in his ears. Annihilation - hey! And all the time it was only a clouded sky, a sea that did not break, the air that did not stir. Only a night; only a silence.'[38]

The arrival of day does not alleviate the sensation of blindness and self-obliteration that accompanies the fall into the sublime: "I couldn't see the water for the glitter of the sunshine," Jim tells Marlow. "All was light, light, and the boat was falling through it."[39]

However, the most significant indication that we are here in the realm of that sublimity which in Derridean terms is synonymous with the dislocatory structure of the sign/writing, and in Lacanian terms describes the subversive appropriation of the self by a discursive unconscious, is the narrative displacement of the jump itself as source, meaning, presence, event. Reflecting upon his action in conversation with Marlow, Jim denies the intentionality of the act and consequently fails to conjure up before Marlow either its experiential truth - in Derrida's terms, "the presence of the thing to the sight as eidos, presence as substance/essence/ existence (ouisia)" - or its temporal immediacy: "temporal presence as point (stigmè) of the now or of the moment (nun)."[40] In a gesture of temporal displacement, Jim is able to describe only the moment which precedes it: "I stood by with my hand on the davit. I was very quiet. It had come over pitch dark. You could see neither sky nor sea...." and, in a dissociative gesture, the moment of recognition: '"I had jumped ..." He checked himself, averted his gaze ... "It seems."'[41] Jim's denial of the intentionality of the action serves to undermine more conclusively than any other moment in the narrative the idealist assumptions which sustain a romantic aesthetic of presence and self-presence. As an allegory of the fall from the Word, the jump is therefore always already a function of temporality and signification, an allegorical lacuna of darkness and silence and absence about which the various explanatory narratives of the text

rotate.

From this point onwards the narrative attempt to retrieve and explicate the meaning of Jim's act of transgression generates a movement of endless circling, a textual vortex of words into which meaning recedes and fades interminably, at once traced and effaced. Signs generate signs ad infinitum as interpretations are revised, contradicted, superimposed, displaced, failing even in their summation to piece together the fragmented reality of the "Patna" incident. The supposedly redemptive Patusan episode does not curtail this movement, for it, too, is constituted as derivative subtext, narrated in the shifting genres of Gothic revenge, epic heroism and debased romance fiction. Moreover, imprisoned within a romantic code, Jim himself struggles to articulate the experience of transgression: his explanatory discourse, constituted as a subtext of Marlow's narrative, is characteristically elliptical, disjointed and incomplete, a stammer which suspends meaning in the very motion of seeking it out: '"Strange, isn't it?" he murmured, interrupting himself in his disjointed narrative.'[42] Despite Marlow's pivotal role as story-teller and interpreter in the novel, his own expository reading of Jim's narrative cannot resolve its textual inconsistencies or provide the solace of closure. His narrative repeatedly announces itself as an interpretative exercise - the flawed product of conjecture and speculation, thwarted by the inadequacies of language and the opacity and elusiveness of its subject:

> 'You are so subtle, Marlow.'
>
> 'Who? I?' said Marlow in a low voice. 'Oh no! But he was; and try as I may for the success of this yarn, I am missing innumerable shades - they were so fine, so difficult to render in colourless words....'

> I wanted to know - and to this day I don't know, I can only guess.... I don't pretend I understood him. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog - bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country ...; they were no good for purposes of orientation. Upon the whole he was misleading.

> The mist of his feelings shifted between us ... and in the rifts of the immaterial veil he would appear to my staring eyes distinct of form and pregnant with vague appeal like a symbolic figure in a picture.[43]

The dynamic of semantic displacement is particularly clear in the last extract, where the "rifts of the immaterial veil" reveal not the substantial reality of Jim's presence, but "a symbolic figure in a picture": derivative and artificial re-presentation, allegory within allegory, text within text, gesturing endlessly into the realm of abstraction.[44] The sublime structure of the image recalls the formal strategies of allegorical repetition and intertextuality in the novel; for Marlow's reading of the "Patna" incident is always already a derivative interpretation of antecedent readings which are similarly projective and incompleté - not only Jim's, but Brierly's, the French lieutenant's, Stein's and Chester's, for example. Moreover, since each of these explanatory

discourses is strategically refracted through Marlow's hermeneutic lens, the various readings are not discrete or autonomous, but thematically interdependent, so that, for example, Brierly's suicidal jump after the trial echoes Jim's jump from the "Patna," just as the French lieutenant's steadfast bravery aboard the doomed ship reflects ironically upon Jim's cowardice in the same circumstances.[45]

But there is another, more profound and subversive, manifestation of intertextuality in the novel - a deconstructive pattern of cross-references and repetitions which exceeds the logistical boundaries of Marlow's narrative, and constitutes a distinctively modernist effect of sublimity. The extended metaphor of the jump is perhaps the best example of this allegorical tendency toward repetition in the text, a tendency which undermines the stabilising mechanism of context in the novel and is inseparable from Conrad's strategy of ontological demystification.[46]

The parallels which I mentioned earlier between, for example, Jim's cowardice and the French lieutenant's bravery, are controlled and intentional repetitions, logistically contained within the hermeneutic context of Marlow's narrative, and productive, at least to some extent, of stable ironic effects. But the uncanny recurrence of the jump subverts this semantic structure and completely undermines the narrative impulse to attribute meaning and value to Jim's action. With each repetition,

the significance attributed to the jump in an earlier narrative context becomes inappropriate, even contradictory. Hence, for example, Jim's failure to jump into a rescue boat as a boy marks a cowardly lapse of romantic heroism, but his successful leap into a life-boat from the "Patna" is construed by the court as a punishable act of transgression. "Meaning" dissolves in the aporia created by a contextual inversion, and is perpetually undermined and relativised in this way. The same paradoxical strategy disrupts the stable semantic connotations of light and dark imagery in this novel and in "Heart of Darkness": as Hillis Miller has noted, light is sometimes the origin of dark, dark at times the origin of light, just as Jim is sometimes a white figure against a sublime backdrop of darkness ("He was white from head to foot, and remained persistently visible with the stronghold of the night at his back....") and at other times a black silhouette against an explosion of light (The growl of thunder increased steadily while I looked at him, distinct and black, planted solidly upon the shores of a sea of light").[47] Thus neither the recurrent theme of the jump nor the sustained motif of dark and light imagery in the novel functions to elucidate meaning - the metaphorical trajectory established in each case moves not inward, towards a destination of (dis)closure, but outward, in a deconstructive sequence of allegorical displacements.

Lord Jim does contain vestiges of the classic realist tradition of omniscient narration in the form of the ironic

narrator of the first few chapters who reappears briefly in chapter thirty-six to introduce another interpreter, the recipient of Marlow's letter describing Jim's demise. Yet, as Jakob Lothe observes, in Conrad's novel "authorial omniscience entails neither definitive information about nor conclusive evaluation of Jim."[48] Moreover, the self-reflexive modality of irony in the sections of classic narration undercuts the traditional narrator's claim to an omniscient "possession of the facts." Consider the following passage, for example, which disputes the fact-finding role of the nautical assessors on the first day of the official Inquiry into the "Patna" affair:

> The light of a broad window under the ceiling fell from above on the heads and shoulders of the three big men, and they were fiercely distinct in the half-light of the big court-room where the audience seemed composed of staring shadows. They wanted facts. Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything![49]

Such scepticism marks a radical break from the objective interpretative tradition of narrative realism, and situates Conrad firmly in the modernist domain.

Stein's high romantic solution

> "So halt' ich's endlich denn in meinen Handen,
> Und nenn' es in gewissem Sinne mein."[50]

The "learned collector" Stein represents the last vestige of a visionary romanticism in a narrative context of doubt

and indeterminacy, and as the narrative gropes incongruously toward an idealist aesthetic in this section, Stein's profound counsel on the question of Jim's future seems momentarily to anchor and stabilise Marlow's inconclusive discourse. Yet the aesthetic of sublimity which permeates Lord Jim subverts Stein's romantic discourse more conclusively than any other explanatory subtext in the novel. Indeed, the scene of Marlow's conversation with the "learned collector," strategically located at the centre of the novel, plays the most significant part in the novel's demystification of the essentialist tenets of a romantic-symbolist aesthetic.

Marlow finds Stein in a dark, shadowy room, writing up a descriptive catalogue of his butterfly collection by the light of a lamp: "I respected the intense, almost passionate, absorption with which he looked at a butterfly, as though on the bronze sheen of these frail wings ... he could see other things, an image of something as perishable and defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death."[51] Marlow's representation of Stein's butterfly as a transcendent, supratemporal Image is consistent with the romantic tenor of the scene, iterated in Stein's reference to Goethe's Torquato Tasso and in his assessment of Jim: "I understand very well. He is romantic."[52] Yet if the narrative seems to project a visionary romantic aesthetic on the one hand, on the other it can be seen to qualify the redemptive status of an idealist aesthetic of possession

and self-possession, knowledge and self-knowledge. For the Stein scene is littered with sublime images of death, decay, darkness, and indeterminacy. Not only is Stein himself a spectral presence among his lifeless butterflies; his discourse, too, is enigmatic and obscure:

> The shadow prowling amongst the graves of butterflies laughed boisterously.
>
> "Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns - nicht wahr? ... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep, sea keep you up...."
>
> ... He spoke in a subdued tone, without looking at me, one hand on each side of his face. "That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so - ewig - usque ad finem...." The whisper of his conviction seemed to open before me a vast and uncertain expanse, as of a crepuscular horizon on a plain at dawn - or was it, perchance, at the coming of night? One had not the courage to decide; but it was a charming and deceptive light, throwing the impalpable poesy of its dimness over pitfalls - over graves.[53]

Stein's obscure equation of the dream with a fall into the sea gestures backward to the leap from the "Patna" which precipitates Jim's fall into the "de(con)structive element" of the sublime, while the sustained sublimity of the imagery hints at the fallibility of Stein's romantic solution to Jim's predicament. The passage also serves as a bridge into the Patusan section of the novel, prefiguring Marlow's rendering of the darkened landscape of Patusan and his associated recollection of the fall upon which Jim's

status is founded:

> A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if into an abyss. The land devoured the sunshine; only far off, along the coast, the empty ocean, smooth and polished within the faint haze, seemed to rise up to the sky in a wall of steel.
>
> And there I was with him, high in the sunshine on the top of that historic hill of his.... I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate. I don't know whether it was exactly fair to him to remember the incident which had given a new direction to his life, but at that very moment I remembered very distinctly. It was like a shadow in the light.[54]

Against this background Jim's naïve romantic attempt to "climb out into the air," to create a transcendent symbolic space and rewrite the script of absence, death, error, displacement and self-loss which marks his fallen condition, is destined to fail. For, as Marlow's narrative suggests, within the signifying context of the sublime there is no such thing as that "clean slate" of which Jim speaks animatedly earlier in the novel. There are only sublime tautologies, endlessly regressive repetitions, so that Jim's failure to confront the fictitious status of his self-mastery aboard the "Patna" prefigures his naïve belief in the integrity of his life in Patusan, and the leap which takes him from the stockade into the formless materiality of the creekbed duplicates, rather than redeems, that earlier leap which shattered the myth of the logos and drew attention to the arbitrary, discursive nature of Jim's romantic dream. Marlow survives in Stein's "destructive

element" because, like Baudelaire's fallen philosopher,[55] he has the capacity to reflect ironically upon meaning and truth as lies of language, "saving illusions" whose glittering light conceals depths invisible (and therefore treacherous) to those who lack the philosopher's detached, ironic vision. Jim belongs in the second category. Fallen, yet trapped within a mode of romantic mystification, he condemns himself to an endless repetition of the "original" fall, culminating in a death which ironically eludes meaning even as it marks a closure. Marlow's narrative ends as "the reality of [Jim's] existence" fades finally into the sublimity of the unknown, and the disillusioned romantic Stein, preparing for his own imminent death, "waves his hand sadly" at those flawed, secular symbols of transcendence, the butterflies:

> And that's the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic.... Is he satisfied - quite, now, I wonder? ... Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force and yet, upon my honour, there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit, astray among the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades.
>
> Who knows? He is gone, inscrutable at heart.... Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself and says often that he is "preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave ..." while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies.[56]

CHAPTER THREE

MEMORY, DESIRE AND REPRESENTATION IN PROUST'S **SWANN'S WAY**

While Conrad's flawed symbols of transcendence in Lord Jim clearly illustrate a secular, deconstructive tendency in early modern fiction, the mystical symbol of the madeleine in Proust's Remembrance of Things Past is less obviously ironic, and for many critics implies the persistence of a transcendental symbolist strain in modernist literature. In this chapter I demonstrate, to the contrary, that Proust's novel not only engages in the same critique of the essentialist tenets of romantic-symbolism as Conrad's Lord Jim, but that the deconstructive dialectic between symbolic presence and allegorical displacement in Remembrance is even more intricate and sustained than it is in Conrad's transitional novel. I focus specifically on Swann's Way, Part one of Remembrance of Things Past: 1,[1] where the central Proustian themes of memory and desire interact most profoundly with a modernist dialectic between symbolic and allegorical modes of representation.

Mixing memory and desire: the maternal kiss and the madeleine scene

Years after his childhood holidays at Combray, the adult narrator of Proust's Swann's Way recalls the poignant ritual of the maternal goodnight kiss, a sublime experience of pain and pleasure, gratification and loss:

> My sole consolation when I went upstairs for the night was that Mamma would come in and kiss me after I was in bed. But this goodnight lasted for so short a time, she went down again so soon, that the moment in which I heard her climb the stairs, and then caught the sound of her garden dress of blue muslin, from which hung little tassels of plaited straw, rustling along the double-doored corridor, was for me a moment of the utmost pain; for it heralded the moment which was bound to follow it, when she would have left me and gone downstairs again. So much so that I reached the point of hoping that this goodnight which I loved so much would come as late as possible, so as to prolong the time of respite during which Mamma would not yet have appeared.[2]

The withdrawal of Mamma's soothing presence is invariably associated with the intervention of an unsympathetic father, who arbitrarily prescribes the terms of Marcel's relationship with his mother:

> Sometimes when, after kissing me, she opened the door to go, I longed to call her back, to say to her "Kiss me just once more," but I knew that then she would at once look displeased, for the concession which she made to my wretchedness and agitation in coming up to give me this kiss of peace always annoyed my father, who thought such rituals absurd.... And to see her look displeased destroyed all the calm and serenity she had brought me a moment before, when she had bent her loving face down over my bed, and held it out to me like a host for an act of peace-giving communion in which my lips might imbibe her real

presence and with it the power to sleep.[3]

This "holy" ritual is even more dramatically disrupted on the occasion of M. Swann's untimely visits, when the young Marcel is obliged to go to bed early, deprived altogether of the consecratory maternal kiss: "And so I must set forth without viaticum; must climb each step of the staircase 'against my heart' as the saying is, climbing in opposition to my heart's desire, which was to return to my mother, since she had not, by kissing me, given my heart leave to accompany me."[4] M. Swann is therefore associated more completely than Marcel's father with an Oedipal principle of negation, for his arrival means, not a mere deferral of gratification, but its ineluctable absence.[5]

There is a crucial metonymic relation between this prefatory testimony of loss and thwarted desire and the narrator's famous philosophical reflections on forms of memory at the end of the "Overture." Indeed it is not merely coincidental that the narrator's association of Swann with maternal loss provides the context for his reflective discourse on voluntary memory. Directly after the evocation of the Combray bedtime scene the narrator refers to the "memory of the intellect" as a faculty which produces only artificial reconstructions of the past, shadowy simulacra of events rather than their once substantial essence. Like Swann, voluntary memory implies loss and displacement: the subordination of "real presence" to the obfuscatory realm of re-presentation. (The metonymic

association between Swann and voluntary memory has significant textual implications, as I illustrate later.) Ironically, although the narrator dismisses the "memory of the intellect" as an inferior and inauthentic mode, the events recalled in the "Overture" in fact owe their representation to conscious memory (Note: "when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray"):

> And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel ...: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the diningroom, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings, would emerge, the hall through which I would journey to the first step of that staircase, so painful to climb, which constituted, all by itself, the slender cone of this irregular pyramid; and at the summit, my bedroom, with the little passage through whose glazed door Mamma would enter; in a word, seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary (like the decor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces) to the drama of my undressing; as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o'clock at night. I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead [emphases added].[6]

The textual/theatrical metaphor which the narrator employs to describe his memories of Combray - "like the

decor one sees prescribed on the title-page of an old play, for its performance in the provinces" - clearly demonstrates the affinity of Proust's differential voluntary memory with Hegelian Gedächtnis the artificial, reconstructive, allegorical memory which de Man opposes to the spontaneous, symbolic mode of intuitive recollection, or Erinnerung. As Derrida explains in his **Memoires for Paul de Man**: "One might recall here the implacable law that always opposes good (living) memory to bad memory (mechanical, technical, on the side of death): Plato's anamnesis or mneme to hypomneme, the good to the bad pharmakon."[7] The association between Gedächtnis and voluntary memory is particularly striking in the last two sentences of the extract, where the narrator dismisses the "memory of the intellect" as a mortal and fallible faculty which produces nothing more than a residue of Combray's once substantial "organic" presence: "[S]ince the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead" (emphases added).

In this philosophical context it seems apt that Proust should posit, in opposition to the allegorical "residue" of voluntary memory, the substantial symbolist essence of involuntary recollection. While voluntary memory/Gedächtnis recalls the temporal mode of différance, an irreversible fading of original presence associated with the Oedipal schism of self and (m)other, the symbolist mode of

involuntary memory/Erinnerung promises the recuperation of the unmediated maternal presence symbolised by the goodnight kiss: "when she ... bent her loving face down over my bed, and held it out to me like a host for an act of peace-giving communion in which my lips might imbibe her real presence and with it the power to sleep." Indeed, the "Overture" concludes with a triumphant retrieval of original plenitude as the sterile artificiality of voluntary memory is unexpectedly superseded by the fluid and sensuous organicity of involuntary recollection. On the narrator's return home on a cold winter's day, his mother waits on him with a cup of tea and a "petite madeleine": "one of those squat, plump little cakes ... which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell." The effect is profound:

> ... I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory - this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal.[8]

Since the sensuous essence of the madeleine is inseparable from the mystical intuition of a transcendent Truth, the temporal barrier between signifier (material image) and

signified (immaterial essence) dissolves in a supratemporal apotheosis of presence and self-presence: "... this essence was not in me, it was me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal." The madeleine therefore not only conserves the essence of past events, but guarantees the transcendent subjectivity of the narrator who, in possession of his past as unmediated vision, is now miraculously exempt from the contingencies of an historical existence. It is on this basis that Germaine Bree differentiates the narrator's transcendental symbolist aesthetic from the abstract historicity of voluntary memory:

> ... [T]he world within [the narrator] is not abstract; it contains in its entirety the rich substance of what was a moment in time as it was actually lived. That is why only involuntary memory can adequately restore the past: any moment in time which does not totally disappear from the narrator's conscious memory is lost because it always undergoes immediate change, the multiple transformations born of dreams, imagination, memory, and emotions. It is caught in the general evolution of human beings in time.[9]

Paradoxically, whereas voluntary memory, caught in the temporal predicament of desire/différance, constantly threatens a loss of the self in error and forgetfulness, or in the sheer proliferation of its allegorical reconstructions, Proust's symbolist involuntary memory reinforces a sense of a "permanent" and "identical" self, singular, originary, and consistent through time.

The madeleine episode is inseparable from the

aesthetic theory which ostensibly governs the formation of the novel, and, for the most part, determines the mode of its interpretation. As I have indicated, few critics question the author's indebtedness to the aesthetics of romantic-symbolism. Edmund Wilson, for instance, situates Proust in a direct line of development through Paul Valery and the French symbolists, arguing that he "is the first important novelist to apply the principles of Symbolism in fiction."[10] The novel is unique for Wilson, not because it marks a departure from an established aesthetic tradition, but because it exploits that tradition in an unprecedented way. On this basis Wilson unhesitatingly identifies Proustian involuntary recollection with the regenerative atemporality of the symbol and, like Bree, finds the key to the composition of the novel in the transcendental, self-mastering epiphanies of the recollecting subject:

> It is hopeless to seek happiness in others - in society or in love. One must turn in upon oneself - one finds the true reality there: in those enduring extra-temporal symbols ... which have been precipitated out by the interaction of one's continually changing consciousness with the continual change of the world. He will make of his life a book, and he will base it upon these symbols. So he may assert his will at last and retrieve his moral surrender - so he may turn at last to swim against the current of the undammed, unchannelled sensibility with which he has been drifting all his life - and at the same time master the world, rejoin the reality which has always seemed to elude him, and, opposing the flow of Time, establish something outside of it: a work of art.[11]

Like many other critics, Wilson here subscribes

unquestioningly to the aesthetic ideology elaborated in the narrative discourse. (The generalising tone of the passage indeed suggests a direct paraphrase or critical extension of the symbolist narrative voice.) Few critics have recognised the contradictions inherent in an aesthetic theory which not only foregrounds one form of memory at the expense of another at a thematic level, but also, by formal extension, subordinates the temporal diachrony of narrative to the supratemporal wholeness and immediacy of a sustained symbolic moment. Wilson, for example, marvels at the ingenuity of a novelistic strategy whereby a diachronic narrative emanates organically and spontaneously from a synchronic experience of involuntary recollection. Even fewer have noted the extent to which the persuasiveness of the text's symbolist rhetoric is undermined by the logistical paradox it would seek to conceal. This deconstructive tendency is most dramatically evident in the madeleine/involuntary memory section of the "Overture," where a seemingly ill-placed theatrical analogy serves to undermine the narrator's philosophical differentiation between a stylised and derivative "thinking" memory, and the pristine Reality of involuntary recollection:

> And as soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me ... immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents ...; and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the

> streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine [emphases added].[12]

The same pattern of demystification is apparent in the concluding sentence of the "Overture," where the narrator suggestively likens the "miraculous" evolution of Combray out of the taste of the madeleine in tisane to the seemingly spontaneous, but, in fact, highly contrived and mechanistic manner in which Japanese paper toys expand into vivid, three-dimensional shapes when steeped in water:

> And as in the game wherein the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, towns and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.[13]

In seemingly anomalous textual extracts such as these the Proustian aesthetic clearly undercuts itself by gesturing toward the mutual implication of symbolist recollection and the allegorical memory of the intellect. Walter Benjamin recognises this in his essay, "The Image of Proust," which stands out among early Proust criticism largely because it confronts those paradoxes of Proust's aesthetic which many contemporary and later critics either

ignored or failed to perceive. Benjamin's understanding of Proustian involuntary recollection is still predicated on the symbolist notion of a supratemporal recuperation of past experience, but, unlike "symbolist" critics such as Wilson, Benjamin does recognise the strange collusion between remembrance and forgetting, Mnemosyne and Lethe, the (involuntary) memory of art and the (voluntary) art of memory:

> We know that in his work Proust did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. And yet even this statement is imprecise and far too crude. For the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection. Or should one call it, rather, a Penelope work of forgetting? Is not the involuntary recollection, Proust's memoire involuntaire, much closer to forgetting than what is usually called memory?"[14]

Benjamin's observation that in Remembrance Proust "did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it" clearly suggests the intervention of a reconstructive, intellectual memory (a process construable as "forgetting" only according to the terms of an Hegelian dialectic which systematically posits the superior Reality or Truth of recollection). It also recalls the narrator's profoundly revealing comment in the "Overture" that the recollecting mind must not only "seek" the truth of past experience, but "[m]ore than that: create." For "[i]t is face to face with something which does not yet exist, to which it alone can give reality and

substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day."[15]

In the next part of this chapter I will build upon the insights of critics like Benjamin and de Man by exploring the complexities of the deconstructive dialectic between voluntary and involuntary memory/symbol and allegory in Proust's Swann's Way. Developing the psychoanalytic analogies established earlier, I will examine in depth the way in which issues of symbolic and allegorical representation in the text interconnect with the Oedipal themes of memory and desire introduced in the "Overture." I will focus specifically on the structural and thematic connections between the "Overture" and "Swann in Love," arguing that in both narratives Swann's involvement in a scenario of desire forms a thematic pretext for a self-reflexive engagement with issues of allegorical representation. In conclusion, I will suggest that Swann's figural status as the "inauthentic" allegorical "alter-ego" of the "authentic" symbolist aesthete, Marcel, has profound consequences for the supposedly transcendent, symbolist identity of the novel as a whole.

Scenes of Reading/Scenes of Desire

Towards the end of the "Overture," just prior to the narrator's celebration of involuntary memory, there is a scene which incongruously associates the mother-son relationship with disjunctive mechanisms of representation (reading, writing, interpretation) rather than imaginary

plenitude (knowing, speaking, truth). The Oedipal scenario clearly prefigures the strategic disruption of symbolical by allegorical modes of memory and representation in "Swann in Love," and reinforces the connection between involuntary memory and the unitary presence of the Lacanian Imaginary (Mother/Eros), and between voluntary memory and the displacements of Oedipal identification (Father/Law).

Predictably, the literary scene to which I refer here takes place on the night of M. Swann's visit. Dismissed from the party of adults and sent upstairs to bed, Marcel lies awake in anguish, desperate for the consolation of his mother's goodnight kiss. Suddenly, "stirred to revolt," he devises a means of overcoming the intolerable separation imposed by Swann's presence. Confident of the magical power of the written word, he composes a letter of entreaty (in which, paradoxically, his desire is silenced: "I wrote to my mother begging her to come upstairs for an important reason which I could not put in writing.")[16] and instructs Francoise to hand it to his mother at once in the dining-room downstairs. Significantly, this is Marcel's first literary act, and he is convinced of its efficacy as a medium of Imaginary identification. The passage below clearly demonstrates a relationship between Marcel's literary gesture and his Oedipal desire for an incestuous union:

> At once my anxiety subsided; it was now no longer (as it had been a moment ago) until tomorrow that I had lost my mother, since my little note - though it would annoy her, no doubt, and doubly

> so because this stratagem would make me ridiculous in Swann's eyes - would at least admit me, invisible and enraptured, into the same room as herself, would whisper about me into her ear; since that forbidden dining-room, where but a moment ago the ice itself ... and the finger-bowls seemed to me to be concealing pleasures that were baleful and of a mortal sadness because Mamma was tasting of them while I was far away, had opened its doors to me and, like a ripe fruit which bursts through its skin, was going to pour out into my intoxicated heart the sweetness of Mamma's attention while she was reading what I had written. Now I was no longer separated from her; the barriers were down; an exquisite thread united us. Besides, that was not all: for surely Mamma would come.[17]

Significantly, the temporal disjunction between the act of writing and the act of reading is here subordinated to an instant of pure semantic coincidence, represented as a condition of unmediated intersubjectivity: "Now I was no longer separated from her; the barriers were down; an exquisite thread united us." The incestuous identity of desire and fulfilment is thus synonymous, at the representational level, with the protagonist's faith in a logocentric identity of meaning and signification. More specifically, the suppression of signification which makes possible the apprehension of meaning corresponds with the suppression of the differential Law of the Father (the Lacanian Symbolic) which allows for the recuperation of an unmediated maternal presence (Eros/the Lacanian Imaginary).

Yet the narrative context of Marcel's rhetoric of possession (and self-possession) undermines his extravagant "authorial" claims. Firstly, the fact that the letter cannot transmit itself, but requires the intervention and

assistance of a third person, Francoise, serves to disrupt the intimate aura of reciprocity seemingly established by the act of written communication. Moreover, Francoise is not a passive mediator. In the physical absence of paternal authority, she threatens the resurgence of a strict patriarchal code to regulate Marcel's desires:

> On the subject of things which might or might not be done she possessed a code at once imperious, abundant, subtle, and uncompromising on points themselves imperceptible or irrelevant, which gave it a resemblance to those ancient laws which combine such cruel ordinances as the massacre of infants at the breast with prohibitions of exaggerated refinement against "seething the kid in his mother's milk," or "eating of the sinew which is upon the hollow of the thigh."[18]

Lastly, although Francoise consents, reluctantly, to deliver the letter, she returns with a message which completely undermines Marcel's illusion of an unmediated reciprocity of desire: "My mother told Francoise to tell me, in so many words: 'There is no answer.'"[19]

Foiled by the representations of fantasy and the written word, Marcel seeks to restore the elusive equilibrium between self and (m)other, desire and fulfilment, sign and meaning, through an act of physical appropriation: the seduction and possession of a real maternal substance. Resolving determinedly to wait until Swann's departure and then rush out and kiss Mamma goodnight, whatever the consequences, he anticipates success in a pursuit of gratification similar to that in which the magic lantern character, Golo, with his "infamous

design" on Genevieve de Brabant, is always already condemned to failure:

> I went quietly into the passage; my heart was beating so violently that I could hardly move, but at least it was throbbing no longer with anxiety, but with terror and joy. I saw in the well of the stair a light coming upwards, from Mamma's candle. Then I saw Mamma herself and I threw myself upon her.[20]

Significantly, Marcel's act of disobedience does not result in the punitive exile to boarding-school that he expects. Instead, through an abdication of paternal authority, he is granted the maternal presence he desires:

> He looked at me for a moment with an air of surprise and annoyance, and then when Mamma had told him, not without some embarrassment, what had happened, said to her: "Go along with him, then. You said just now that you didn't feel very sleepy, so stay in his room for a little. I don't need anything."[21]

The outcome of this scenario is highly significant. For the failure of paternal principle exposes the arbitrariness of the Oedipal law of difference which structures the child's desires, and accordingly suggests the possibility of unrestricted gratification. However, this potentially consummatory scene is undermined by the scene of sublimation which follows. For the abdication of paternal authority emerges as the logical precondition for <u>a representation of reading</u> which cannot be seen in isolation from the unsatisfactory act of written mediation which

precedes it.

To calm Marcel's anguish, Mamma reads aloud to him from George Sand's Francois le Champi, a story about the passionate love of a miller's wife for her adoptive son. The Oedipal significance of the tale within the context of the nocturnal bedroom scene is quite obvious. Somewhat less so is the sense of Oedipal gratification suggested by the organic and substantial presence bodied forth in the mellifluous accents of his mother's voice. The sensitivity of her rendering, the way she "slacken[s] the pace of the syllables so as to bring them, despite their differences of quantity, into a uniform rhythm," (emphases added)[22] seems to suggest an elimination of Oedipal difference, a triumphant recuperation of the "uniform rhythms" of the Imaginary. Moreover, there is a crucial link between the Oedipal and the scriptural scenarios of the text, since this accession of maternal substance figures simultaneously an unmediated accession of literary meaning and truth. Accordingly, the narrative expresses an organic bodying forth of meaning, in harmony with the natural contours of the speaking voice, and freed of the artificial overtones of rhetorical affectation:

> And so, when she read aloud the prose of George Sand, ... taking pains to banish from her voice any pettiness or affectation which might have choked that powerful stream of language, she supplied all the natural tenderness, all the lavish sweetness which they demanded to sentences which seemed to have been composed for her voice and which were all, so to speak, within the compass of her sensibility.[23]

Yet to interpret this scene as a consummation of incestuous desire and, by logical extension, as a phonocentric recuperation of extra-textual meaning, is to succumb to the authority of the narrative discourse - the articulation of desire - and to leave the controversial desire of articulation unread. Few critics seem to have taken into account the dislocatory effects of Marcel's daydreaming fantasies, compounded significantly by his mother's censorial omission of the love scenes:

> The plot began to unfold: to me it seemed all the more obscure because in those days, when I read, I used often to daydream about something quite different for page after page. And the gaps which this habit left in my knowledge of the story were widened by the fact that when it was Mamma who was reading to me aloud she left all the love-scenes out.[24]

Jeffrey Mehlman, in his psychoanalytic account of the scene, mentions its repressive absences and displacements without adequately questioning their significance:

> Marcel's note alluded to that which cannot be put into writing, and the description of the mother's bedside reading indicates why. It is pre-eminently an auditory experience. Mother's rich voice is a metaphor of presence, sheer immediacy; and the entire Francois le Champi episode is articulated in terms of a description of the mellowness of the reader's voice. As for the text itself, we are informed only of what has been censored from it: the love scenes between miller's wife and boy."[25]

Mehlman's critical discourse fails to identify the

deconstructive paradox of this scene: namely, that the illusion of presence created by the resonant wholeness and immediacy of the voice is radically undermined by the repressive silences of textual interpretation. "If", as the narrator says, "my mother was not a faithful reader, she was none the less an admirable one,"[26] she is an admirable one only because her beguiling rhetorical skills enable her to conceal a disjunctive principle of Oedipal censorship behind the uniform rhythms of the speaking voice. (Furthermore, the voice itself becomes an arbitrary signifier, divorced from its meaning, because for the child its supreme value consists in its autotelic status as sound.)

In a secondary displacement of meaning these aporia engender and complement the displacements of the child's libidinal fantasies: the gaps in Marcel's attention, in other words, "widen" the space of interpretative desire created by the censorial deletions of his mother. The result is the sacrifice of vocality as the material-immaterial expression of an immediate presence and meaning to textuality: a trajectory of desire and error in which meaning is never present, but constantly traced and effaced, placed and displaced, in the allegorical gap between signifier and signified, self and other, reading and understanding.

Remembering/Reading "Swann in Love"

Insufficient critical attention has been drawn to the

structural and thematic connections between the "Overture" and the story of "Swann in Love," a self-reflexive narrative within Swann's Way, related at "second hand" by the symbolist narrator. As I have suggested, Swann's deconstructive allegorical role is already implicit in the "Overture," where his physical presence disrupts an Oedipal communion between Marcel and his mother, and instigates the representational scenes of reading and writing discussed above. However, in "Swann in Love," Swann's role is more explicitly rhetorical, for here he assumes abstract representational status as the symbolist Marcel's disingenuous allegorical Other. Hence, where Marcel's desire for Oedipal consummation coincides with an "authentic" aesthetic preference for symbol and involuntary memory, Swann's debased desire for a society coquette coincides with an "inauthentic" preference for allegory and the contrivances of Hegelian Gedächtnis. Yet the dialectical tensions of the text cannot be ascribed simply to the ironic relation between the symbolist Marcel (subject of his desires: remembering, reflecting, and in possession of the truth), and the allegorical Swann, constantly displaced in the fictions of his desiring imagination. For as a reader/narrator of "Swann in Love," Marcel is ineluctably inscribed in the allegorical web of textuality, desire and forgetting that characterises the "fictional" situation of Swann, the story's frustrated protagonist. Indeed, it is in "Swann in Love" that we learn to take more seriously Marcel's designation of Swann

(Allegory/Voluntary Memory) as "the unwitting author of my sufferings," for it is here, above all, that we witness the way in which a deconstructive allegorical subtext "unwrites" in palimpsest the declared symbolist intention of the narrative.

A number of Proust critics have drawn attention to the subversive allegorical status of "Swann in Love," notably Paul de Man in "Reading (Proust)," Samuel Weber in "The Madrepore," and David Ellison in his more recent critical study The Reading of Proust, all of whom have been concerned to show how the idealist aesthetic "contained" in Marcel's "omniscient" narrative is severely undermined by the representational instabilities of "Swann in Love."[27] Yet although each of these critics identifies the subversive representations of the story under the rubric of allegory, none has made explicit the connection between Hegelian Gedächtnis and Proustian voluntary memory, or developed the theme of M. Swann's metonymic relation to "inferior" allegorical modes of memory and representation. De Man, for example, goes so far as to identify Swann as "the personification of metaphor,"[28] but does not look to the subversive implications of Swann's allegorical role within a purportedly symbolist text. Ellison's position is closest to my own, for he similarly draws attention to the self-reflexive status of "Swann in Love," the way in which it "plays with the boundaries and laws of mimesis," and "reflects upon itself and designates its own productivity." Moreover, he appropriately identifies Swann as a

representative "interpreter of texts."[29] However, he does not relate the rhetorical fabric of the story to the modality of voluntary memory, nor does he go so far as to identify Swann (Swan/cygne) as an abstract personification of the allegorical sign (signe).[30]

"Swann in Love"

A hint of the imminent demystification of symbol/involuntary memory in the story of "Swann in Love" occurs in the transitional narrative section at the end of "Combray":

> Thus would I often lie until morning, dreaming of the old days at Combray, of my melancholy and wakeful evenings there, of other days besides, the memory of which had been more recently restored to me by the taste - by what would have been called at Combray the "perfume" - of a cup of tea, and, by an association of memories, of a story which, many years after I had left the little place, had been told me of a love affair in which Swann had been involved before I was born, with a precision of detail which it is often easier to obtain for the lives of people who have been dead for centuries than for those of our own most intimate friends, an accuracy which it seems as impossible to attain as it seemed impossible to speak from one town to another, before we knew of the contrivance by which that impossibility has been overcome [emphases added].[31]

In identifying "Swann in Love" as a story he has heard from somebody else, the narrator implicitly draws attention to its textual status, in turn undermining his own supposedly authentic narrative status as an originating consciousness in the process of recollection. The admission is repeated

later in the passage, when he refers to his memories of Swann as "those which were actually the memories of another person from whom I had acquired them second hand."[32] The original meaning and truth of Swann's story are thus displaced not merely by the temporal gap between experience and representation that ordinarily defines the differential structure of voluntary memory, but by the complete eradication of experience as a narrative condition. Significantly, the events of the story take place long before the narrator is born. The story of Swann is thus a product of articulation itself, not of a symbolist discourse, expressing and representing a living subject in its identity, but of the text, irremediably graphic, always already inscribed within the realm of a signifying system which precedes it.

The sense that we are here in the domain of signification and desire is reinforced by the technological metaphor at the end of the passage. Figuratively speaking, the "contrivance" which serves to "overcome" the impossibility of speaking from one town to another is the contrivance of imaginary wish-fulfilment: the insertion of narrative desire into the interstices between language and meaning, reading and knowing, such that we witness a conflation of the fictional story of the allegorical aesthete, Swann, and the recollective, "autobiographical" story of the symbolist aesthete, Marcel.[33]

As the story evolves, its deconstructive relation to the symbolist scenarios of the "Overture" becomes

progressively more evident. In a sequence of self-reflexive parallels, "Swann in Love" undermines the apparently inviolable status of the maternal goodnight kiss, the maternal voice and the madeleine as infallible sensory registers of symbolic presence and identity. Instead of the symbolist triad Mother-Marcel/Madeleine/Involuntary Memory, we encounter, in diametric opposition, the allegorical triad Swann-Odette/Vinteuil's Sonata/Voluntary Memory, the latter - a less holy Trinity than the former - based on a principle of secular disjunction rather than spiritual conjunction, arbitrary association rather than essential identity.

Firstly, the female object of desire is here represented in/as metonymic flight rather than synecdochic site; allegorical absence rather than symbolic presence. Ever elusive, she consists in/as the indomitable movement of displacement that defines the structure of the signifier. Her subversive indifference is ironically suppressed in the title of the story - in the French, "Un Amour de Swann" - which implies a triumphant realisation of desire, an unchallenged feat of possession and self-possession. Yet the story itself subverts the triumphant claims of the title, for it tells of a cuckolded Swann, constantly thwarted in his attempts to uncover and restrict the polymorphous range of Odette's desires. Paradoxically, her very elusiveness and duplicity intensify Swann's quest for appropriation, a quest which is as much an allegorical effort to curb the proliferation of meaning which she

represents as it is a strategic attempt at sexual conquest. Hence the greater Swann's consciousness of his ignorance, the more intense his desire and the more vigorous his attempts to possess the reality and the truth of a body which is also an allegory of signification.

The ironic relationship between the (original) title of the story and its subversive allegorical content is only one example of a disjunctive non-identity of signifier and signified, idea and embodiment in "Swann in Love."[34] The comic disparity between Odette's actual appearance and Swann's Botticellian representation of her is another, and as I will demonstrate, it, too, has significant representational implications:

> [It] was with an unusual intensity of pleasure, a pleasure destined to have a lasting effect upon him, that Swann remarked Odette's resemblance to the Zipporah of that Alessandro de Mariano to whom one shrinks from giving his more popular surname, Botticelli, now that it suggests not so much the actual work of the Master as that false and banal conception of it which has of late obtained common currency.... The words "Florentine painting" were invaluable to Swann. They enabled him, like a title, to introduce the image of Odette into a world of dreams and fancies which, until then, she had been debarred from entering, and where she assumed a new and nobler form. And whereas the mere sight of her in the flesh, by perpetually reviving his misgivings as to the quality of her face, her body, the whole of her beauty, cooled the ardour of his love, those misgivings were swept away and that love confirmed now that he could re-erect his estimate of her on the sure foundations of aesthetic principle; while the kiss, the physical possession which would have seemed natural and but moderately attractive had they been granted him by a creature of somewhat blemished flesh and sluggish blood, coming, as they now came, to crown his adoration of a masterpiece in a gallery, must, it seemed, prove supernaturally

delicious.[35]

The arbitrary, allegorical status of Odette as object of desire contrasts pointedly with the substantial symbolic presence of the maternal figure in the "Overture." Whereas Marcel's desire is purportedly sustained by the mother's sensuous organic presence, Swann's desire is predicated on the mediation or displacement of the real, the rejection of life in favour of art, of presence in favour of re-presentation. The overtly allegorical nature of this transformation is parodied in the literalness of Swann's substitutive gesture: "He placed on his study table, as if it were a photograph of Odette, a reproduction of Jethro's daughter."[36] As a reproduction of a reproduction, an allegory of the infinite anteriority of meaning, the "real" Odette recedes further and further into the concatenations of Swann's aesthetic system.

The deconstructive parallels between Swann's relationship with Odette in "Swann in Love" and Marcel's relationship with his mother in the "Overture" are further demonstrated in the narrator's allusion to the kiss in the passage above. At this point the allegorical representation of the kiss as an act of physical possession enhanced by its aesthetic transposition seems to recall the symbolist representation of the kiss as a medium of unmediated gratification (presence/meaning). Yet the ideal of possession epitomised in the transfigurative symbol of the maternal kiss is strategically undermined by the

allegorical representation of desire in "Swann in Love." This becomes clearer in the self-reflexive scene of the "cattleya kiss" a few pages later, where we witness how the lovers' employment of the phrase "Do a cattleya" evolves as an allegory for the act of love-making out of its original metonymic context. Although in both its literal and figural phases of operation the metaphor refers supposedly to an act of physical possession (that is, the appropriation of the desired object), the narrator parenthetically defines that act as having nothing as its object:

> [H]e was so shy in approaching her that, after this evening which had begun by his arranging her cattleyas and had ended in her complete surrender, whether from fear of offending her, or from reluctance to appear retrospectively to have lied, or perhaps because he lacked the audacity to formulate a more urgent requirement than this (which could always be repeated, since it had not annoyed her on the first occasion), he resorted to the same pretext on the following days. If she had cattleyas pinned to her bodice, he would say: "It's most unfortunate; the cattleyas don't need tucking in this evening; they've not been disturbed as they were the other night. I think, though, that this one isn't quite straight. May I see if they have more scent than the others?" Or else, if she had none: "Oh! no cattleyas this evening; then there's no chance of my indulging in my little rearrangements." So that for some time there was no change in the procedure which he had followed on that first evening, starting with fumblings with fingers and lips at Odette's bosom, and it was thus that his caresses still began. And long afterwards, when the rearrangement (or, rather, the ritual pretence of a rearrangement) of her cattleyas had quite fallen into desuetude, the metaphor "Do a cattleya," transmuted into a simple verb which they would employ without thinking when they wished to refer to the act of physical possession (in which, paradoxically, the possessor possesses nothing), survived to commemorate in their vocabulary the long forgotten custom from which it sprang.[37]

The logical/linguistic articulation at work in the genesis of the cattleya metaphor closely resembles Swann's arbitrary translation of Odette's sensual person into the titular abstraction of the words "Florentine painting." In both cases a sensuous origin and a logic of symbolic interiorisation or possession is superseded and rendered obsolete by the dispossesive logic of allegory/conceptual representation. (However, in this case the allegorical metamorphosis is more complex, and more typical, for it is predicated in the first stage on the purely contiguous, metonymic relation of the cattleya to Odette's person, and in the second stage on the abstract representational status of the lovers' allegorical expression "Do a cattleya.")

Yet there is another scene of allegorical representation which in turn subsumes both the analogy between Odette and Botticelli's Zipporah and the self-reflexive scene of the cattleya, in the same way that the famous scene of the madeleine in the "Overture" metaphorically encompasses the early theme of maternal presence symbolised in the oral gratification of the goodnight kiss. This is the scene of Vinteuil's sonata which, as locus of Swann's (displaced) love for Odette and pretext for his mechanistic use of voluntary memory - as an allegory, that is to say, of both physical and figural desire - cannot be seen in isolation from its symbolist counterpart in the "Overture," namely, the madeleine as sensuous matrix of involuntary memory and warm maternal

substance. [OED: matrix: womb (anatomical), that in which anything is embedded, intercellular substance etc. (Latin: matrix, -icis, a breeding animal, later, the womb, - mater, mother)]

Significantly, unlike the relation between the madeleine and Marcel's incestuous desire for the maternal figure in the "Overture," the relation between Swann's love for Odette and Vinteuil's "little phrase" is quite as arbitrary and mechanical as the relation between Odette and Jethro's daughter, or between the cattleya and the act of love-making:

> The little phrase continued to be associated in Swann's mind with his love for Odette. He was well aware that his love was something that did not correspond to anything outside itself, verifiable by others besides him.... But the little phrase, as soon as it struck his ear, had the power to liberate in him the space that was needed to contain it; the proportions of Swann's soul were altered; a margin was left for an enjoyment that corresponded no more than his love for Odette to any external object and yet was not, like his enjoyment of that love, purely individual, but assumed for him a sort of reality superior to that of concrete things. This thirst for an unknown delight was awakened in him by the little phrase, but without bringing him any precise gratification to assuage it. With the result that those parts of Swann's soul in which the little phrase had obliterated all concern for material interests, those human considerations which affect all men alike, were left vacant by it, blank pages on which he was at liberty to inscribe the name of Odette.[38]

This supremely allegorical gesture, in which Swann's rudderless desire dissociates itself entirely from Odette's sensuous existence and is provisionally relocated in a

musical "phrase" with which she has a merely nomenclative association, subverts the declared symbolist intention of the narrative more comprehensively than the earlier allegorical scenes. For it builds on an earlier narrative digression on the question of love which does not merely inscribe desire within a system of aesthetic representations, but subtly suggests the relation between the artificial displacements of desire, such as we witness in Swann's relationship with Odette (as Zipporah/Vinteuil's sonata), and the allegorical modality of voluntary memory. The early exposition is brief, and seemingly innocuous: the narrator remarks simply that at a certain age love

> no longer evolves by itself, obeying its own incomprehensible and fatal laws, before our passive and astonished hearts. We come to its aid, we falsify it by memory and suggestion. Recognising one of its symptoms, we remember and recreate the rest.[39]

Within this context it comes as no surprise that the musical phrase should function as dual locus of Swann's artificial desire for Odette and of his mechanistic "deployment" of voluntary memory - that inferior technical or "thinking" memory which Derrida identifies with "the art of writing, of 'material' inscription, of all that exteriority which, after Plato, we call <u>hypomnesic</u>, the exteriority of <u>Mnemon</u> rather than <u>Mneme</u>."[40] Frustrated by the elusiveness of his musical impressions and unable to "procure a copy" of the sonata for himself, Swann compensates by transcribing the auditory sensation into a

memorised representation, a geometrical system of signification which operates metonymically and diachronically and enables Swann to see and recall the music at will. The abstract, mnemonic representation, "no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought," clearly demonstrates the relation between an allegorical voluntary memory and the hypomnesic art of material inscription:

> Perhaps it was owing to his ignorance of music that he had received so confused an impression, one of those that are nonetheless the only purely musical impressions, limited in their extent, entirely original, and irreducible to any other kind. An impression of this order, vanishing in an instant, is, so to speak, sine materia.... And this impression would continue to envelop in its liquidity, its ceaseless overlapping, the "motifs" which from time to time emerge, barely discernible, to plunge again and disappear and drown, recognised only by the particular kind of pleasure which they instil, impossible to describe, to recollect, to name, ineffable - did not our memory, like a labourer who toils at the laying down of firm foundations beneath the tumult of the waves, by fashioning for us facsimiles of those fugitive phrases, enable us to compare and to contrast them with those that follow. And so, scarcely had the exquisite sensation which Swann had experienced died away, before his memory had furnished him with an immediate transcript, sketchy, it is true, and provisional, which he had been able to glance at while the piece continued, so that, when the same impression suddenly returned, it was no longer impossible to grasp. He could picture to himself its extent, its symmetrical arrangement, its notation, its expressive value; he had before him something that was no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought, and which allowed the actual music to be recalled. This time he had distinguished quite clearly a phrase which emerged for a few moments above the waves of sound. It had at once suggested to him a world of inexpressible delights, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing could initiate him;

> and he had been filled with love for it, as with a new and strange desire.[41]

The "new and strange desire" evoked by the musical notation unambiguously recalls the narrator's earlier reflection on romantic desire, in which the hypomnesic faculty of intellectual memory plays a significant part: "We come to its aid, we falsify it by memory and suggestion. Recognising one of its symptoms, we remember and recreate the rest." In a supremely self-reflexive gesture, the sonata episode thus interweaves and conflates all the dominant allegorical tropes of the novel - the art of memory, the art of desire and, finally, the art of material signification. Indeed, Swann himself duly recognises that the "new and strange desire" and the "impression of a frigid and withdrawn sweetness" evoked by the musical notation are founded "not upon the phrase itself, but merely upon certain equivalents, substituted (for his mind's convenience) for the mysterious entity of which he had become aware, before ever he knew the Verdurins, at that earlier party when for the first time he had heard the sonata played."[42]

The symbolic epiphany at the end of Remembrance of Things Past, commonly read as the culminating expression of the author's symbolist aesthetic, assumes a very different meaning in the light of the deconstructive parallels between the "Overture" and "Swann in Love." Passing time in the Prince de Guermantes' library, Marcel takes down the novel by George Sand which his mother had read to him on

the night of Swann's visit many years before. The tale of Francois le Champi, like the madeleine, stirs poignant memories of Combray, and unexpectedly, across the years, he hears the ringing of the garden bell which always signalled M. Swann's departure. Although Marcel's recollections suggest an exorcism of Swann (Allegory/Voluntary memory) and, by implication, a consecratory (symbolic) reunion with Mamma, it is profoundly ironic that the experience of "spontaneous" recollection upon which the symbolist Remembrance is finally founded should have its "origin" in a mediatory act of reading. Indeed, the symbolist aesthete has already, unknowingly, embarked on Swann's (allegorical) way.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING STEPHEN: ALLEGORY, IRONY AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBJECT IN **A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN**

Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man resembles Proust's Remembrance of Things Past in several ways, the most obvious of these being that Joyce's novel is also a fictionalised, self-ironising bildungsroman. A more subtle, and significant, resemblance is that Stephen Dedalus' rudimentary aesthetics, like Marcel's, have a specifically symbolist derivation, and in A Portrait, too, we witness a self-reflexive ironic interplay between this essentialist aesthetic and a secular allegorical mode which disrupts logocentric categories of meaning and identity.

However, the implications of this dialectic for the representation of the subject and, in turn, the relation between author/narrator and literary protagonist are quite different in each case. The disruption of symbolist identity in Proust is still tentative, as the presence of a personalised narrator who speaks from the position of an originating consciousness in the process of recollection constantly serves to reinvoke a condition of symbolist omniscience, albeit a tenuous and contradictory one. Moreover, since the ironic interplay of symbol and allegory does not wholly undermine the empirical reflective self, the overall unity of the novel as an odyssey of consciousness is not seriously challenged. In A Portrait, by contrast, the disappearance of a personalised narrator

centred in a fictitious narrative present coincides with a wholesale dissolution of categories of character and narrative time, a decisive fragmentation of the transcendent self of romantic-symbolism into a disseminated allegorical self constructed in/as language. Moreover, as I demonstrate in this chapter, the stylistic dispersal of the subject in A Portrait in turn renders obsolete critical debates over the degree of ironic distance between author/narrator and literary subject and demands that we re-examine the nature and function of irony in the "authorless" modern novel.

"Good old Coleridge would call that fancy, not imagination."[1]

> Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being?
>
> His heart trembled; his breath came faster and a wild spirit passed over his limbs as though he were soaring sunward. His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made radiant and commingled with the element of the spirit. An ecstasy of flight made radiant his eyes and wild his breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his windswept limbs.[2]

Stephen Dedalus' vision of the mythical "hawklike man flying sunward above the sea" is frequently read as an exemplary symbolist epiphany, a transcendental moment which, like the redemptive scene of the birdgirl, serves to confirm and consecrate the young artist's aesthetic vocation. The name "Dedalus," now resonant with the significance of its mythical origins, apparently confers at last upon the protagonist the authentic artistic identity he has sought through the obfuscatory "mists of childhood and boyhood," and authorises the proud aesthetic flight described in the second paragraph.

Ostensibly symbolist moments such as these seem to

justify readings which identify a trajectory of development from a naïve romanticism towards that mature symbolist aesthetic proclaimed by Dedalus in his long philosophical debate with Lynch later in the novel. Yet on a closer reading of those sections of the novel suffused with an elevated symbolist idiom, the same ironic undertone which pervades Swann's Way becomes apparent, suggesting that we ought to be more critical of Dedalus' aesthetic claims. It is worth noting, for example, how the omniscience of Dedalus' epiphanies is undermined by the protagonist's inconclusive attempts to decipher the meaning of his experiences, a pattern which recalls the interpretative mode of allegory rather than the intuitive mode of the symbol. For instance, despite Stephen's claim to have been "delivered of incertitude," the vision of the "winged form" remains elusively hypothetical, devoid of the revelatory essence of the romantic-symbolist Image: "What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea...?" The textual metaphor reinforces the sense that we are here in the exegetical realm of allegory, while the reference to the emblematic image as a "quaint device" strongly suggests the work of allegorical artifice and contrivance. Finally, the mythical invocation of Dedalus' son, Icarus, seems inauspicious in a symbolist context. Indeed, I would argue that although images of air and flight pervade the text, the allusion to Icarus' sunward flight and ill-fated fall into the sea ironises

notions of symbolic transcendence, signifying instead the inevitability of mortal falling and despondency that follows symbolic moments of flight.

The transcendental status of the birdgirl vision is similarly undermined by the anomalous depiction of the birdgirl in midstream, and by the sensuous, almost voyeuristic, rendering of her physical presence:

> A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.[3]

Significantly, the authenticity of the birdgirl epiphany is compromised, not only by a secular physicality, but by the same material taint of signification which in Proust's Swann's Way and Conrad's Lord Jim erupts within and demystifies a symbolist rhetoric of pure figuration. I have already drawn attention to the way in which signs of allegorical contrivance and textuality undermine the pre-discursive spontaneity of the hawk-man epiphany. The same sort of allegorical "intrusion" occurs in the birdgirl scene, where the striking emerald hieroglyph of seaweed on the girl's thigh serves to qualify the purity and supremacy

of the epiphanic image: "... pure, save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh." In this instance, however, the mark of emerald-green signifies more than the secular trace of writing within the domain of the symbol. The Hermetic association of the colour emerald with Thoth[4], god of writing and death, and patron of the passing of time, suggests the inextricable link between temporality and the materiality of the sign. (Thoth, significantly, looks after dead thoughts and fossilised words.) This is not an isolated allusion: Thoth is reinvoked by Stephen in the scene following the composition of the villanelle, as he dwells uneasily upon his departure for France. In this instance a protracted intellectual meditation upon the signs of departure completely subverts the - already debatable - spontaneity of the earlier epiphanic experience: "A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings, of Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon."[5]

Within this context it is not surprising that the formal structure of the birdgirl epiphany also demonstrates the tendency towards sequentiality and repetition which de Man associates with the temporal, diachronic modality of allegory. For the epiphanic "moment" expands and proliferates beyond the sensuous material image of the

birdgirl in a fluid sequence of metaphorical displacements, culminating in the hymeneal image of the flower, whose crimson petals unfurl successively in their turn: "glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes, every flush deeper than other."[6] This centreless scarlet rose is a far cry from Dante's glowing white rose with the golden heart in the Divina Commedia, which serves as a vivid literary analogy of the logos. Indeed, the fallen flower of A Portrait, like the "multifoliate rose" of T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," signifies not Truth or Divine Essence, but that endless displacement and proliferation of meaning which characterises the temporal mode of allegorical signification. As de Man writes:

> ... [I]n the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category. The relationship between the allegorical sign and its meaning ... necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this sign to be pure anteriority. The secularised allegory of the early romantics thus necessarily contains the negative moment which in Rousseau is that of renunciation, in Wordsworth that of the loss of the self in death or in error.[7]

De Man's emphasis on the repetitive, durational modality of allegory is particularly interesting, not only in the context of "circumscribed" epiphanies such as this one, but also in relation to an extended pattern of epiphanic demystification across the allegorical duration of the text, even from text to text. For every Joycean epiphany unravels in a deflationary sequence of self-reflexive inversions or echoes, in the diachronic manner of an extended metaphor, or repetitive textual "unconscious."[8] Hence, for example, the sensuous romantic image of the birdgirl tainted by the mark of seaweed in A Portrait metamorphoses into the crippled Gerty MacDowell in Ulysses, who transposes in turn into Biddy Doran the hen foraging in the midden heap in Finnegans Wake. Significantly, this temporal process is always a movement into the corporeal texture of writing, so that the midden heap, for instance, functions unambiguously as an image of the contaminated and uncontrollable materiality of language in the last and most postmodern of Joyce's texts. The same pattern is evident within the textual duration of A Portrait. Michael Levenson notes, for instance, how the self-reflexive mode of the diary at the end of the novel parodically subverts the elevated romantic-symbolist language of the epiphanies through oblique textual references to earlier epiphanic scenes. He remarks:

> Beneath the casual surface of Stephen's personal record, there is an extraordinary linguistic density, and here, as elsewhere in Joyce, one might speak of a linguistic unconscious which

> carries meanings which do not depend on the intentions of the speaker.... Quite apart from Stephen's own perceptions, his language itself establishes connections, sees resemblances, marks differences. A space opens up between the self and its form of representation. Stephen has high romantic intentions, but his language has intentions of its own.[9]

While it is by now a critical commonplace that the traditional subject devolves and fades in the narrative space between Dubliners and Finnegans Wake, few critics have looked closely at the implications of this repetitive, dialectical mode for the representation of the subject across the narrative space of A Portrait. Levenson's identification of a linguistic strain which subversively engulfs and re-writes Stephen recalls de Man's emphasis on the negative moment of self-loss associated with the secularised allegory of the romantics, and leads us to consider the fate of the romantic-symbolist subject of Joyce's novel. For it is inevitable that as a rhetoric of symbolist authority is subverted by the primacy of the sign, the subject, too, should be displaced and effaced in writing, dispersed across the allegorical duration of the text. Indeed, as Young argues:

> If the novel is a portrait, a representation, at all, it is because it shows the becoming of the subject in writing (bio-graphy). Rather than portraying the well-rounded 'character', it shows the fading of the subject as serial. A Portrait presents a Stephen Dedalus who is disremembering, not developing but devolving, not achieving an identity but dissolving into a nameless scar. A full and self-present consciousness,'His Majesty the Ego' as Freud put it, gives way to the self-mutilation of the subject in and as metaphor.[10]

It is in this context that I would like to look more closely at the modality of irony in the novel.

Irony and the disappearance of the subject

Thus far I have been primarily concerned to demonstrate how a deconstructive allegorical mode undermines the romantic-symbolist elements of A Portrait to form a secular or ironic type of epiphany, bearing the scars of temporality and writing. Although most contemporary critics recognise the presence of an ironic subtext in the novel, many recent studies fail to account for the peculiarly linguistic, self-reflexive nature of an ironic effect generated by the rhetorical interplay of allegory and symbol, and propose that the ironic modality of the text has its origins in a dialectical tension between Joyce's realist attitude to experience and the romantic idealism of his autobiographical protagonist. Indeed, criticism of A Portrait has largely been preoccupied with the degree of aesthetic distance in the novel, and there is by now a plethora of critical studies devoted entirely to the question of Joyce's attitude to Stephen's Thomist aesthetics. Such approaches founder in relation to A Portrait of the Artist for two reasons. Firstly, as I have suggested, they fail to take into account the peculiarly self-reflexive nature of representation in the novel. Like Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, the materiality of writing in A Portrait resists appropriation back into the logocentric

discourse of realism, just as it subverts the logocentric premises of a romantic symbolist aesthetic. Secondly, critical approaches of this sort rely predominantly upon the essentialist tenets of a classic rhetoric of irony, predicated upon coherent and discrete categories of subjectivity. Accordingly, issues of representation (realism/romanticism) are all too often subordinated to a critical concern with the autobiographical relationship between the mature Joyce and the naïve, self-absorbed romantic aesthete, as if irony were by definition an evaluative, intersubjective phenomenon. For example, in his essay "Stephen Hero, Dubliners, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: styles of realism and fantasy" John Paul Riquelme repeatedly invokes an evaluative dimension of irony predicated on categories of subjectivity: "By using styles that often work by means of oppositions in order to present a character whose thoughts and experiences regularly involve opposing forces, Joyce enables readers to recognise a variety of possible resemblances and differences between the writer and the character.... Various judgements about Stephen become possible."[12] Limited by the terms of his conventional methodology, Riquelme cannot account for a self-conscious rhetorical interplay which not only subverts the logocentric premises of symbolist and realist representations, but in the process generates a distinctively modernist ironic effect which disrupts stable ethical categories and traditional conceptions of literary subjectivity.

The crucial difference between A Portrait of the Artist and the earlier, more conventionally autobiographical, Stephen Hero, is the absence in A Portrait of an "extra-discursive" authorial position with which the reader might identify in a search for stable ironic effects. The disappearance of inverted commas in the later text provides a formal indication of this shift to authorless textuality, and confounds critics who remain trapped within the constraints of a classical rhetoric of irony. For where classic irony takes for granted the superior moral insight of an author/narrator and encourages the reader to detect and identify with an authorial stance outside and above the materiality of the text, Joyce's A Portrait prevents recourse to a stable hermeneutic reference point beyond the instabilities of discourse. Through the subversion of formal narrative conventions it subordinates authorial subjectivity and value entirely to the signifying process of the text, and correspondingly undermines the privileged, metatextual status of the classical ironic mode. The failure of classic irony in Joyce can therefore be attributed to a distinctively modernist "unravelling" of subjectivity as the transcendent authorial voice gives way to the differential allegorical structure of the sign. The figure of the artist is no longer a unitary, coherent "I," consistent over time, but a derivative, metonymic "I," traced and displaced in the trajectory of signification that makes up the text. As Stephen Heath argues:

> The definition of the artist as God remaining 'within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails', ... is not ... a question of the artist as substantial subject dominating everything from the fixity of his position, but of the absence of any position, an indifference which is here an illimitation, a perpetual movement of difference (in the very movement of hesitation) in which the subject is no longer visible, is dispersed in the writing.[13]

Few critics have attempted to account in a comprehensive way for the ironic mode of Joyce's novel. Wayne Booth draws attention to a peculiarly decontextualised ironic effect in A Portrait in The Rhetoric of Fiction, but his methodological bias in favour of stable irony leads him to dismiss the "unstable infinite"[14] mode of irony in A Portrait as a literary defect.[15] Stephen Heath's discussion focuses predominantly on rhetorical issues in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, while Colin MacCabe restricts his discussion on Joycean irony in The Revolution of the Word to the short story "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" from Dubliners.[16] The difficulty for most critics arises, as I see it, when, having once identified that the significance of conventional irony in A Portrait is suspended in the absence of a stable authorial position, the very term "irony" seems redundant. In other words, there seems to be no way of accounting for the sublimity of the ironic effects in the novel within the vocabulary of classic rhetoric, and yet there appears to be no suitable paradigm outside its descriptive sphere. Accordingly, contemporary post-structuralist critics such

as MacCabe still tend to define the ironic mode of the novel in terms of its transgression of the rules of classic rhetoric. Even where irony is described as subversively infinite or unhinged, there is an implicit emphasis upon the interpretative, intervenient, authorial aspect of conventional irony. As MacCabe concludes in James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word, since Joycean irony is theoretically endless, "we are ... forced to rely on our own discourses to re-write and order the text" (emphases added).[17] Michael Levenson comments astutely upon this methodological problem in his paper on Stephen's diary: "[I]n a sense the critical locution is itself a source of the problem," he writes. "The reader does not need to wrench [Stephen] from the dense web that surrounds him, to appropriate him to a single mode, to assimilate him to a single myth.... The persistent contention over the novel's irony threatens to obscure its workings."[18] While Levenson moves away from a rhetoric of irony and argues that it is rather the "allure of the pun" which functions at every level of Joyce's work, I would argue that it is still possible to talk about irony in A Portrait without falling into a classical interpretative mode.

No critic, to my knowledge, has yet perceived the close affinity of Joycean irony with the ex-centric, self-reflexive mode of irony described by de Man in "The Rhetoric of Temporality." What makes this form of irony particularly apposite is, firstly, its emphasis on the subject's relation to language; secondly, its dialectical

structure (a structure which does not include the author as a necessary term); and thirdly, its affinity with the sublime, temporal modality of allegory. For de Man, irony arises when the differential structure of language impels subjectivity into a relentless "dialectic of self-destruction and self-invention," a pattern which directly recalls the deconstructive sequences of (symbolist) self-discovery and (allegorical) self-loss which we witness in A Portrait. Significantly, the ironic split is now located within the textual subject, not between a demystified author and a mystified literary protagonist:

> The dialectic of self-destruction and self-invention which ... characterises the ironic mind is an endless process that leads to no synthesis.... Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the inauthentic. It can know this inauthenticity but can never overcome it. It can only restate and repeat it on an increasingly conscious level, but it remains endlessly caught in the impossibility of making this knowledge applicable to the empirical world. It dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral. The temporal void that it reveals is the same void we encountered when we found allegory always implying an unreachable anteriority. Allegory and irony are thus linked in their common discovery of a truly temporal predicament.[19]

For de Man, then, irony is generated in a deconstructive relation between a mystified empirical self immersed in the world in a symbolic totality of self and other, and an alienated allegorical "self," endlessly receding into language in its attempt at differentiation and self-

definition. The ironic modality of A Portrait reveals itself in the same interminable pattern of self-invention and self-loss which de Man describes. On a mystified symbolic level, the novel describes the protagonist's search for a transcendent aesthetic meaning and identity. Stephen Dedalus' determination to escape the patriarchal constraints of Church, Family and State are an attempt to affirm the romantic status of the artist as privileged mediator of an authentic Reality and language. Yet, as I have suggested, the young artist's attempts at self-creation do not reveal an unproblematical progression towards subjective autonomy and freedom. Many critics have noted how, while each section of the novel appears to end on a note of epiphanic triumph and resolution, implying that self-definition has been achieved, closure is systematically undermined by an ironic subtext (not to be confused with an authorial voice) which calls into question the romantic-symbolist notion of transcendent subjectivity. Hugh Kenner describes, for example, how "each chapter closes with a synthesis of triumph which the next destroys,"[20] while Patrick Parrinder observes that "[w]hen Stephen at the end of the book announces that he is going 'to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience' ... it is (the structure implies) already the fifth in an exhilarating sequence of new starts."[21]

However, few critics have realised the extent to which this deconstructive pattern of self-destruction and self-invention is bound up with the problematics of language in

the text: that the spiralling movement described by Kenner and Parrinder gains impetus from those linguistic predicaments in which Stephen is repeatedly portrayed. That is to say that while the protagonist's romantic striving toward "authentic" self-expression in A Portrait instigates a process of self-construction typically associated with the bildungsroman, the project of self-expression is persistently thwarted by the resistant materiality of language; a derivative allegorical substance which can never be reclaimed as individual or authentic; is always second-hand. Discussing the word "tundish" with the Dean of Studies, Stephen reflects:

> How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.[22]

Although Stephen's desire is to forge in opposition to this a transcendent and authentic artistic speech, the language of the literary tradition proves at once pervasive and inescapable. Even his musing, like Jim's in Conrad's novel, is of a derivative nature. Walking down the avenue on his way to University College, he is inspired not so much by the reality about him as by the literary associations which mediate it:

> The rainladen trees of the avenue evoked in him,

> as always, memories of the girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann; and the memory of their pale sorrows and the fragrance falling from the wet branches mingled in a mood of quiet joy. His morning walk across the city had begun, and he foreknew that as he passed the sloblands of Fairview he would think of the cloistral silverveined prose of Newman, that as he walked along the North Strand Road, glancing idly at the windows of the provision shops, he would recall the dark humour of Cavalcanti and smile, that as he went by Baird's stonecutting works in Talbot Place the spirit of Ibsen would blow through him like a keen wind, a spirit of wayward boyish beauty, and that passing a grimy marinedealer's shop beyond the Liffey he would repeat the song by Ben Jonson which begins:
>
> "I was not wearier where I lay." [23]

Dedalus' poetic (re)productions are similarly inauthentic, predetermined and surpassed by the language of the literary Father. It is worth recalling that for Harold Bloom the literary "anxiety of influence" is always overcome through the neurotic defence of repression, "a process that in language must be always <u>the repression of quotation</u>."[24] Referring to this as the effect of a "counter-sublime," Bloom writes: "Sublime poetry ... is the topos where the power of 'the father' never can be overcome, because its labor endlessly remystifies the precursor."[25] Dedalus' "inspired" verses, even those which are merely paraphrased in the text, aptly demonstrate the repressive dynamic of the counter-sublime. The word "weary" which features prominently in the villanelle, for instance, derives directly from the poems of Shelley, Newman and Ben Jonson, and self-consciously echoes the decadent weariness of the 1890s fin-de-siècle tradition. The descriptive

verbosity of the epiphanies, and the birdgirl epiphany in particular, similarly recalls the decadent literary style of the 1890s. The words "angel, wild, swooning, aglow, aflame" and the adjectival patterns and cadences of the phrase "radiant his eyes and wild his breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his windswept face," patently echo the style of Swinburne, for example. Indeed, the signature of (predominantly romantic-symbolist) influence is inscribed aphoristically at every point of literary self-definition in the narrative. The passage below describes Stephen's first significant artistic attempt:

> The next day he sat at his table in the bare upper room for many hours. Before him lay a new pen, a new bottle of ink and a new emerald exercise. From force of habit he had written at the top of the first page the initial letters of the Jesuit motto: A.M.D.G. On the first line of the page appeared the title of the verses he was trying to write:
> To E --- C ---. He knew it was right to begin so for he had seen similar titles in the collected poems of Lord Byron....[26]

The emphasis on the pristine newness of the writing materials is ironically counterpointed with Stephen's derivative emulation of Byron and his habitual allegiance to Jesuit formalities. Moreover, the Irish green of the exercise book, like the trail of seaweed in the birdgirl epiphany, evokes at once the ideal of dynamic creation and the taint of discursive repetition. This subtle detail serves to undermine the scene of self-recognition which follows:

> Now it seemed as if he would fail again but, by dint of brooding on the incident, he thought himself into confidence. During this process all those elements which he deemed common and insignificant fell out of the scene. There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses: nor did he and she appear vividly. The verses told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon. Some undefined sorrow was hidden in the hearts of the protagonists as they stood in silence beneath the leafless trees and when the moment of farewell had come the kiss, which had been withheld by one, was given by both. After this the letters L.D.S. were written at the foot of the page and, having hidden the book, he went into his mother's bedroom and gazed at his face for a long time in the mirror of her dressingtable.[27]

On a superficial level this scene marks a transcendent moment of artistic self-definition and an unproblematical identification with the mother - hence, liberation from the deterministic constraints of patriarchal discourse. However, this possibility is demystified, not only by the debased romanticism of the verses, but by the threat of ironic disjunction which erupts in a typically Lacanian moment of (mis)recognition. Objectified by his reflection and the abbreviated Dedalian signature "L.D.S." at the end of the poem, Stephen is implicitly appropriated into a system of allegorical simulacra, an interminable succession of mirror images in which the self, in de Man's terms, "dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning."[28] This moment therefore registers simultaneously the apparent emergence of Stephen's aesthetic identity and, paradoxically, the failure of symbolic recuperation beyond

the realm of unconscious fantasy.

The irony of the scene becomes more obvious in the context of the later novels. Reading "backwards," the abstract designation "L.D.S" clearly anticipates the postmodern sigla and signatures of Finnegans Wake, such as ALP, HCE, and ⌐⌐ which radically undermine essentialist attributions of personal identity.[29] Moreover the scene is part of an extended intertextual series of mirror images. Stephen's abortive attempt at self-definition at the mother's mirror is explicitly subverted by the sublime mirror scene in Ulysses, in which a slightly older Stephen sees his own reflection uncannily superimposed upon the shadowy paternal images of Shakespeare and the surrogate father figure, Leopold Bloom.

Despite such ironic allusions in the Portrait scene, however, Stephen's fall into linguistic sublimity remains merely implicit at this stage, subordinated to a rhetoric of authority which still seeks to disguise the subversive potential of language and the precarious status of the subject. Epiphanies such as this one differ markedly from those drained, inverted, wholly linguistic epiphanies in the novel which no longer insinuate a condition of rhetorical disjunction, but portray it. The latter expose, not only the sublimated corporeality of the epiphanic experience, as in the birdgirl scene, but the pervasive materiality of language itself, while the effect on the subject is none other than that sublime experience of self-effacement which de Man describes. An interesting example

of this occurs in Book Two of A Portrait, where the pretext is a literal scene of dispossession: Stephen accompanies his father to Cork, where the old family property is to be auctioned to pay off Mr Dedalus' debts. In a vain attempt to compensate for his dispossession and to reinstate the power of the paternal name, Simon Dedalus elicits the help of a porter to search for his initials carved in a desk in the Queen's College anatomy theatre. However, before Mr Dedalus has managed to locate the inscription (which, significantly, signifies his son's name also), Stephen encounters the word "Foetus" deeply engraved in another wooden surface:

> They passed into the anatomy theatre where Mr Dedalus, the porter aiding him, searched the desks for his initials. Stephen remained in the background, depressed more than ever by the darkness and silence of the theatre and by the air it wore of jaded and formal study. On the desk before him he read the word Foetus cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk. A broadshouldered student with a moustache was cutting in the letters with a jackknife, seriously. Other students stood or sat near him laughing at his handiwork. One jogged his elbow. The big student turned on him, frowning. He was dressed in loose grey clothes and had tan boots.
>
> Stephen's name was called. He hurried down the steps of the theatre so as to be as far away from the vision as he could be and, peering closely at his father's initials, hid his flushed face.[30]

This scene has often puzzled readers. As Maud Ellmann

writes: "Concerned as this passage is with spotting, it also functions as a blank spot in the narrative.... Neither Stephen, nor the reader, nor the text, can incorporate the word "Foetus" which erupts so inexplicably."[31] Ellmann's identification of the passage as a sublime "blank spot" is particularly apt, for the word carved in the stained wood erupts paradoxically as absence, rather than presence: anonymous allegorical inscription rather than substantial origin. Its materiality is the deathly materiality of writing: unlike the Word which Stephen seeks, it is engraved as a "trace," a spectre of loss, a mark of death and separation. Hence, while "Foetus" pre-empts the Bloomian/Lacanian name of the father, it cannot counter the threat of self-dispossession, for it, too, is always already implicated in the linguistic process of differentiation which characterises every scene of (male) writing in the novel.

What we see enacted here is precisely that post-structuralist identification of the subject as an effect of signification, always already preceded and defiled by the materiality of writing. Indeed, it is significant that the word has been carved into the desk "several times" over, deeper and deeper, and not necessarily by the same author. Hence, like the dirty word which is no more than an "echo" of the obscene graffiti in the school urinal, the image of the foetus is not a unique feature of Stephen's "monstrous reveries." As we are told: "It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a

brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They, too, had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words."[32] Such words testify to the irreducible anteriority of language. As Calvin Thomas remarks: "The word that Stephen would speak has already been spoken by another, by many others. The word, in effect, has already spoken Stephen. He has lost it and been lost in it, and any other word that he might thereafter speak, or write, is one in which he has always already suffered the same fate."[33]

The confluence of the materiality of writing and the body in this scene is also significant. For the entire passage is tainted with the theme of corporeality, a theme which is evident throughout the novel, particularly in scenes of rhetorical self-consciousness. On his way home after the first day of the Hell sermon, for example, Stephen's guilt and disgust at his own lustful physicality coincides with a sense of linguistic alienation as the boorish materiality of the secular signifier threatens to undermine and fragment meaning: "The letters of the name of Dublin lay heavily upon his mind, pushing one another surlily hither and thither with slow boorish insistence."[34] Speech, too, thickens and fails as the body suffers the torment of an imagined death on the second day of the sermon: "He felt the deathchill touch the extremities and creep onward towards the heart, the film of death veiling the eyes, the bright centres of the brain extinguished one by one like lamps, the last sweat oozing upon the skin, the

powerlessness of the dying limbs, the speech thickening and wandering and failing...."[35] By the last day of the retreat language has been reduced to an incoherent stream: "- We knew perfectly well of course that although it was bound to come to the light he would find considerable difficulty in endeavouring to try to induce himself to try to endeavour to ascertain the spiritual plenipotentiary and so we knew of course perfectly well -."[36]

The same theme is sustained through the scene of reading on the streets of Cork which follows Stephen's discomfiting experience in the anatomy theatre. Again the loss of the sanctity of the body coincides clearly with the desanctification of language, meaning and identity. Signs disintegrate into meaningless letters which Stephen cannot read, while his thoughts dissolve schizophrenically into a fallen language which he can no longer identify as his own:

> His very brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops. By his monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality.... He could scarcely recognise as his his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself:
> - I am Stephen Dedalus.I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names.[37]

In a typically de Manian movement which dramatises the formal death of the author in the novel, this scene of fallen language culminates in a "blank spot" of forgetting

which subverts Stephen's initial act of naming and signifies complete self-loss:

> The memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim.... He had not died but he had faded out like a film in the sun. He had been lost or had wandered out of existence for he no longer existed. How strange to think of him passing out of existence in such a way, not by death but by fading out in the sun or by being lost and forgotten somewhere in the universe![38]

Interestingly, the displacement of the self dramatised here recalls an earlier scene of self-definition, which coincides with Stephen's naïve belief in a language that mystically empowers. During a study period at Clongowes Wood, he writes himself into the order of the universe by constructing a geographical hierarchy, in which his name comes first:

> He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.
>
> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe[39]

After the foetus scene, however, naming can no longer serve its definitive, centripetal purpose. Nor can Stephen's creative language overcome the dislocatory effect of the

fallen word. Later in the novel, after conjuring a curiously disjointed image of his friend Cranly, Stephen's ironic consciousness of the materiality of language overwhelms his creative control, and the words of his verses "band and disband themselves" in meaningless concatenations. Significantly, this occurs soon after the supposedly triumphant, self-authenticating birdgirl scene:

> But the nightshade of his friend's listlessness seemed to be diffusing in the air around him a tenuous and deadly exhalation and he found himself glancing from one casual word to another on his right or left in stolid wonder that they had been so silently emptied of instantaneous sense until every mean shop legend bound his mind like the words of a spell and his soul shrivelled up, sighing with age as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language. His own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms:
>
> The ivy whines upon the wall
> And whines and twines upon the wall
> The ivy whines upon the wall
> The yellow ivy on the wall
> Ivy, ivy up the wall.
>
> Did anyone ever hear such drivel? Lord Almighty! Who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall?[40]

There is no secure space for the traditional subject when language is thus reified and emptied of meaning, reduced to a postmodern "drivel." As de Man cautions: "The moment the innocence or authenticity of our sense of being in the world is put into question a far from harmless process gets underway. It may start as a casual bit of play with a stray

loose end of the fabric, but before long the entire texture of the self is unravelled and comes apart."[41] Narrative moments like this in A Portrait clearly anticipate the radical experimentation with language, form and literary subjectivity in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake.

The diary: irony and paronomasia

The diaristic mode of representation in the closing pages of the novel appears to signify a return to an authentic mode of self-expression; hence the retrieval and reintegration of the dispersed, allegorical subject of the text. Yet the aphoristic, staccato mode of the diary paradoxically announces an extreme stage of linguistic alienation. In a rhetorical display inconsistent with the modality of the genre the ironic interplay between symbol and allegory, self-invention and self-loss, culminates here in a complex of linguistic contradictions which not only subverts a symbolist rhetoric of authority, but marks the subject's inexorable dispersal in writing. Stephen's ultimate and penultimate diary entries read thus:

> 26 April. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.
>
> 27 April. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.[42]

The "encounter" with "reality" is - like the "new secondhand clothes" - simultaneously original and repetitional ("I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience"), suggesting that the artist's logocentric notion of a transcendent aesthetic reality and experience is quite as illusory as any other claim to a symbolic reality beyond language. Similarly, the word "forge" has a duplicitous semantic ambivalence: as part of the creative metaphor "to forge in the smithy of my soul," the word takes on the meaning of original symbolic creation, but there is implicit in the word the entirely contradictory meaning of fraudulent imitation; a sense, in other words, of art as an expression of the "always-already-written," and of the Irish conscience as doomed to be "always-already-created," indelibly inscribed in the patriarchal discourses of Church, Family and State. The phrase "Old father, old artificer" contains the same sort of ambivalence. The word "artificer" signifies at once two irreconcilable concepts: on the one hand it could be taken to mean craftsman, inventor of symbols, author as initiator or begetter; on the other hand, an "artificer" could be a fraud, one capable of artifice, cunning or contrivance, a meaning which undermines the connotation of artistic authority and authenticity.

In the context of the diary, therefore, one could speak of a subversive ironic effect at the semantic level of the word, precisely that form of paronomasia which marks the linguistic texture of Ulysses and, more radically,

Finnegans Wake. In this sense, more than any other, A Portrait anticipates the sublimity of the late modern novel, and signals a movement beyond the dialectical domain of early modernist literature.

CONCLUSION

> Who can say how many pseudostylic shamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impostures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist pen?
>
> this is nat language at any sinse of the world.[1]
>
> Finnegans Wake

Although the high modern novel lies beyond the scope of the present study, I would like to conclude with a brief examination of the representational issues involved in the transition from early to high modernist aesthetics.

The dialectical interplay between the logocentric mode of the symbol and the secular, intertextual mode of allegory in Lord Jim, Swann's Way, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man defines a transitional phase in modernism, for in high modernist works such as Ulysses and Finnegans Wake the early modern preoccupation with the essentialist premises of the symbol abates and the sublime, intertextual mode of allegory predominates. Jean-Francois Lyotard observes a similar representational shift in modernism, although he defines the disruptive, self-reflexive features of the typical late modernist text under the rubric of postmodernism. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge he writes:

> [M]odern aesthetics is an aesthetics of the sublime, though a nostalgic one.... It allows the

> unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognisable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure.... The postmodern would be 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....[2]

Lyotard's designation of modernism as a nostalgic aesthetics of the sublime is particularly apt in this context. While Conrad's Lord Jim, Proust's Swann's Way and Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist all to varying degrees invoke the "missing contents" of the romantic symbol and offer the reader "the solace of good forms," the high modern novel does neither. This is particularly clear in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, where allegory no longer operates in ironic relation to the symbolic image, like the hieroglyph of seaweed "fashioned ... as a sign upon the flesh"[3] in the birdgirl epiphany, but in deconstructive relation to the fiction of language per se. That is to say that in both novels allegory is manifest not only as a thematic or tropological "taint," but as a formal or stylistic contaminant as well. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify allegory as a distinctive trope in the high modern novel. For when intertextuality is taken to a formal extreme, as it is in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, we witness not only a structural conflation of literary styles and genres, but finally the graphic interpenetration of all lexical items -

what amounts to the allegorical contagion of the signifier itself.

The disappearance of a personalised narrator figure (Marlow/Marcel) in A Portrait of the Artist clearly prefigures the shift to "authorless" textuality in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. However, the proliferation of critical articles on the subject of ironic distance between Joyce and Stephen Dedalus indicates that it is still possible (albeit inappropriate) to interpellate an authorial position "outside" the text, and hence to order and restrict the free play of signification in the text. The debased linguistic "epiphanies" in the latter half of A Portrait similarly anticipate the contamination of language in the later novels, but the foregrounding of the materiality of the signifier in these scenes is strictly thematic or descriptive, and the formal integrity of the text remains intact. Hence, for example, Stephen's senseless versification shortly after the birdgirl epiphany is logistically contained by a description of the waywardness of language: "His own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms."[4] The foetus scene and the scene of reading on the streets of Cork similarly foreground the disruptive physicality of the signifier at a thematic level, but prove formally innocuous.

The pattern of epiphanic demystification across the trajectory from A Portrait to Finnegans Wake provides a

clear demonstration of the shift to an intertextual allegorical form in high modernism. In the last chapter I drew attention to the ironic metamorphosis of the tainted symbol of the birdgirl in A Portrait into Biddy Doran the hen, foraging in a contaminated heap of litter(ature) in Finnegans Wake. Significantly, whereas the Portrait image is thematically contained and bears no specific relation to the form of the text, the image in Finnegans Wake functions unambiguously as a mise en abyme[5] of the novel's own intertextual composition: its parasitic dependence on the midden of the always-already-written.

Both Finnegans Wake and Ulysses come into being as a medley of rhetorical elements scavenged from extraneous texts. In the "Lotus-Eaters" chapter of Ulysses, for instance, Leopold Bloom's narrative randomly incorporates verses and lines from popular songs, advertising jingles and operatic arias; quotations from nursery rhymes, novels and poems; and fragmentary clippings from magazine and newspaper articles. Furthermore, the absence of inverted commas problematises the "original" status of the excerpts, so that nothing permits the reader to know a priori where the appropriated textual material originates. Even when extraneous texts are not directly reproduced Bloom's monologue shifts arbitrarily from one stylistic register to another. This tendency is particularly striking in the "Cyclops" chapter, where disparate forms of writing - various types of legal and medical jargon, classical rhetoric, literary and journalistic discourses, even the

style of wall graffiti - appear and recede in palimpsestic succession. In the context of this rhetorical display issues of originality, identity and author-ity become irrelevant.

It would be a mistake to assimilate this form of allegorical intertextuality to the narrative pluralism of a novel like Lord Jim. Although the plurality of discourses in Conrad's novel signals a methodological shift toward intertextuality, an explanatory logic still underpins and stabilises the various discourses which make up Marlow's narrative.[6] Moreover the discourses themselves are modelled on the psychology of character, and constitute "readerly" points of view rather than "writerly" stylistic registers. The intertextuality of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake is an entirely different literary phenomenon, for here the fall into the "waters of babalong" signals the complete dissolution of subjectivity and meaning in the "pelagiaristic" (plagiarist/pelagian) medium of textual signification.

The play of signification in Finnegans Wake foregrounds the differential, intertextual nature of language even more than the surplus of themes or the multiplication of compositional units in Ulysses. Indeed, Joyce's last novel takes the sublimity of A Portrait and Ulysses to a postmodern extreme, conclusively denying any passage beyond the vertiginous depths of language. As allegorical intertextuality contaminates and disrupts the singular identity of the signifier, boundaries between

words shift and dissolve, and lexical units float apart and reassemble in schizophrenic configurations. Even proper names, the last vestige of literary subjectivity, are capable of splitting and merging at random. The name "Bloom" in Ulysses, for instance, either exceeds its boundaries and dissolves into other words, as in "Bloomusalem" or "greaseabloom"; or turns into a nomenclative hybrid of Stephen and Bloom, as "Blephen" or "Stoom," or drops a letter to become "Boom." Similarly, Anna Livia Plurabelle, as the River Liffey, circulates through the text as "Anna Lynchya Pourable," "Appia Lippia Pluviabilla," "allaniuvia pulchrabelled," and more obliquely, as "Alla tingaling pealabells," "Allalivial," "allalluvial," "Avelaval."

In the same way famous lines from the literary canon are misappropriated and grotesquely transformed, so that, for example, the line from Keats' "Endymion," "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" becomes "A king off duty and a jaw for ever!"[7] and Byron's "Maid of Athens, ere we part,/Give, oh give me back my heart!" reappears as "Mades of ashens when you flirt spoil the lad but spare his shirt!"[8] Finally, in a supremely self-reflexive gesture, lines from Joyce's own earlier texts are cited in parodic displacements such as "Eins within a space and a wearywide space it wast...,"[9] or "Once upon a drunk and a fairly good drunk it was and the rest of your blatherumskite!"[10] The opening line of A Portrait, "Once upon a time and a very good time it was,"[11] is barely discernible in such

wordplay.

Even before Ulysses was complete, Joyce had decided to write a novel "to suit the aesthetic of the dream, when the forms prolong and multiply themselves, when the visions pass from the trivial to the apocalyptic, when the brain uses the roots of vocables to make others from them which will be capable of naming its phantasms, its allegories, its allusions."[12] Finnegans Wake, which pushes language beyond its own limits, is this apocalyptic text. It is also the epitome of the postmodern sublime.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Melvin Friedman, "The Symbolist Novel: Huysmans to Malraux," in Modernism 1890-1930, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 453.

2. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London: Routledge, 1957), 2.

3. C.M. Bowra likewise refers to the metaphysical underpinnings of the symbol. In The Heritage of Symbolism (London: Macmillan, 1943) he argues that Mallarme and his followers are rightly called Symbolists because "they attempted to convey a supernatural experience in the language of visible things, and therefore almost every word is a symbol and not used for its common purpose but for the associations it evokes of a reality beyond the senses" (5).

4. Kermode, Romantic Image, 44.

5. T.S. Eliot, quoted in Kermode, Romantic Image, 141.

6. Ezra Pound, quoted in C.K. Stead, Pound, Yeats, Eliot and the Modernist Movement (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 344.

7. Walter Benjamin, "Allegory and Trauerspiel," in The Origin of German Tragic Drama, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), 161.

8. Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (New York: Cornell University Press, 1964), 74.

9. Ibid, 2.

10. Ibid, 2.

11. Ibid, 77.

12. Ibid, 245.

13. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual, ed. W.G.T. Shedd (New York: 1875), 437-438, and Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T.M. Raysor (London: 1936), 29 [Quoted in Fletcher, Allegory, 16-17].

14. These are David Ellison's translations from the original German formulations. See David Ellison, The

Reading of Proust (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 99-100. The theoretical implications of the symbol-allegory distinction in the realm of German aesthetics are re-examined by Tzvetan Todorov in Theories of the Symbol, trans. Catherine Porter (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982). See "The Romantic Crisis," 147-221.

15. Roland Barthes, quoted in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," Modernism 1890-1930, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 21.

16. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (Glasgow: Collins, 1959), 27.

17. Although Ian Watt's differentiation between "centripetal" and "centrifugal" modes of meaning is a useful one, I disagree with his identification of symbolism as a "centrifugal" rather than a "centripetal" mode [See Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (London: Chatto, 1980), 180] Since Symbolism seems to contain within itself a late shift from a romantic-symbolist to a modernly ironic/allegorical aesthetic, in my view it is important to differentiate between a logocentric (centripetal) mode of representation which emerges from native romantic roots and gives Symbolism its distinctively mystical identity and an ex-centric (centrifugal) mode which marks the emergence of literary modernity. Clive Scott's disparaging description of the work of Symbolists like Georges Rodenbach, Stuart Merrill, Adolphe Retté, Henri de Régnier and Francis Vielé-Griffin, all of whom gravitated around Mallarme, reinforces my theory. In his essay "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism," in Modernism 1890-1930, he writes:

> Their weaknesses lie chiefly in the way they made Symbolism easy. They tended to prefer an allegorical mode, where objects merely represent abstractions for narrative purposes, to a symbolic one, where abstractions are contained by an object; they consolidated a diction with a prefabricated suggestiveness and by failing to stiffen it with real intellectual motive, they let their work become a collection of seasonal mood-poems, bland and wistful (226).

18. Walter Benjamin lays the ground for a post-structuralist reformulation of the dialectic between allegory and symbol in "Allegory and Trauerspiel," where he argues that the transformation of symbol into

the fallen, secular form of allegory is associated not only with a decisive entry into the category of time, but also with the disjunctive structure of writing. Hence, where the symbolic construct strives for a unity of appearance and essence which will transfigure its material status, "at one stroke the profound vision of allegory transforms things and works into stirring writing" (176); for "[t]he allegorical has its existence in abstractions; as an abstraction, as a faculty of the spirit of language itself, it is at home in the Fall" (234).

Significantly, Benjamin points out that many romantic theorists explicitly denounce the abstract, scriptory nature of the mode. He quotes, for example, Creuzer, who uses the term "zeichenallegorie" (sign-allegory), and Schopenhauer, who disclaims the coldly graphic nature of pictorial allegory:

> Only the [expression of an Idea] can be an aim of art; the other [the expression of a concept] is a foreign aim, namely the trifling amusement of carving a picture to serve at the same time as an inscription, as a hieroglyphic... (162) [emphases added].

19. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 190.

20. Ibid, 191.

21. Ibid, 204.

22. De Man, quoted in Jacques Derrida, **Memoires** for Paul de Man, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cadava (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 70-71.

23. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xix.

24. Spivak, Translator's Preface to Of Grammatology, xix.

25. Ibid, xix.

26. Derrida, Of Grammatology, lxviii.

27. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (London: Croom Helm, 1968), 139.

28. Jacques Lacan, "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever," in

The Structuralist Controversy, The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970/72), 189, 194.

29. Joel Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," in Allegory and Representation, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 44-45.

30. Fletcher, Allegory, 234-235.

31. St. Augustine, quoted in Fletcher, Allegory, 235.

32. See Gabriel Josipovici, The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction (London: Macmillan, 1971), especially chapter 2, "The World as a Book," 25-51, and chapter 12, "The World and the Book," 286-311.

33. Edward Said, The World, the Text and the Critic (London: Faber, 1984), 81-2.

34. Ibid, 82.

35. Benjamin, "Allegory and Trauerspiel," 214.

36. Ibid, 207.

37. William Wordsworth, "The Prelude," 7: 158-167, in The Fourteen Book "Prelude", ed. W.J.B. Owen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 140-141.

The sense of representational excess conveyed in such allegorical moments in "The Prelude" typifies the mode of the romantic sublime, an aesthetic philosophy which not only formalises the indeterminacy of aesthetic experience after the breakdown of the medieval world-view, but in the process legitimates the basic indeterminacy of allegory in its "post-lapsarian" phase. Popularised by Kant and Burke in the eighteenth century, the sublime is revived to account for experiences of conceptual bafflement in the face of representational excess or obscurity, and is therefore particularly appropriate to the rhetorical category of allegory. Indeed many romantic theorists either deliberately or inadvertently rely upon a Kantian vocabulary of sublime "overextension" to describe the experience of cognitive blockage and disorientation associated with allegorical modes of reading. What is significant from a broad aesthetic perspective is that the sublime marks the birth of a secular hermeneutics and formalises the transition from an undissociated ("pre-lapsarian") to a dissociated ("post-lapsarian") allegorical mode.

Angus Fletcher discusses the relation of allegory to

the romantic aesthetic of the sublime in greater detail in Allegory. See 245-252. Thomas Weiskel's de-idealised psychoanalytic reading of the romantic sublime is extremely complex, but his broad definition of the sublime moment as "that moment when the relation between signifier and signified breaks down and is replaced by an indeterminate relation" (17) is a useful and straightforward one, which is readily applicable to the modality of a secularised allegorical form. See The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

38. The recuperative nature of romantic allegory clearly reveals its aesthetic relation to the Kantian philosophy of the sublime. For Kant the moment of interpretative blockage, "a ... checking of the vital powers," is by definition followed by a reactive phase in which the mind exults in a realisation that it has a transcendent standard by which to measure the incapacity of its own sensuous imagination. Hence, in the Critique of Judgement, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951) Kant describes the "dynamical sublime" as follows (the "dynamical" has peculiarly natural determinants, but all versions of the sublime reveal the same transcendental structure):

> [I]n the immensity of nature and in the insufficiency of our faculties to take in a standard proportionate to the aesthetical estimation of the magnitude of its realm, we find our own limitation, although at the same time in our rational faculty we find a different, nonsensuous standard, which has that infinity itself under it as a unity, in comparison with which everything in nature is small, and thus in our mind we find a superiority to nature even in its immensity (101).

For a discussion of the Kantian Sublime, see Hazard Adams, Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1983), 29-45.

39. Benjamin, "Allegory and Trauerspiel," 232.

40. Schiller, quoted in Fletcher, Allegory, 251.

41. Blake, quoted in Fletcher, Allegory, 251.

42. In Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic Hazard Adams distinguishes between "substitutive" allegory and the more common forms of "Platonic," "religious," and "empirical" allegory primarily on the basis of the latter's invocation of a spiritualising logos. He

explains that in each of the main types "reality is located not in the particular but in the universal, so-called - a universal that can be known only by a process which abandons the sensuous.... And in each case the relation of word to referent is the relation of sign to something hidden." (15) By contrast, he argues, "substitutive" allegory "merely reveals a text behind a text, which must then be interpreted in one of the other three ways [i.e. in the mode of "Platonic," "religious" or "empirical" allegory]. One has, therefore, failure after all, and possibly an infinite regress" (16).

43. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 190.

44. Spivak, Translator's preface to Of Grammatology, lxxvii.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Joseph Conrad, Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus (London: Dent, 1945), 3.

2. Neil Hertz, The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 217.

3. Ibid, 219.

4. Cf. Michael Jones, Conrad's Heroism: A Paradise Lost (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), David Thorburn, Conrad's Romanticism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), and Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (London: Chatto, 1980). Jones' critical position is closest to my own. Unlike Watt and Thorburn he compares Wordsworth's Preface to Conrad's primarily to illustrate "the historical displacement" of romanticism in Conrad's fiction." (xviii) He argues:

> That the Preface does not express Conrad at his most heroic - that it presents a Conrad elegiac and nearly resigned - offers evidence even at this early stage in Conrad's career that his heroes will from the beginning of their journeys be reeling in the aftershocks of romanticism's greatest dreams (33).

5. Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus, 5.

6. Ibid, 3.

7. Conrad's formulation recalls Coleridge's conception of the organic unity of the work of art, which cannot be detached from a revelatory theological basis: "Now what the Globe is in Geography, miniaturing in order to manifest the Truth, such is a Poem to that Image of God, which we were created with, and which still seeks Unity or Revelation of the One in and by the Many." Quoted in J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 24.

8. Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, 83.

9. Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), 201.

10. Ibid, 204.

11. Ibid, 230.

12. Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 79.

13. Ibid, 111.

14. Thorburn, Conrad's Romanticism, 119, 121.

15. Conrad, Lord Jim, 258.

16. Ibid, 136.

17. Baudelaire, quoted in Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, 199.

18. Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, 198.

19. F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), 196, 216, 221.

20. See Wendy Faris, "The 'Dehumanisation' of the Arts: J.M.W. Turner, Joseph Conrad, and the Advent of Modernism," Comparative Literature, 41 (1989), 305-326, and Barton Thurber, "Speaking the Unspeakable: Conrad and the Sublime," Conradiana, 16 (1984), 41-54.

21. Faris, "The 'Dehumanisation of the Arts," 311. Faris does draw attention to self-reflexive narrative qualities in Lord Jim, but not within the context of her discussion on sublimity in the novel. See 314-322. Cf. 323-324.

22. Barton Thurber, "Speaking the Unspeakable," 42, 43.

23. Cf. E.M. Forster, in Abinger Harvest (London: Edward Arnold, 1936), who uniquely avoids this ideational tendency:

> Is there not also a central obscurity, something noble, heroic, beautiful, inspiring half a dozen great books, but obscure, obscure?...[Conrad] is misty in the middle as well as at the edges,... the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel... (135).

24. Cf. Hillis Miller, "Lord Jim: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form," Fiction and Repetition, 22-41, Paul B. Armstrong, "The Hermeneutics of Literary Impressionism: Interpretation and Reality in James, Conrad, and Ford," Centennial Review, 27 (1983), 244-269, and Suresh Raval, "Narrative and Authority in Lord Jim: Conrad's Art of Failure," ELH, 48 (1981), 387-410. Each of these critical studies draws attention to the infinitely regressive nature of signification in Lord Jim.

25. Walter Benjamin, "Allegory and Trauerspiel," The Origin of German Tragic Drama, ed. George Steiner, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), 234.

26. Conrad, Lord Jim, 11.

27. Royal Roussel, in The Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971) and Mark Wollaeger, in Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Scepticism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) are the only critics I have encountered who refer overtly to the aesthetic status of Jim's dreams of heroism and to the self-reflexive aesthetic implications of the foundering of the "Patna" (Roussel) and the collapse of Jim's storybook "empire" in Patusan (Wollaeger). Roussel writes, for example:

> In the pattern that dominates Conrad's fiction of this period, a pattern in which the voyage of the adventurer becomes a metaphor for the act of writing, Jim's symbolic quality will inevitably have an aesthetic reference as well. He is ... both sailor and artist, and in the Patna incident Conrad has given us an analysis not only of the destruction of Jim's dreams of heroism, but of the dissolution of a certain kind of art which is implicit in his dreams (81).

However, while I have been concerned to demonstrate that the dissolution of Jim's dreams after the "Patna" episode marks the demystification of a romantic aesthetic and the inauguration of a modern sublime mode, Roussel identifies the "Patna" incident specifically with the failure of a naïve realist vision:

> Because Jim's vision flows from his taste in literature, he is implicitly representative of a kind of writing which shares the same quality. One can say...that the way in which he embodies his dreams, or projects them into the peaceful world around him, suggests the way in which the artist, for Conrad, incarnates his temperament in the realistic re-creation of this same visible surface (82).

The central weakness of Roussel's argument, namely, his failure to identify or describe the aesthetic which emerges in the wake of realism's destruction, serves to reinforce my contention that the "Patna" episode is best understood in relation to the critique of romanticism in Conrad's fiction, for it strategically coincides with a fall out of a symbolic condition of presence and self-presence into a secularised allegorical mode in which signification (reading) is foregrounded at the expense of meaning and subjectivity (seeing). Wollaeger comes closer to an understanding of the sublimity of the novel when he argues that "we can read the collapse of Jim's communal order on Patusan as the revenge of the real on Jim's idealised art, the triumph of the anarchy Marlow glimpsed beyond the pale over the reordering power of the romantic" (115).

28. Conrad, Lord Jim, 11.

29. Ibid, 16-17.

30. Ibid, 101.

31. Ibid, 19-21.

32. Ibid, 25.

33. James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (London: Faber, 1939), 30, 103.

34. Ibid, 163.

35. Nietzsche, in Nietzsche Werke V ii, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 90-91. Extract translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the Translator's Preface to Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xxx.

36. Conrad, Lord Jim, 91.

37. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 190.

38. Conrad, Lord Jim, 91.

39. Ibid, 99. It is by no means inappropriate to read this description allegorically. De Man invariably associates the fall into linguistic self-consciousness with a disruption of that organic symbiosis of mind and nature, self and other, which in romanticism sustains a belief in the transcendental status of the self. In "The Rhetoric of Temporality, "Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), he writes:

> At the moment that the ... language-determined man laughs at himself falling, he is laughing at a mistaken, mystified assumption he was making about himself.... 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 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 (196).

Significantly, Conrad himself articulates the problem of human self-consciousness in terms which bear an uncanny similarity to de Man's representation of the linguistic subject's alienated, instrumental relation to nature. In a letter to Cunningham-Graham he writes:

> What makes mankind tragic is not that they are victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it.... We can't return to nature, since we can't change our place in it. Our refuge is in stupidity, in drunkenness of all kinds, in lies, in beliefs, in murder, thieving, reforming, in negation, in contempt - each man according to the promptings of his particular devil. There is no morality, no knowledge and no hope: there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that, whether seen in a convex or a concave mirror, is always a vain and floating appearance. [quoted in Joseph Conrad, Life and Letters. Volume I, ed. G. Jean-Aubry (London: Heinemann, 1927), 226.]

40. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, lxviii.

41. Conrad, Lord Jim, 88.

42. Ibid, 90.

43. Ibid, 76, 64, 63, 104.

44. Albert Guérard also comments on this curiously palimpsestic image of Jim, but attributes it merely to an accident of phraseology. In Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), he writes: "This questionable sentence would suggest that the 'real' Jim behind the apparent one has the vague symbolic appeal. Very possibly this dubious phrasing simply came to Conrad, who refused to examine it closely" (163).

45. While Tony Tanner in Conrad: Lord Jim (London: Edward Arnold, 1963) would have it that the classic narrator, Marlow and, by implication, Conrad himself, subscribe unhesitatingly to a realist aesthetic, I would argue that the irony of passages like this one, as well as Marlow's satirical depiction of the arch-realist Chester later in the novel, self-consciously undermine the tenets of traditional realism.

46. Stephen Heath comments upon the same narrative phenomenon in Joyce's texts, arguing that the "shattering of the context in the dialogism of Joyce's writing" results in a self-reflexive pattern in which textual elements echo backward and forward indefinitely, perpetually deferring meaning. See his essay "Ambiviolences: Notes for Reading Joyce," Post-Structuralist Joyce, eds. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). I explore this allegorical feature of Joyce's writing in relation to A Portrait in chapter four. Hillis Miller also discusses the subversive effect of repetition in Lord Jim. See "Lord Jim: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form," 32-39.

47. Conrad, Lord Jim, 253, 136-137. See also Hillis Miller's discussion of these effects in "Lord Jim: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form," 37-38.

48. Jakob Lothe, Conrad's Narrative Method (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 136.

49. Conrad, Lord Jim, 27.

50. Goethe, in Conrad, Lord Jim, 161. Stein's quote from Goethe's Torquato Tasso reads, in rough translation:

> And so at last I hold it in my hands,
> And call it in a certain sense my own.

51. Conrad, Lord Jim, 158.

52. Ibid, 162.

53. Ibid, 163-164.

54. Ibid, 201.

55. Commenting upon the ironic spectacle of the "language-determined" man who trips and falls in the street in Baudelaire's De l'essence du rire, de Man writes:

> [T]he 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. And the fallen philosopher reflecting on the discrepancy between the two successive stages is wiser still, but this does not in the least prevent him from stumbling in his turn ("The Rhetoric of Temporality," 196-197).

Jim is like "the fool who walks around oblivious of the crack in the pavement," while Marlow, the "fallen philosopher" has the capacity to reflect upon the inauthenticity of his "language-determined" existence.

56. Ibid, 313.

CHAPTER THREE

1. All quotes are from the acclaimed C.K. Scott Moncrieff - Terence Kilmartin translation of Remembrance of Things Past. Unfortunately the most recent English translation of the novel was still awaiting publication when this chapter was written, and is still unavailable in South Africa.

2. Marcel Proust, Remembrance of Things Past: 1, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Penguin, 1989), 13-14.

3. Ibid, 14.

4. Ibid, 29.

5. Jeffrey Mehlman notes, similarly, in A Structural Study of Autobiography: Proust, Sartre, Levi-Strauss (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974):

> The text presents ... a third term whose function is to prevent ... communion [with the mother]. For everything that Swann does makes him a focus of thoughts of paternity. He is, first of all, the prototypical outsider, whose arrival will interfere with Marcel's evening ritual. He is

> both son and father (of the girl Marcel will fall in love with). He is an object of the child's admiration, someone whose amorous experiences are the model of the very one Marcel is to suffer on the night of Swann's arrival, a secretly superior man who resists the humiliation to which the narrator's family would put him. He thus posits the possibility of escape from this frighteningly closed matriarchy, of a kind of mobility the pampered child is denied. As both rival for the mother's attention and idealised model for the child, Swann occupies the role of Oedipal father, a fantasied parent to replace the inept and vacillating one who, in the novel, can think of nothing better to do than talk about the weather (21-22).

Although I would take issue with Mehlman's notion that Swann "posits the possibility of an escape from [a] frighteningly closed matriarchy," I agree entirely with his identification of Swann as a fantasied Oedipal Father, a Lacanian "third term" whose function is to obstruct the child's desire for unmediated maternal gratification. However, while for Mehlman Swann's substitutive paternal role is of purely thematic interest, I have been concerned to demonstrate that it has important theoretical connotations in the text; more specifically, that there is a crucial metonymic relation between this Oedipal scenario and allegorical modes of memory and representation in the Remembrance.

6. Proust, Remembrance, 46-47.

7. Jacques Derrida, **Memoires** for Paul de Man, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cadaver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 70-71. Paul de Man explicitly connects Gedächtnis with allegory/sign, and Erinnerung with symbol in his essay "Symbol and Sign in Hegel's Aesthetics." More significantly, he also explores the relation between symbolic and allegorical modes of representation in Proust's novel in Allegories of Reading: Figurative Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). Surprisingly, however, de Man does not dwell at any length on the connection between voluntary memory and the allegorical mode of Gedächtnis in Proust's Remembrance, nor does he discuss the relation between memory and desire. In this chapter I have attempted to show that allegorical modes of memory, desire, and representation in Proust's novel are crucially

interlinked.

8. Proust, Remembrance, 48.

9. Germaine Bree, Marcel Proust and Deliverance from Time, trans. C.J. Richards and A.D. Truitt (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 43.

10. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930 (Glasgow: Collins, 1959), 111.

11. Ibid, 133.

12. Proust, Remembrance, 51.

13. Ibid, 51.

14. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 204.

15. Proust, Remembrance, 49.

16. Ibid, 30.

17. Ibid, 32.

18. Ibid, 30-31.

19. Ibid, 34.

20. Ibid, 37-38.

21. Ibid, 39.

22. Ibid, 46.

23. Ibid, 45.

24. Ibid, 45. Margaret Gray-McDonald perceives a significant relation between the Oedipal taboo and literary censorship in this scene, as I do, but she reaches very different conclusions about its implications for Marcel's literary vocation. In "Skipping Love Scenes: The Repression of Literature in Proust" MLN 104: 4-5 (1989) 1020-1033, she writes:

> Literature as symptom, as the trace or mapping of the struggle between repression and expression, is introduced to Marcel by his mother's careful editing, and repeated recurrently within the edited text itself.... Such simultaneous repression and idealisation of literature would then offer an explanation for the narrator's long delay in embracing his vocation as a writer....

> For to write, or produce literature, would be to reproduce Francois le Champi - repeating, it seems, the love story of mother and adoptive son, a story of incestuous, forbidden desire.... [T]o write would not be to appropriate the mother's voice, but the mother herself - to realise the oedipal dream of possession (1025).

In Lacanian terms, this incestuous outcome is unlikely. If, as Lacan suggests, representation is inherently censorial or sublimatory, writing by definition precludes the possibility of Oedipal consummation.

25. Mehlman, A Structural Study of Autobiography, 26.

26. Proust, Remembrance, 45.

27. See Paul de Man, "Reading (Proust)" Allegories of Reading, 57-78, Samuel Weber, "The Madrepore," MLN, 87 (1972), 915-961, and David Ellison, The Reading of Proust (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 10-29.

28. De Man, "Reading (Proust)," 73.

29. Ellison, The Reading of Proust, 14, 11.

30. At a recent English Graduate Seminar at the University of Cape Town, Brenda Atkinson responded to a paper I had presented on Swann's Way with the novel observation that the allegorical theme of semantic slippage between sign and referent in "Swann in Love" is both concealed and revealed in the name "Swann." After pointing out the phonetic identification between "Swann" and the English "swan," she proceeded to show how the French translation cygne for swan phonetically invokes the French term signe, in English, "sign." Significantly, the connection between allegory, voluntary memory and sign is a well-established one. As Walter Benjamin points out in "Allegory and Trauerspiel," The Origin of German Tragic Drama, ed. George Steiner, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), Creuzer, in the Romantic period, uses the term zeichen-allegorie (sign-allegory) whenever he opposes allegory to symbol, while de Man uses the term interchangeably with allegory to describe Hegelian Gedächtnis in his essay "Symbol and Sign in Hegel's Aesthetics."

31. Proust, Remembrance, 203.

32. Ibid, 203.

33. Surprisingly, Edmund Wilson sees no connection at all

between Marcel and M. Swann. In Axel's Castle he writes:

> [C]ertain of the characters that figure most prominently in the novel have almost no relation to the hero at all ...: Swann is merely a friend of the family whom the narrator has occasionally seen in his youth, Charlus a person he meets later on. Yet these two characters almost dominate, respectively, the earlier and the later parts of the book - and as we read, we never question their significance: it is only when we think to examine Proust's novel from the point of view of ordinary fiction that we become aware of their irrelevance to the main narrative (145).

Leo Bersani and Germaine Bree, by contrast, do draw attention briefly to parallels between the story of Swann and the narrator. See Germaine Bree Marcel Proust and Deliverance from Time, 55, and Leo Bersani Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 137-138. Bersani identifies this as an allegorical tendency, but he uses the term exclusively to describe a psychological process of narrative self-projection, rather than a rhetorical/aesthetic effect, arguing that the psychological parallels between Marcel and characters like Swann suggest that the novel is "an allegorical representation of the narrator's psychology," "a self-dramatisation by means of novelistic character and incident." (137-138) Significantly neither critic perceives how the interpenetration of Swann's story and Marcel's "autobiographical" narrative radically undermines the narrator's project of symbolist self-possession.

34. The theme of allegorical disjunction erupts at several points other than "Swann in Love" in Marcel's symbolist narrative, and in each case Swann plays a critical role. The most striking instance of this is the scene in "Combray" in which Marcel likens the pregnant kitchen-maid to Giotto's Charity:

> [T]he folds of her ample smock ... recalled the cloaks in which Giotto shrouds some of his allegorical figures, of which M. Swann had given me photographs. He it was who pointed out the resemblance, and when he inquired after the kitchen-maid he would say: "Well, how goes it with Giotto's Charity? And indeed ... just as the

> figure of this girl had been enlarged by the additional symbol which she carried before her, without appearing to understand its meaning, with no awareness in her facial expression of its beauty and spiritual significance, as if it were an ordinary, rather heavy burden, so it is without any apparent suspicion of what she is about that the powerfully built housewife who is portrayed in the Arena Chapel beneath the label "Caritas" ... embodies that virtue, for it seems impossible that any thought of charity can ever have found expression in her vulgar and energetic face (87).

Unlike "Swann in Love," however, this digression on allegory is represented as a moment to be surpassed, a moment of thematic aberration within a symbolist discourse which seeks to reduce and to master the materiality of the signifier. (Significantly, although Paul de Man and Samuel Weber independently draw attention to Marcel's observation of an allegorical non-identity of idea and embodiment in this scene, neither comments upon Swann's aesthetic association with Giotto's allegories.)

I am also reminded here of the scene in "Combray" in which Marcel remarks upon Swann's habitual refusal to say what he means, to position himself "behind" his speech as an authentic origin of meaning. The ironic habit serves to expose the status of words as allegorical signifiers rather than symbolic signifieds, something which disconcerts the young Marcel, who likes to believe in an unmediated reciprocity of words and their meanings:

> As he spoke I noticed, what had often struck me before in his conversations with my grandmother's sisters, that whenever he spoke of serious matters, whenever he used an expression which seemed to imply a definite opinion upon some important subject, he would take care to isolate, to sterilise it by using a special intonation, mechanical and ironic, as though he had put the phrase or word between inverted commas, and was anxious to disclaim any personal responsibility for it; as who should say "the 'hierarchy,' don't you know, as silly people call it" (105-106).

35. Proust, Remembrance, 244-245.

36. Ibid, 245.

37. Ibid, 255.

38. Ibid, 259.

39. Ibid, 214.

40. Derrida, **Memoires** for Paul de Man, 107.

41. Proust, Remembrance, 228.

42. Ibid, 380.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. James Joyce, quoted in Eugene Jolas, "My Friend James Joyce," in James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. Sean Givens (New York: Vanguard Press, 1948), 15.

   According to Jolas, Joyce became increasingly absorbed by Romantic debates on the creative imagination in the 1930s. While working on Finnegans Wake he meditated on Coleridge's distinction between fancy and the imagination in Chapter XIII of the Biographia Literaria, and concluded that Finnegans Wake suited the category of Coleridgean fancy/allegory more than imagination/symbol.

2. Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London: Paladin, 1988), 173.

3. Ibid, 175.

4. I am indebted for this observation to Hélène Cixous in her seminal text The Exile of James Joyce. Although familiar with the mythical legend of Thoth, I was not aware of the association between the colour emerald and the god of writing. As Cixous explains, the emerald coloured text Tabula Smaragdina is mythically attributed to this Egyptian god. (See Hélène Cixous, The Exile of James Joyce (New York: David Lewis, 1972), 401.

5. Joyce, A Portrait, 229.

   Significantly Thoth plays an intermediary, substitutive role, for while both Thoth and Horus transmit the word of the sun-god Ra, Horus conceives the idea, while Thoth translates it into words. Hence he is often regarded as an inferior god, not an origin of meaning but an interpreter, messenger or substitute. Thoth is thus the allegorical "prototype"

for the differential trace-structure of writing in Derridean philosophy. The association of writing with death through Plato, Socrates, Hegel and in recent post-structuralist thought also has its origins in the Greek myth. Significantly, Thoth is both master of writing and god of mortality, for the derivative, temporal structure of writing is associated with the death of "true" memory. In Egyptian mythology King Thamous, the representative of Amon-Ra, rejects Thoth's offer of the gift of writing on the grounds that it will conduce to forgetfulness, the failure of the active memory (Platonic mneme) and the substitution of an inferior, passive, technical form of memory (hypomneme). As we have seen the same binary opposition is transposed into Hegel's philosophical opposition of Gedächtnis and Erinnerung, and in literary terms underlies the Proustian dialectic between voluntary and involuntary memory in Remembrance of Things Past.

In her famous appendix "Thoth and the Written Word" Cixous describes the Thoth legend in detail, arguing that the myth is subtly interwoven as the philosophical subtext of Finnegans Wake, Shem playing the part of a latterday Thoth, and Shaun that of Thamous. Explaining the association of Shem/Thoth with the Other, and Shaun/Thamous with the Same ("Undivided reawlity"), she puns on the word Thoth to produce the apposite amalgam, Th'Other. The relation of the pun to the etymology of allegory is striking: allos: other + agoreuein: to speak.

6. Joyce, A Portrait, 177.

7. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Interpretation: Theory and Practice, ed. Charles S. Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 190.

The same protracted, repetitional structure is evident in Stephen's proud cry, "On and on and on and on!" just after the enraptured vision of the birdgirl.

8. Other critics who remark upon this feature of the text are Hélène Cixous in The Exile of James Joyce, Patrick Parrinder in his chapter on A Portrait in James Joyce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Maud Ellmann in "Disremembering Dedalus: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," in Untying the Text: A Post Structuralist Reader, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), and Stephen Heath in "Ambiviolences: Notes for reading Joyce," in Post-Structuralist Joyce, ed. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

For Heath it is this self-reflexive, repetitional mode

which renders the traditional distinction between literal and figurative obsolete in Joyce's work, and "places the texts outside the descriptive categories of rhetoric." He writes: "Joyce's writing deconstructs the fundamental (contextual) distinction between the literal and the figurative... [A]ccording to what criteria are any particular elements to be identified as metaphors in a text in which every element refers to another, perpetually deferring meaning?" (41) It is my contention that the rupture with classical rhetoric does not invalidate all rhetorical categories, and that this feature of Joyce's writing is fruitfully understood in the context of the sublime mode of modern allegory.

Hélène Cixous argues, as I do, that the pattern of repetition in Joyce is inseparable from the deconsecration of the symbol. Interestingly, she also briefly identifies the deflated, ironic image as a secularised allegorical form. Commenting on the way in which the sustained rose symbolism in A Portrait devolves into the prosaic image of "the great overblown scarlet flowers of the tattered wallpaper" in the villanelle scene, she argues:

> The metaphor, once a sign of identity, and then reduced at the Renaissance to the status of mere allegory supported by the comparison, is thus brought to disintegration by Joyce, who reconstitutes a new metaphor, no longer harmonious but discordant. Stephen is indeed transported in ecstasies like those of a saint, but the essential equation is lacking to make both terms of the metaphysical metaphor into epiphany and to unite reality with the Christian supernatural (640).

9. Michael Levenson, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait - The Shape of Life," ELH, 52 (1985), 1026.

10. Young, Untying the Text, 189.

11. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 197.

12. John Paul Riquelme, "Stephen Hero, Dubliners, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: styles of realism and fantasy," in The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 116.

Vicki Mahaffey, in Reauthorising Joyce (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), comes closer to an understanding of the rhetorical complexity of the novel when she observes that the ironic contradictions that Stephen's language reveals are conflicts "between

the referentiality of language and its materiality; between conscious and unconscious desire" (4). Hence, "when Stephen tries, in Platonic terms, to model himself on an ideal, his language reasserts his - and its - ineluctable materiality..." (94). However, Mahaffey fails to explore the effects of the materiality of language in A Portrait, and rapidly retreats into the conventional framework of a dialectic between romantic and classical modes of representation.

13. Heath, "Ambiviolences," 37.

14. Wayne Booth employs the term "unstable infinite irony" in A Rhetoric of Irony (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), where he is concerned to establish a systematic typology of ironic forms.

15. In The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), he writes:

> We simply cannot avoid the conclusion that the book itself is at fault, regardless of its great virtues. Unless we make the absurd assumption that Joyce had in reality purged himself of all judgement by the time he completed his final draft, unless we see him as having really come to look upon all of Stephen's actions as equally wise or equally foolish, equally sensitive or equally meaningless, we must conclude that many of the refinements he intended in his finished Portrait are, for most of us, permanently lost.... For some of us the air of detachment and objectivity may still be worth the price, but we must never pretend that a price was not paid (335-6).

The passage is a clear example of the pitfalls of a methodological approach to A Portrait which relies upon the tenets of a classical rhetoric of irony.

16. MacCabe's primary concern is with the implications of "the end of a meta-language" for the reading subject in Joyce. In James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word (London: Methuen, 1978), he argues that interpretation as the search for meaning reaches an impasse in Joyce's later works (A Portrait, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake) where, in the absence of a narrative metalanguage, "both meaning and interpreter become functions of the traverse of the material of language" (2). For MacCabe the modality of irony in Joyce is inevitably implicated. He argues that Joycean irony is theoretically endless, since there are no fixed rules for interpreting ironic moments in an "authorless" text. Without this recuperative narrative

mechanism, he claims, "we are ... forced to rely on our own discourses to re-write and order the text" (31).

17. MacCabe, The Revolution of the Word, 31.

18. Levenson, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait - The Shape of Life," 1033.

19. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 202-3.

20. Hugh Kenner, Dublin's Joyce (London: Chatto, 1955), 129.

21. Parrinder, James Joyce, 83.

22. Joyce, A Portrait, 194.

23. Ibid, 179-80.

24. Harold Bloom, Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 238.

25. Ibid, 243.

26. Joyce, A Portrait, 72.

27. Ibid, 72-3.

28. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 203.

29. In an excellent paper, "Joyce and the Ideology of Character," in James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), Derek Attridge ingeniously plays on the meaning of the word "character" to explain the resistance of the Joycean subject to traditional attributions of personal identity. He argues that the later Joycean texts demand a conflation of the meaning of character as "an assemblage of consistent personal qualities" with the alternative sense of character as written sign in an historically-determined system. He writes: "[I]t is only in this double sense that we can legitimately talk of HCE and ALP as "characters" in Finnegans Wake: they are persons only insofar as they are at the same time letters scattered across the text" (154).

30. Joyce, A Portrait, 92-3.

31. Ellmann, "Disremembering Dedalus," 203.

32. Joyce, A Portrait, 93.

33. Calvin Thomas, "Stephen in Process, Stephen on Trial," Novel, 23 (1990), 293.

34. Joyce, A Portrait, 115.

35. Ibid, 115.

36. Ibid, 139-40.

37. Ibid, 95. This scene of semantic breakdown and self-loss bears an uncanny resemblance to the sublime street scene in Wordsworth's "Prelude." See chapter one, 24-25.

38. Ibid, 95-6.

39. Ibid, 15-16.

40. Ibid, 182.

41. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 197.

42. Joyce, A Portrait, 257.

CONCLUSION

1. James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (London: Faber, 1939), 181-182, 83.

2. Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 81.

3. Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London: Paladin, 1988), 175.

4. Ibid, 182.

5. There is no English equivalent for the French term mise en abyme: a casting into the abyss. I use the term here to describe the self-reflexive mirroring of the project of artistic representation. In pictorial terms the effects are evident in the Courbet painting, "La Source de la Loue," reproduced in chapter two, which depicts a surrogate painter figure standing before the indistinct space of a cave with what appears to be a paintbrush in his raised right hand. The trompe l'oeil features of modern art are a more dramatic example of the mise en abyme effect. Here an illusion of infinite regress is created by incorporating within the work a mirror image of the larger structure, setting up an apparently unending metonymic series.

6. Frederic Jameson makes a similar observation about the

representational mode of Lord Jim. In The Political Unconscious (London: Methuen, 1981), he describes the first half of Lord Jim as "écriture that approaching its narrative presence, its anecdotal centre, at once denies the possibility of such presence and spills us over into yet further sentence production and the further frustration of presence affirmed and denied." Yet, he continues, "this texture is not post-modern either insofar as the content projected by this free play of sentences on the ideological level turns out to be the now more traditional one: to search for narrative plenitude, narrative presence, is essentially to seek the unity of the act, or analytically to call into question." (222-223)

7. Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 162.

8. Ibid, 436.

9. Ibid, 152.

10. Ibid, 453.

11. Joyce, A Portrait, 7. The supremely allegorical activity of self-citation which characterises Joyce's Ulysses and Finnegans Wake is typical of postmodern texts such as John Barth's LETTERS, suggesting that the postmodern novel does not mark a departure from the high modernist novel, but rather consolidates the self-reflective allegorical tendencies of texts like Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. Appropriately, Maureen Quilligan argues in The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979): "We seem in the last quarter of the twentieth century to have re-entered an allegorical age" (155). Brian McHale similarly identifies a pervasive allegorical tendency in postmodernist literature. See his Postmodernist Fiction (London: Methuen, 1987), 140-147.

12. Joyce to Edmond Jaloux, cited by Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 714.

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