ALLEGORIES OF THE POSTMODERN:
THE WORK OF WILFRED WATSON AND R. MURRAY SCHAFER

by

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Abstract

The characteristic doubling of postmodern works of art is best seen in terms of an allegorical gesture that melancholics undertake in order to create life in an entity they consider dead and meaningless. Walter Benjamin has theorized the allegorical gesture and provides a basis for extending his understanding of modern allegory to the postmodern. The postmodern can be seen as a continuum that at its two extremes veers towards a deconstructive and a reconstructive impulse, respectively. While the former decentres meaning and authority, the latter reconstructs the two on the basis of an arbitrary allegorical construct that relies itself on audience belief which is generated in participatory rituals. Watson and Schafer exemplify the interdependencies of these two postmodern impulses and their emblematical qualities. Furthermore, they illustrate how melancholics view the world, how they imbue their works with a political agenda, and how they try to indoctrinate their audiences. Ultimately, the allegorical construct is as ideological as what it brutally replaces. An outward sign of the violence that is at the root of the allegorical gesture can be seen in the many acts of violence in Watson and Schafer. Watson's project ends in ambiguity because he ironically subverts his own authority so that the audience is left mocking the allegorical "message." Schafer, on the other hand, represses the challenge that this violence poses to his allegorical construct. Although he does not realize it, his work remains caught in ideology. Reconstructive postmodernism, as far as it depends on the author(ity) of allegory, is thus built on a validating act of the audience, which is a leap of faith rooted in ideology.

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Meine Mutter

Mein Vater

Hélène

sollen bedankt sein

Chapter 1

Prelude

The Argument

This dissertation is not about two authors but about allegories of the postmodern or, more precisely, about what I understand to be a continuum of the postmodern that veers at its one extreme toward a deconstructive impulse and at its other toward a reconstructive impulse. I use the authors merely as case studies that shed light upon discontinuous, postmodern attempts to confront contemporary crises of loss and desacralization.

Bringing together two authors who depict two discontinuous moments in a discontinuous postmodernity means (to a certain extent at least) accepting discontinuity as an organizing principle for this enquiry. This dissertation, then, does not aim at a tight unity because the result would be a sense of closure that impugns the discontinuity of the postmodern.

Still, formal affinities do exist between the authors. While not strong enough to provide a centre to the dissertation, they are strong enough to justify gathering the authors in one place to be analyzed with regard to their relations to postmodernism in general and postmodern allegory in particular. Such formal affinities are their exclusion from Canadian canons of theatre and poetry, their use of performative media, and,

most importantly, their use of allegory as their primary method of composition.

Even though at times I seem to compare the authors--an impression, imagined or real, that cannot be avoided in a study that of necessity must organize its material in a way that usually indicates comparison--it is not the primary objective of this dissertation to do so. As well, this dissertation is not a study of influence. The authors in question, to my knowledge, have not influenced each other, and I do not try to trace any mutual influences on them.

This dissertation, furthermore, is neither an analysis of the authors' entire work nor an exhaustive literary scrutiny of selected works from a variety of angles. Rather it is a study of selected works under specific criteria that I consider relevant to the postmodern. Hence it is a study in the history of ideas.

Finally, when considering Murray Schafer's international reputation as composer, readers may find it strange that I exclude his music. Nevertheless, I do so quite deliberately. It is my contention that his Patria cycle is primarily a multimedia accomplishment (not primarily a musical accomplishment) that deserves attention from many disciplines because it comments on our cultural condition in the late twentieth century. These comments, I think, are more easily accessible through a study that is situated somewhere between literature and theatre criticism than in musical criticism because the latter has to

find a way of relating its semiotics to culture at large.[1] This (necessary but difficult) harmonization of semiotic codes seems too much of a detour for a dissertation that in any case is neither focussed on Schafer's work alone, nor on Schafer as one of two authors, but on allegories of the postmodern.

[1] The schism between music and culture is a result of the fact that music is a non-conceptual semiotic system. (As Leonard Bernstein has shown in his Charles Eliot Norton lectures with regard to Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the status of "program" music collapses under close scrutiny so that only "absolute" music remains [ch. 2].) On the one hand, this semiotic condition of music serves as an advantage and accounts for the special philosophical status of music in the work of many aestheticians (such as Eduard Hanslick, who argued against Schopenhauer and Wagner by maintaining an "absolute" status for music), but, on the other, it also causes a deep-rooted incompatibility with other disciplines of enquiry.

Biographical Sketches

Wilfred Watson was born in England in 1911. He emigrated to Canada at the age of fifteen. He attained his B.A. in English literature from the University of British Columbia in 1943. For the remainder of the war, he served in the Canadian navy. After the war he con-

R. Murray Schafer was born in Sarnia, Ontario, in 1933. Even as a child, he showed considerable talent in both music and the fine arts. In his monograph devoted to Schafer, Stephen Adams speculates that the loss of sight in his right eye made him choose a career in music rather than in the fine arts (R. Murray Schafer 5). However, as Adams also points out and as a cursory look at his scores shows, not only did Schafer integrate both talents in an innova-

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I was born in Trier, a city founded as Augusta Treverorum by the Romans in 16 BC to supply the eastern border of their empire, the Limes, with troops and goods. At various points in elementary and secondary school, we covered this period of the

tinued his education at the University of Toronto and received an M.A. in 1946 and a Ph.D. in 1951. The same year, he became professor in the Department of English at the University of Alberta and taught until 1953 at its Calgary campus. In 1953, he moved to teach at the Edmonton campus, where he participated in an intellectual circle that included his wife Sheila Watson, the painter Norman Yates, and the

tive way, but he also developed his personal style of graphic illustration so much so that his scores have been exhibited in art galleries (6). Perhaps I can add to Adams's speculations by pointing out that, even in his childhood and adolescence, Schafer tried to recover loss by opting for meaningful alternatives which fill the void of loss.

After his high-school graduation, Schafer began studying piano and composition at the University of Toronto, but after only one year he was dismissed because of tensions between him and a number of his professors. From 1956 to 1961, he travelled in Europe and studied music as an autodidact.

In his first book, British Composers in Interview, which grew out of a series of interviews prepared for the CBC while he was

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city's history from various angles so that the Limes gradually emerged as a landmark roughly synomymous with the river Rhine beyond which there was unknown territory, inhabited by irrational, frightful barbarians who, needless to say, were never covered in the same lesson unit.

actor-directors Gordon Peacock and Thomas Peacocke among others. In the early 1960s, he co-founded the Jazz Club "Yardbird Suite" that, on occasion, served as a theatre venue.* In 1972, Watson joined the editorial group of White Pelican (a quarterly review of the arts). Sheila Watson founded White Pelican in 1971

* Wail for Two Pedestals, Chez-vous Comfortable Pew, and Thing in Black premièred at the Yardbird Suite in 1964, 1965, and 1967, respectively (Bessai, "Wilfred Watson" 382).

in England, Schafer showed himself very intrigued by the creative process. In the interviews, he attempts to draw out idiosyncracies as well as similarities of the composers' methods. But, as he points out in his introduction, the creative process remains ultimately a "mystery" that is unspeakable:

> It is always interesting to speak to creative artists. Interesting because it can never be entirely rewarding, for the mystery of the creative mind can never be fully exposed by speech alone. The precise definition of art lies in its being, not in its being talked about. Nevertheless, talking about art can be moving and exciting, especially when one is fortunate enough to be speaking to artists about their own work. (British Composers 13)

In Schafer's view, art and the creative mind do not expose themselves fully in speech but only in being, which is unspeakable.

Schafer's view of the creative act has a romantic air about it, and he has often been

Having been exposed to these sentiments day-in and day-out for the better part of my life, I sometimes caught myself being astonished that it was so easy to cross the Limes when I went from Trier to, say, Frankfurt. Despite all geographical education and empirical proof to the contrary, the "other" side of

and continued publishing it until 1976.* Wilfred Watson retired from the University of Alberta in 1977 and moved in 1980 to Nanaimo where he lives with his wife Sheila in a house overlooking a small lagoon.

Watson's creative career went through several periods during

* The first issue was published in Winter 1971 and the last in Spring 1976 (5.2). Wilfred Watson edited issues 2.4 (Fall 1972) and 4.1 (Winter 1974). The editorial group included Sheila Watson, Stephen Scobie, Douglas Barbour, John Orrell, Norman Yates, Wilfred Watson, and Dorothy Livesay, who left the group in 1972.

called a romantic (Adams, R. Murray Schafer 31). During his stay in Europe, he also wrote E.T.A. Hoffmann and Music, a study in which he grapples with romanticism and what it means to him.* Schafer's attitude towards romanticism is highly ambivalent. Noting at first that "one might be tempted to agree . . . that the nineteenth century really did represent some pinnacle of musical expression never again to be attained," he admits only a page later that "today many romantic sentiments elicit self-conscious-

* Schafer wrote E.T.A. Hoffmann and Music between 1960 and 1963 but only published it in 1975. Adams comments: "The book may disappoint readers primarily interested in Hoffmann's texts; Schafer translates only nine of Hoffmann's musical pieces, and the bulk of the volume is Schafer's distillation of early romantic attitudes. Still, Schafer's is the only book-length study in English of Hoffmann's musical romanticism" (R. Murray Schafer 32).

the Limes had never become quite real to me until I partook in a string of events that convinced me not only of the reality of the other side but also of the fact that this Other is not so much unknown as it is repressed, in reality an integral and necessary part of the worldview I had been taught in my youth.

which he focussed on different genres. Perhaps it is not wrong to interpret his career as an ongoing search for a genre that would fulfill all of his creative ambitions. These ambitions are primarily, it seems, to create an art that is at once Canadian and performative.*

* Watson scribbled a note onto a typescript of The Trial of Corporal Adam that illuminates his search for a Canadian genre: "If an ethnic writer is one with a double allegiance, their runs [the performances of Corporal Adam] was my last ethnic production. Sometime after I wrote this, I wrote, 'I shot a trumpet into my brain', which masked my break with the homeland, by using a form, [which,] though not absolutely Canadian,

ness and diffidence" (E.T.A. Hoffmann 3-4). This self-consciousness is the result of a different outlook on the world that he expresses poignantly: "The spectacle of Beethoven playing C-sharp minor arpeggios by moonlight on the Danube is difficult to bring into view now that moonlight has been replaced by neon* and all the rivers are

* Schafer later devoted a choral composition to a related idea, namely that of the decline of the symbolic value of the moon, listen to Epitaph for Moonlight. In it, he mourns the loss of the moon as a symbol that humans dismantled with the moonlanding in 1969. As a text, he uses onomatopoeic words for moonlight invented by seventh-grade students in 1966. Schafer asked them to "create a more suggestive word in a private language to substitute for 'moonlight'" (The Thinking Ear 184). He comments about Epitaph: "I doubt whether a group of young people today asked to produce synonyms for moonlight could find inspiration so easy as did my young poets in 1966. The moon as a numinous and mythogenic symbol died in 1969. It is now merely a piece of property--and moonlight will soon rhyme with neon." And he adds melancholically, "The moon is dead, I saw her die" (221. I am quoting from Schafer's preface to a facsimile reproduction of the score which appears on 222-27.).

One spring, because unusually heavy snowfalls had occurred in the middle mountain ranges of Hunsrück and Eifel, the Rhine overflowed its banks in Cologne, turning the oldest part of town, the Altstadt, into a quagmire of polluted waters and mud. What added to the singularity of the event was the crowd of

T.S. Eliot accepted his first volume of poetry, Friday's Child, for Faber and Faber. It was published in 1955, and Watson received a Canadian Governor General's Award for it. His next volume of poetry, The Sorrowful Canadians, had to wait until

polluted" (4). Significantly, Schafer chooses to express his ambivalence towards romanticism by referring to the loss of a romantic symbol, namely moonlight, and the loss of a worldview that does not have to take into consideration environmental pollution. Loss, to him, is an obstacle to achieving the romantic state of mind. Schafer thus is torn between wanting to be romantic and seeing that romanticism today is really impossible.

Early in his career, Schafer was searching for an answer to a question that kept coming back to him. The question was "What is music?" Because he could not produce a satisfactory answer, he wrote letters to many distinguished composers and scholars containing merely this direct question. The

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was virtually so, the form which culminated in The Sorrowful Canadians" (Watson Archives, Box 6, ts., U of Alberta, Edmonton, verso of p.1).

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several thousand people that gathered one Sunday afternoon on the Hohenzollern-bridge crossing the Rhine near the cathedral. The crowd was there to watch what had happened in the overnight battle between city and river. It was a carnivalesque atmosphere that marked that crowd--"carnivalesque" in the sense of

1972.* The late 1950s and early 1960s were a period of reorientation during which he shifted his artistic focus to drama. During his tenure of a Canadian Government Overseas Fellowship in Paris, 1955-1956, he learned about and took an interest in

* Watson, however, continued to publish poetry in journals, see bibliography. Also, the section "Bawl of Wool" (first published in Poems 63-144) with its two sequences "poems by Jenny Blake" and "letters for the bach. of wire" falls stylistically at the beginning or middle of his dramatic period because they do not exhibit the ritualistic repetitions characteristic of the poems written after "I Shot a Trumpet into my Brain."

one response that impressed him, influenced him, and that he remembers vividly more than thirty years later was John Cage's.* Schafer has since included Cage's definition in an educational tract entitled "The New Soundscape." Cage wrote:

> Music is sounds, sounds around us whether we're in or out of concert halls--see Thoreau. (qtd. in The Thinking Ear 94)

Cage's definition signifies to Schafer a trend in twentieth century music to overcome more exclusive definitions of music. Furthermore, the reference to Thoreau's Walden connects this new concept of music to environmental sounds. Enthusiastically,

* Schafer made these comments in conversation to me in 1993.

confronting an irrational entity whose power the crowd feared yet haughtily defied.* This crowd was knit together into a

* I choose the term "carnivalesque" for two reasons. On the one hand, the atmosphere in Cologne, a city known world-wide for its carnival parade, is very conducive to turning carnivalesque at a moment's notice. While living in Cologne, I heard a fine anecdote that illustrates the carnivalesque defiance of authority: after Hitler came to power, he staged massive Nazi parades through all major cities. In Cologne, however, rumor has it that some

the theatre of the absurd. The following year, he directed Ionesco's The Bald Soprano at the University of Alberta Studio Theatre. Watson pursued his interest in the theatre of the absurd with his own short absurd play, The Whatnot, for the interfaculty drama festival at the University of Alberta Studio Theatre in November 1959.*

* Bessai, Prairie Performance 181. The Whatnot is unpublished. The typescript is in the Watson archives, U of Al-

Schafer spells out some implications of Cage's definition:

> Behold the new orchestra: the sonic universe! And the new musicians: anyone and anything that sounds! (95)

Furnished with an understanding of music along Cagian lines, Schafer was prepared and ready to direct a leading-edge enquiry into the sounding environments of the world.

In 1965, Schafer became director of the "World Soundscape Project" at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C. Here he could devote himself to soundscape research as well as to his creative work which included the first parts of the Patria cycle.* Dur-

* Activities of the World Soundscape Project included documentary recordings of some Vancouver sound marks (included in The Vancouver Soundscape) and a study of five European village soundscapes. Schafer began work on Patria 1 in 1966 and finished it in 1974. Patria 2 was finished in 1972.

community by a catastrophe that occurred in plain view beneath it yet could not touch it: the crowd was on the Limes, in a

people lining the streets yelled--to the Nazis' consternation--not "Heil Hitler" but "candy, throw us candy" ("Kamelle, dunn os Kamelle") because, if there is a parade in Cologne, surely, it must be a carnival parade, and the custom is to throw candy to the people.

On the other hand, Bakhtin's theorization of carnival provides a link between my experience and some of the works under scrutiny in my dissertation.

As the notebooks in the Watson Archives at the University of Alberta show, Watson started work on his first major play, Cockcrow and the Gulls, in 1955 and finished it in 1960.* It was first performed at the Studio Theatre in March 1962. Watson worked closely

berta, Edmonton, Box 6, grey folder, 36 pp.

* Box 2 of the Watson archives contains all notebooks and folders related to Cockcrow and the Gulls. They are dated from 1955-1960.

ing this time, he realized how influential the surrounding soundscape was on his compositions.

During his tenure at SFU, Schafer wrote The Tuning of the World,* a study of sounding environments (urban, rural, and natural) that single-handedly laid the foundations for the new interdisciplines of "acoustic ecology" and "acoustic design" (205 and passim). Schafer defines acoustic ecology as "the study of sounds in relationship to life and society" (205). He maintains that acoustic ecology cannot remain confined to the laboratory but that it must examine on location the effects of the acoustic en-

* Schafer originally published The Tuning of the World in 1977. It was reprinted in 1994 under the title The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World.

state of liminality, watching the irrational onslaught, not of the barbarians on the Romans, but of nature on civilization. Hovering in security over that spectacle, the crowd was in between opposing forces, gaining a dizzying perspective that gave way to a celebration. In that celebration, the liminal posi-

with the Studio Theatre where Gordon Peacock and Thomas Peacocke, both of whom were associated with the Department of Theatre, brought many of his plays to the stage.* He also collaborated with Norman Yates, a painter who taught in the Department of Fine Arts and with whom he shared an interest in the effect of the environment on the creatures living in it. Only the last of four parts, "Toward Acoustic Design," focuses on defining this new discipline. Acoustic ecology is the basis for acoustic design because, Schafer argues, "only a total appreciation of the acoustic environment can give us the resources for improving the orchestration of the world soundscape" (4). In other words, first we must determine and know what is wrong with the current soundscape. Schafer warns:

> The soundscape of the world is changing. Modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustic environment radically different from any he has hitherto known. These new sounds, which differ in quality and intensity from those of the past, have alerted many researchers to the dangers of an indiscriminate and imperialistic spread of more and larger sounds into every corner of man's life. Noise pollution is now a world problem. It would seem that the world soundscape has reached an apex of vulgarity in our time, and many experts have predicted universal deafness as the ultimate consequence unless

* Gordon Peacock directed the première of Cockcrow and the Gulls in 1962, and Thomas Peacocke directed O Holy Ghost Dip your Finger in the Blood of Canada and Write I Love You in 1967 and Gramsci x 3 in 1986 (Plays 605).

tion began crumbling and the crowd eventually crossed over into irrationality; that is, instead of watching the spectacle of a contest between civilization and nature, the crowd derided other people's misfortune that was ultimately their own.

est in the theories of Marshall McLuhan.*

In the early 1960s, Watson made contact with Marshall McLuhan through Sheila Watson, who was a Ph.D.-student of McLuhan's. He was a great but critical admirer of McLuhan. Their collaboration culminated in the study From Cliché to Archetype in which they

* Yates designed the sets and costumes for many of Watson's plays: Cockcrow and the Gulls, Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan, and Up Against the Wall Oedipus, to name the most important (Beauchamp 38-40).

> the problem can be brought quickly under control. (3)

In this way, the ultimate consequence of the degeneration of the soundscape is a universal loss of hearing. Schafer thinks we should prevent that loss by striving for aesthetic standards according to which we can evaluate the soundscape. These standards, however, are not purely aesthetic; they often veer toward the spiritual or pragmatic.

A good example of these tendencies is Schafer's discussion of silence. Arguing that in Western societies silence has come to signify the absence of life and is overwrought with negative connotations, he pleads for a "recovery of positive silence" (258). This connotation of silence dis-

"Liminality" to me, then, signifies being in a position between Self and Other, between reason and irrationality, between what I know and what I fear. Being in this position allows one to spy out the feared Other of irrationality without

redefined both concepts in light of McLuhan's media theory.

In the 1970s, Watson devoted himself almost exclusively to poetry. He published several volumes that featured idiosyncratic notation methods. In The Sorrowful Canadians, he tries to achieve a polyphonic notation method by using different typefaces and repetitions. Later, in I Begin With Counting, he introduces his Number Grid Verse (NGV), a

appeared from the West at about the same time as the Christian mystics (such as Meister Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, Angela de Foligno) died. Linking silence to contemplation and even concentration illustrates the interpenetration of aesthetic, spiritual and pragmatic standards in Schafer's approach toward acoustic design (258).

Taking the soundscape of the world as a musical composition, Schafer remarks that "we are simultaneously its audience, its performers and its composers" (205). While the metaphor of "orchestrating the soundscape" may at first appear like an urge to determine and even control the soundscape, he qualifies this notion as follows:

> Acoustic design should never become design control from above. It is rather a matter of the retrieval

going all the way, that is, without actually crossing over into unknown territory. I suspect, however, that the dichotomy of Self and Other is not as rigorous as I have described it although it is subject to constant remappings onto other dicho-

method of notation that combines numerals and words in order to facilitate performance.

After not writing for the stage for most of the 1970s, he returned to writing for the stage with a short play, The Woman Taken in Adultery, that was performed at the Edmonton Theatre Fringe Festival in 1987. A major play, Gramsci x 3, followed in the early 1980s and combines the ritual repetitions of the early 1970s with the

> of a significant aural culture, and that is a task for everyone. (206)

The retrieval of a significant aural culture has aesthetic, spiritual and pragmatic functions. It recapitulates in a nutshell the focus of Schafer's striving: all his talents contribute in some way to this goal.

In 1975, Schafer relinquished his position at SFU and moved to a farm near Indian River, Ontario. The rural soundscape changed his music. His works have since become more environmental both in the sense of making natural sounds an integral part of his compositions and of providing his audiences with the insight that the human being is a part and not the dominator of nature. He also has become actively involved in performances of his theatrical work that have

tomies that draw their legitimacy from the original one. Yet these mappings seem to project a repressed part of the Self onto the outside world so that the Self can deal with a repressed part of itself as an Other in an objective way rather

NGV of the late 1970s into a performative spectacle. Thomas Peacocke directed the play for the Studio Theatre in 1986.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Watson devoted much of his time to preparing anthologies of his poetry (Poems, 1986), drama (Plays, 1989) and short fiction (The Baie Comeau Angel, 1993).

earned him an international reputation as a music-theatrical innovator. Furthermore, at the age of sixty, he is a renowned lecturer and consultant on soundscape and environmental issues.

Murray Schafer has won numerous musical awards, the most distinguished of which was the first Glenn Gould prize in 1988. In 1993, the first international conference on acoustic ecology took place at the Banff Centre for the Arts in honor of Schafer's sixtieth birthday. In reference to his ground-breaking book on soundscape studies, the conference had the title "The Tuning of the World."

than confront its own incongruencies. Furthermore, the liminal position suspends social or rationally conditioned behavior in favor of a carnivalesque community that reacts less obediently to authority.

Now I would like to note some of the parallels that exist between Watson and Schafer and that lead to explorations of the postmodern. In three allegorical poems written during his period of reorientation, Watson sketches a vision of a performative art that is specifically Canadian. Included in this vision, however, is an ironical subversion of extant myths and paradigms of creating art. This subversion is not unlike the deconstructive impulse that in several critics' views constitutes postmodernism.[2]

After his tenure at the World Soundscape Project at SFU, Schafer articulated an allegorical vision of North and Northern art. This vision describes a turn towards local values and towards ritualistic art that frequently has an environmental agenda. Schafer's vision, however, includes the decline of what he views as "Canada" and "Canadian" art because of a reliance on so-called universal values. The critique of these universal values is also not unlike the deconstructive impulse of postmodernism.

[2] Critics who note the deconstructive impulse of postmodernism include Linda Hutcheon ("It is difficult to separate the politicizing impulse of postmodern art from the deconstructing impulse of what we have labelled 'poststructuralist' theory" ["Postmodernism's Ironic Paradoxes" 111-12]), Craig Owens ("The Allegorical Impulse"), and Suzi Gablik (The Reenchantment of Art).

With these visions, I argue, the authors position themselves at a liminal point between what they know and what they fear. At this liminal point, they encounter anOther that provides access to various unspeakables.[3]

[3] Henceforth I will write "anOther," not "the Other," in order to allow for the possibility of other Others. Furthermore, I write "anOther," not "an Other," to indicate the nonspecificity of this concept.

The Work of Wilfred Watson

I have chosen to analyze three of Watson's plays from the 1960s that invariably integrate versions of the Last Judgment. The Last Judgment, of course, is the trial that will end all trials. Watson employs the Last Judgment as an absolute allegory that will end all allegories because it promises to achieve an ultimate signified, namely divine and absolute justice. If it could be achieved, this justice would satisfy once and for all the pursuit of truth and responsibility that Watson is so concerned about throughout his work. Nonetheless, Watson illustrates time and again the profound injustice of Last Judgments. As a matter of course, a (divine) redemption takes place that is as unjust as the verdicts were. In the last scenes of the plays, Watson derides the redemption and encourages the audience to participate in the

The Work of R. Murray Schafer

As is evident from Murray Schafer's biographical sketch, experiences of loss have touched him in important ways. Everywhere he turns, he experiences loss: the loss of the human capacity to integrate meaningful rituals in everyday life, the loss of natural sounds, the loss of historically human-produced sounds, the loss of the human capacity to listen properly, and the loss of the positive experience of silence are concrete manifestations of this loss. The multiple loss affects the quality of human relations to the environment, especially the sounding environment.

One manner of coping with loss is manifest in Schafer's artistic work. I argue that

derision and take sides with a stance that declares life to be an endless struggle without hope for Last Judgments or redemption. Constitutive of Watson's stance, I argue, are his strong Catholic beliefs in original sin and an inescapable, collective guilt. The recognition that there is no redemption, that all that remains is an endless struggle, must be devastating to the Catholic Watson. His recognition is unspeakable, and he cannot re-present it but must present it to the audience in a participatory ritual.

In Gramsci x 3, Watson reinterprets Antonio Gramsci's life in terms of the Christian Calvary. In reversing the calvary, Watson suggests that this ritual is interminable because any end is merely another beginning. Thus, Watson again confronts the audience with his unspeakable recognition that all that remains is an endless struggle.

Watson's recognition leads to a melancholy that underlies an allegori- the contemplation of loss leads him to use allegorical modes because they supply him with the necessary authority to recover the loss by re-inscribing a meaningless world with new meaning. Moreover, the allegorical mode facilitates the integration of a didactic slant in his work.

Because the destruction of natural habitats in the late twentieth century occurs at a stunning rate, loss touches his audience in a manner similar to the way it touches him. This is where the didactic slant in many of his works has its origin: he wants to make his audience aware of the loss, and he wants them to respond to the experience of loss, either by following his lead or else their own intuitions.

cal gesture through which he invests his dead world with new meaning. He uses theatre in radical ways to recover a performative paradigm that he perceives as absent. With the term "radical," I want to indicate, on the one hand, Watson's intention to return to the "roots" of drama, namely secular and religious rituals, and on the other his idiosyncratic extension of the theatre of the absurd.

Wilfred Watson wants to bring about radical change from within the theatre itself. In his view, theatre must be reinvented as a revolutionary art form. Watson shares the McLuhanesque insight that "revolutionary" means re-inventing the wheel (Plays 433); in other words, revolutions take old forms and give them new meaning. Watson applies this general insight to the theatre by inscribing theatre with a new meaning that he describes as "radical absurdity." Radical absurdity, according to Watson, aids him in celebrating a postmodern freedom that

In order to illustrate how Schafer's allegorical methods influence his environmental artistic work, let me here briefly analyze his composition Music for Wilderness Lake. In this work, Schafer positions twelve trombones around a wilderness lake.* Because the idea of a conductor is anti-thetical to the piece's listening experience, all musicians play from full scores. Still, the distance between musicians poses problems of coordination that Schafer resolves by having a raft in the centre of the lake from which two people coor-

* The CBC commissioned Music for Wilderness Lake and the Canadian trombone ensemble Sonaré premièred the piece on a wilderness lake in central Ontario in September 1979. The premiere is documented on film (by Fichman-Sweete) and tape (by CBC Radio).

radically decenters the modern human being who cultivated a unified but one-dimensional consciousness by creating a visually oriented culture based on the book. Because media do not merely extend our senses (as McLuhan contends) but constitute new senses (as Watson argues), the proliferation of mass media causes a proliferation of senses. Humans living with the postmodern, then, are moving towards multi-consciousness. Like the new media, this state of awareness is aurally and not visually structured.

In Watson's view, the theatre of the absurd is a step towards radical absurdity. In "Towards a Canadian Theatre," he writes: "What theatre of the absurd is about, is the birth of a new kind of mind, through the labour pangs of the old simple-minded book mind" (58).

We can glean some characteristics of the theatre of the absurd from Esslin's The Theatre of the Absurd. dinate the music with coloured flags.*

In congruence with John Cage's non-traditional definition of music, Music for Wilderness Lake recasts our conception of music because Schafer's insistence on site-specificity ensures that the sounds of the wilderness lake become part of his composition. However, in being part of the composition, these sounds have changed their semiotic import because Schafer has re-inscribed them with a new (musical) meaning. This re-inscription exemplifies the allegorical gesture that takes off from Schafer's perception of loss, be it the loss of the human capacity to listen pro-

* In his "Composer's Notes," Schafer provides an account of how the piece developed (Music for Wilderness Lake n. pag.). During the première, Murray Schafer and his wife Jean semaphored the cues to the musicians.

Esslin's principal representatives of the theatre of the absurd are Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco and Jean Genet. Their plays from the 1950s for the most part tackle a "metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition" (23-24) in such a way that their form, as much and even more than their content, presents this anguish. Characteristic of these plays are elementary situations with which the audience readily identifies. Related to this presentation is the fact that the theatre of the absurd often reduces language to a subordinate role (395-98). Esslin specifically comments on this reduction of language in order to set the theatre of the absurd off from traditional, literary theatre.

Watson's theatre provides a contrast to these characteristics. Where the theatre of the absurd presents elementary situations, Watson presents highly complex and even incomprehensible settings. Furthermore, Watson's perly to the sounds of a wilderness lake or the loss of these sounds themselves. The intense melancholic contemplation of this loss has rendered the soundscape of a wilderness lake meaningless or dead to Schafer. In an unspeakable and unheard way then, Schafer's piece contains the very possibility of the death of a wilderness lake. By means of his melancholic mourning, he is recreating this soundscape in an enhanced version, as it were, with trombones.*

In order to grasp the full import of Schafer's allegorical gesture in Music for Wil-

* The term "soundscape" is Schafer's. He defines it as follows: "I call the acoustic environment the soundscape, by which I mean the total field of sounds wherever we are. It is a word derived from landscape, though, unlike it, not strictly limited to the outdoors" (A Sound Education 8). The term has become widely accepted and is used as a key term in musicological and ecological discourses to describe acoustic environments.

settings are peopled with allegorical and mythical characters that require a fair amount of prior knowledge to be understood in the contexts Watson lays out for them. Inaccessibility, for Watson, seems to be a virtue that he tries to achieve at all cost.

Watson also denounces the reduction of language as a trend he does not wish to emulate. In "Towards a Canadian Theatre," he characterizes language as a mode of behavior that slowly metamorphoses into environmental language. In his view, the theatre must learn to speak that new language and not escape it (55).

Watson's diverse experiments in the notation of poetry betray his interest in the sounding poem where he tries to initiate a dialogue between the eye and the ear of the recipient. He perceives this dialogue, which he considers essential to effective poetry, to be largely absent in poetry. McLuhan's media theory provides an explanation for this ab-

derness Lake, it is necessary to shift the scrutiny of the composition and the author's underlying motivations to a scrutiny of the recipients and the composition's effects on them. On the one hand, the recipients become aware of the ritual of going to a wilderness lake--a journey that may (depending on the remoteness of the lake) take on qualities of a pilgrimage. As well, coming to the shore of a wilderness lake in order to listen to trombones playing in uncommon surroundings is a ritual that turns a group of individuals into a community devoted to one activity, namely apprehending the soundscape of a wilderness lake through Schafer's music. Most people live in urban environments and seldom have the opportunity to listen to a natural sound-

sence. McLuhan argues that since the invention of the printing press we have lived in a culture determined by the book and the eye. In this way, the rise of a visual culture put an end to the aural culture of the pre-Gutenberg era. At present, however, electro-acoustic media force us to switch back to an aural culture, a development that leads to a predominance of orality:

> Empathic identification with all the oral modes is not difficult in our century. In the electronic age which succeeds the typographic and mechanical era of the past five hundred years, we encounter new shapes and structures of human interdependence and of expression which are "oral" in form even when the components of the situation may be non-verbal. (The Gutenberg Galaxy 2-3)

In other words, there is a contemporary shift from a predominance of the eye back to the ear. Watson wants to reflect this shift in his poetry through a dialogue between the eye and the ear.

In his Number Grid Verse (NGV) notation, Watson in my view aims at such a dialogue between eye and ear. Accordingly, he claims that in NGV, a scape, a circumstance that only adds to the impact of the ritual.

By exposing the recipients to the impending loss of an endangered soundscape (one which Schafer in fact perceives as already lost), he tries to foster an attitude in the recipients that would make them become actively involved in attempts to preserve nature. In other words, Schafer does not aim at a temporary transportation of participants and recipients, but rather he intends a permanent transformation.* Schafer writes:

> Several performers assured me that the natural soundscape of the lake affected them and was affected by their playing; others said that the experience provoked "pantheistic" sensations. All agreed that the event (unlike many traditional

* I use the terms "transportation" and "transformation" as suggested by Richard Schechner (Between Theatre and Anthropology 4; see also chapter five).

transformation from visual to acoustic space occurs, in which the eye has to sort words and numerals into groups for the ear to recognize. For this transformation to occur, the reader must perform the NGV. Performance also enhances the polyphonic possibilities of multi-voiced NGV which stacks several voices, as in "hokku times three":

```
                    1
                    1  momently
          momently  1  following
                    2
         following  2
                 a  2  readimix
                    3  a
                    3
     concrete-mixer 3  over
                     readimix  4  concrete-mixer
                               4
                          the  4  high
              over  5  the
                    5  and
             level  5  bridge
                         high  6  level
                        below  6
                          and  6  below
            bridge  7
           flowing  7  the
               the  7  north
                        below  8  below
                        north  8  saskatchewan
                saskatchewan   8  river
     9  below
     9  river
     9  flowing  (I Begin With Counting n. pag.)
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NGV illustrates Watson's working method in that he re-invents an old form,

> concerts) would never be forgotten--a reaction echoed by a few visitors who accompanied us to Wilderness Lake for that first performance in September 1979. (Music for Wilderness Lake n. pag.)

A ritualistic and subtle (allegorical) instruction thus evokes in the recipients a similar experience of loss as is at the root of Schafer's composition. In Patria, Schafer uses similar methods as in Music for Wilderness Lake in his attempt to instruct the audience. In the process of expanding the cycle from a trilogy to twelve parts, Schafer felt it necessary to introduce Patria with a separate prologue, The Princess of the Stars. This prologue provokes considerable revaluation and recontextualization of Patria 1: The Characteristics Man. The recontextualization of The Characteristics Man functions primarily to instruct the

the Japanese haiku. A haiku consists of 17 syllables; Watson's number grids consist of 17 slots. These slots, however, can be left empty or filled with words, phrases or entire sentences. Watson also preserves in NGV an overall reliance on precise sensory images which is a constitutive feature of the haiku.

spectators on how to become a community, just as it tells the performing ensemble how to become a team creating "co-opera," as it were.* Hence the ritual as allegory becomes, by dint of its instructive slant, the allegory as ritual. Schafer's rituals, then, are contingent on his authority as allegorist.

* The term is Schafer's (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 36).

Chapter 2

Visions of Beginning

Before immersing myself in theory, I would like to consider briefly the worlds these two artists have created. I do not intend to provide full-fledged analyses in this chapter. As a matter of course, references to my theoretical apparatus are few and take the form of an occasional foreshadowing. What I do intend, however, is to transport my reader into a state of benign apprehension in which an intuitional reading of the selected texts is possible. I contend that the more Watson and Schafer tend towards the reconstructive end of the postmodern continuum, the more they exhort such intuitions from their audience.

Wilfred Watson and R. Murray Schafer have both created works that seem inaccessible. Watson's poetry and drama seem, on first sight, very abstract and not at all concerned with a recipient's understanding of them. Schafer's Patria, likewise, seems at first overwhelming because of its many sequels and its use of many different media. Nonetheless, both authors also write shorter texts that serve to mediate between their idiosyncratic works and what they view and construct as larger, explanatory contexts. The "Sermon on Bears" section of Watson's Poems and Schafer's Music in the Cold sketch visions of Canada and its art that serve as programs for their allegories of the postmodern.

Decolonizing the North:

Schafer's "Music in the Cold"

Formally, Music in the Cold consists of five discrete but unmarked sections. These sections present Schafer's North (that is, his construction of what he believes is "North"), his views on how modern society exploits this North, and his projections of how this North will take revenge on modern society and how humans can live in harmony with this North.

In section I, consisting of 71 lines,* he describes an art and life-style of the North and situates himself as "a Northerner." In section II, he describes the colonization of the North and the foundation of "Canada," here thought to be an economic construct furthering the exploitation of the

* I am referring to the reprint of Music in the Cold in Schafer's On Canadian Music 64-74, cited hereafter as MIC. Section I is on pp. 64-66.

Obscuring the Program:

Watson's "Sermon on Bears"

The "Sermon on Bears"-section of Watson's Poems includes "Laurentian Man," "A Manifesto for Beast Poetry," and "Sermon on Bears." Watson first published these poems between 1959 and 1961.* They originate in the period of reorientation in which Watson started writing plays.

In these poems, Watson relates how he views Canadian artists and audiences. Moreover, he sketches in a programmatic fashion the outlines of a new art that would redefine the

* "Laurentian Man" was first published in Prism 1.1 (September 1959); "A Manifesto for Beast Poetry" in Canadian Literature 3 (Winter 1960); and "Sermon on Bears" in Prism 2.2 (Winter 1961). Throughout this chapter, I refer to their reprint in Poems 45-58.

North. This section has 40 lines (66-68). In section III, Schafer presents a "Canada" that prospers because of the ruthless pursuit of progress. This section is the longest and takes up 121 lines (68-71). In the following section (IV), Schafer describes the repossession of the North by the North. This decline of "Canada" takes up 55 lines (71-73). In the fifth and last section, taking up 45 lines (73-74), Schafer sketches a new beginning for himself and a handful of people who stay behind after the breakdown of Canada. Sections I and V function like a frame within which we are invited to behold the exploitation of the North and its recovery and revenge. This frame is intensely personal, allegorical and utopian.

Schafer, thus, provides the listener with his beliefs about how and why modern Canadian society violates the North as he understands it. Moreover, he sketches an alternative life-style that would cease violating his North. How-

relationship between artist and audience. I see the "Sermon on Bears" poems as a key to Watson's allegorical method as he employs it in his plays and riddles. The keynote in this program is a movement from passive observation to ritualistic, active participation. From this perspective, a melancholic Watson experiences art as dead and creates a new performative paradigm that quickens art again. However, Watson is enough of a skeptic to question the probability of his program. In this way, he ironically subverts his program and his status as a melancholic author/creator.

Watson's "Laurentian Man" (Poems 47-49) recounts the history of cultural colonialism by rewriting the Judaic-Christian creation myth. Watson glosses the title "Laurentian Man" with

ever, I also see Music in the Cold as an introduction to Schafer's allegorical method. From this perspective, I behold a melancholic author/creator who uses the (self-proclaimed) death of his world to shape it according to his views and beliefs. But let us start with a close reading of the text.

In Music in the Cold, Schafer constructs the North in contrast to the South: "Northern geography is all form. Southern geography is color and texture" (MIC 65). With regard to lifestyle and energy consumption, he associates the North with conservation, while the South, in his view, is opulent. From these characteristics, Schafer expands his dichotomous notion of the North and South to the point where it produces distinct and, of course, dichotomous kinds of art: in the North, he detects the "art of restraint" and in the South the "art of excess" (65). The former consists in "tiny events," while the latter consists in "fat events that don't matter" (65).

a Latin phrase "Homo novissimum canadiensis" (47), which means "the new Canadian man." This footnote adds the Latin name of the species much in the manner of the scientific discourse of anthropology. The first line of the poem, however, alludes to the creation myth before repeating the technical term, so that mythical and scientific discourses exist ironically side by side: "When indefatigable God decided to make a new man, homo canadiensis" (47).

This ironic tone is extended by introducing words that question the creation myth and in this way subvert its authority. God is called "indefatigable" and a "pioneer of creation." He has to try three times to make the Laurentian Shield bring forth life, "of a sort," as the narrator ironically comments. Once God has

Schafer's construction consists of a number of dichotomies positing North and South as the two poles of a continuum. The assumption of such a continuum allows him to integrate the seasons into his view of a timeless contest between North and South:

> Between [northern glacier and southern jungle], rolling land masses become formal in winter and technicolor in summer as the claw of the arctic stretches south then leaps back to escape the flatulence of the tropics. (65)

This passage, then, reveals that Schafer's North is not "North of 60." Rather, his North is in his mind--it is merely a lifestyle tenuously dependent on northern characteristics, such as cold, snow and wolves. At any rate, in the preface to Music in the Cold, Schafer admits that his North is "in south-central Ontario near Algonquin Park" (64). To Schafer, it seems, "North" serves as a particularly apt metaphor for depicting certain strategies of preserving wilderness and developing lifestyles that depend on regional characteristics and do not exploit them. As well, this metaphor tends

created the Laurentian man, the narrator remarks about God: "He all but gave up the ghost, / Self-crucified in a wanton act of creation" (47). The image of God Watson creates is quite unlike that of the original creation myth. All of these comments make up an ironic subtext to the retelling of the creation myth. It is against this subtext that we read Watson's description of Eve's creation and of cultural colonialism in stanzas 5 to 7.

Creating an Eve for his Adam is a quasi sexual act for God. Brushing aside all doubts, God creates Eve from Adam's backbone "as if engaged in seduction" (48). To make Adam stand up to his Eve, God decides that "although she is all backbone, he must be educated" (48, emphasis in original). The ensuing colonial-

towards dichotomizations because once one is in the north, east and west disappear as positional markers and every other position is south so that one's worldview is reduced to "here" (north) and "not-here" (south).

The method underlying Schafer's construction of the North is reminiscent of the manichean dichotomies that colonialism erects in order to deal with anOther it encounters on alien territory. Commonly, these dichotomies acquire moral and even metaphysical connotations that expand into allegories. An example is racial difference in colonial discourses.* That Schafer in this first section of Music in the Cold uses this method with similar moral and metaphysical connotations reveals that his discourse on the North is not yet a discourse of the North. In other words, Schafer must overcome colonialist patterns of conceptualizing ist education presents a bastion of male dominance. In God's mind, a "good foreign, European, education" consists entirely of studying male artists and their works: for music, Wagner, Brahms, Beethoven; for painting, Rubens and Rembrandt; for literature, Rabelais and Shakespeare; for dramatic characters, Julius Caesar and Coriolanus (48). Yet to God's surprise and disappointment the Canadian Adam is unimpressed with these European achievements:

> O, this new man's soul was cut
> from such dead granite,
> That, though his professors tried
> all their wit,
> God had to call them off, lest
> culture itself perish. (48)

The interpretation of this passage seems to turn on how one reads the adjective "dead." What does it mean that a soul is cut from dead granite? The first response would be to read

* See Abdul R. JanMohamed's "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature."

the world before he can truly capture his North.

Notwithstanding the colonialist patterns, Schafer reverses the dichotomies: it is not, as usual, the colonizer who is "good," but the colonized. In this way, Schafer assimilates his North into a morally spotless sphere of self-discipline and necessary energy conservation, while the South emerges as a wasteful and voluptuous presence:

> Of necessity, conservation of energy begins in the North.
> It begins with lean stomach and strong bow.
> Prodigality is centred in the South, and the waste of energy begins at the mouth. (MIC 65)

Furthermore, these dichotomies give rise to a consideration of the northern soundscape and its impact on the content and form of northern art. Schafer embraces this consideration as a means of instruction to "those accustomed to fat events that don't matter [because] to them the winter soundscape is 'silent' as snow is merely 'white'" (65). As a matter of course, the text also addresses them directly, positing that anyone who reads Music in the Cold is "dead" as indicating "unresponsive." However, the dead granite is merely unresponsive to the culture with which it is confronted, namely the imported European "master" pieces. Watson goes on to show that the Canadian Adam responds to indigenous poetry. Taking Satan's advice, God exposes Adam to Irving Layton and Louis Dudek. Watson quotes the opening line of Layton's "The Birth of Tragedy" which touches Adam to ecstacy: "And me happiest . . . When I compose poems" (49). Dudek proclaims triumphantly that Adam is "the new reader poetry requests" (49).

Layton and Dudek had an almost controlling influence on the Canadian poetry of the 1940s and 50s through their journal First Statement (founded in the early 1940s) which in 1945 merged with an-

in need of instruction in this matter: "The scene you miss is the white hunter with the white bow stalking the white animal" (65, emphasis added).

In the remainder of this first section, and with the words "I am a Northerner" (66), Schafer asserts himself and maintains that he is part of his North. He goes on to direct attention to a particularly northern triad of meaning--survival, soundscape, art:

> With my axe I resist the environment, shape a log house, and cut firewood to warm it.
> The strident clap of my axe rings against the forest by day, and by night my fire plays tunes in the stove. (66)

It is from this triad, according to Schafer, that northern artists draw their strength. There is no waste; everything has a purpose. Even the gesture of applause has a practical function besides expressing aesthetic pleasure:

> I am the unpainted observer in a Group of Seven painting, squatting behind the painter in the snow. I know the physical delights and discomforts of holding my position before the First Snow in Algoma or Above Lake Superior, and I know that what makes Harris or Thomson great painters is that they could hack it in the bush.
> I slap my hands together, partly in appreciation, partly to keep warm. (66)

other Montréal journal (Preview) under the title Northern Review. Watson thus replaces one set of "master"-poets with an indigenous one; he does not suggest that Dorothy Livesay or P.K. Page are the new Canadian poets. Poetry stays in the realms defined by European (masculine) modernism because Layton and Dudek were also influenced by European modernism, a circumstance that makes them even less different from their European counterparts.

To the narrator of "Laurentian Man," they write poetry overwrought with emotion and sentimentality which is communicated in too obvious a manner: Layton "sings," "sighs" and even "semaphores" until Adam is reduced to "a sentimental concrete windmill," helplessly exposed to the onslaught of Layton's poetry and Dudek's

This triad--survival, soundscape, art--is not dialectical, for dialectics is another pattern of "universal" conceptualization that would be imposed on the North. It is a constellation that emerges from and re-informs the local. Moreover, none of the three terms dominates any of the others. As soon as this constellation is transformed into a dialectic, it is thrown off balance. In other words, if a society in northern territory violates, negates, elevates or hides one or more of the triadic components in favor of others, Schafer's North becomes unbalanced. As a result, he denounces the violating society as an artificial economic construct whose only raison d'être is the exploitation of the North.

In the ensuing section, depicting colonialism and the emergence of Canada on northern ground, Schafer describes acerbically but recognizably the haughty colonial attitude:

> 'Culture,' they explained, 'You have none.
> Where you have a log house we have palaces.
> Where you have an axe we have grand pianos.
> Where you have a bog we have heated swimming pools. . . .

lecturing. This kind of indigenous poetry reduces the recipient through sentimentality to passivity, a response diametrically opposed to that of the performative poetry Watson calls for in "A Manifesto for Beast-Poetry."

The metaphor that controls the remaining poems and extends them into allegories is that of the beast and the wildness and freedom associated with it. Beast-poetry is a new poetry that comes from the "inner beast" of the poet, which is to say from some usually, and to ordinary human beings, inaccessible essence of experience. This essence of experience emerges as a part of the Self that is also anOther; it is liminal, something the poet desires but also fears. Watson detects this essence in the single-minded determination to

> Great art is not kept in a refrigerator.
> You need to mediterraneanize your existence.
> You also need people. Your cities are too small--too out of touch.' (MIC 67)

For the seemingly disinterested project of breeding culture, then, the colonialist powers send people and "know-how." Schafer, however, at once unveils this project as a sham, for the underlying motive for their friendliness is that their resources are running out:

> They had culture and empire.
> Why were they speaking to me?
> It seems their resources were running out.
> They needed resources to carry forward their empires.
> If I would send them the resources, they would send me 'da people.'
> They did not wait for an answer. (67)

Changes to the North include an increased population ("I became we" [67], which signifies a shift in narrative perspective) and a reliance on the world economy. As a result, the new society violates one of the triadic components and disrupts the triad's internal equivalence: the market economy, which replaces survival, dominates soundscape and art so completely that it threatens them with extinction. As fulfill a purpose that goes hand in hand with the reduction to a machine:

> The ant-eater is a machine for eating ants.
> The lion is a machine for eating antelopes.
> The ant is a machine for eating dead cats, etcetera etcetera. (53)

Beast-poetry focuses energy on passion; "it is the blood crying" (50). This metaphor with its connotations of primitive passion and determination reinforces and further extends the metaphor of the beast by creating an ancestral legitimacy.

One is reminded at this point of T.S. Eliot's notion of poetic tradition and the "historical sense" which aids a poet in situating himself in past and present alike ("Tradition" 27). Yet Watson rejects this kind of tradition in stanzas 11 and 12. He also gives credit to T.S. Eliot for a "wonderful beast's nose for

a matter of course, Canada replaces the North, or, more precisely, Schafer's Canada replaces Schafer's North because they are both his constructs.

Progress, Schafer implies in Music in the Cold, is one of the meaning-creating forces in a modern society. He links it to an economy based upon the expectation of unlimited growth. As a matter of course, then, the urge to quantify "achievements" is intrinsic to this society and leads to a "belief in quantification as the defining character of the real"--a characteristic that Robert Frodeman described as the foundation of modern society ("Radical Environmentalism and the Political Roots of Postmodernism" 308).

Schafer takes this belief in progress to its logical extreme. But he also points to a necessary side effect of quantification, namely that in a world where only numbers count, so to speak, humaneness retreats:

> Everything was reckoned in billions.
> 'There is no difference between one and a billion,' said the statisticians, except the decimal point.'

images." Ultimately, however, he rejects Eliot because "his beast-images are screens for thought" (Poems 54).

Men commonly use words for expression or to give structure to human acts:

> Whether a man dances
> or whether a man makes music
> or whether he gestures or paints a picture or carves sculptures
> (or simply is)
> words keep recurring. It isn't
> sufficient merely to dance, this won't do for a man.
> He must dance a madrigal.
> He must caper to the words of a ballad. (55)

Being "the most dumbing of all human acts" (55), beast-poetry, however, uses words in a new way, not in order to think, speak or communicate, but to be, as experiences in themselves:

> Let us understand this, that beast-poetry uses words in a totally new way,
> it uses words as experiences. It excludes speech.
> Beast-poetry is profoundly uneloquent.
> Words are used so as to be, not to speak. (55)

> A few individualists argued: 'If a man has a soul, then a billion men have .000 000 000 000 1 of a soul each. That was the difference,' they said.
> But the statisticians were counting, products and profits and immigrants.
> The soul went into hiding. (MIC 70)

In Music in the Cold, quantifications of progress and growth are used to compare one person with others and ultimately with the entire world:

> We began to prosper. . . .
> We became richer. . . .
> We became one of the richest nations in the world. . . .
> We became the most powerful nation in the world. (68-69)

Yet Schafer's Canada is only "the most powerful nation" with respect to those standards that colonialism mistakenly believes to be universal. He considers all those values that grow out of the place, or out of the North, to be out of sync with the modern age and, hence, in need of being replaced. The result is a hostile takeover, as it were.

The soundscape of Canada becomes more and more mechanical. "Fierce, noisy computers" control everything, and in the higher echelons of the administration one can hear the "hissing air conditioners" (70, 71). Although Perhaps Watson is pointing in this stanza at his reinterpretation of McLuhan's media theory. In his view, media do not extend sense (as McLuhan claimed) but they make sense. In beast-poetry, words do not represent or express a reality, but they are a reality on their own. As a result, beast-poetry provides access to other modes of consciousness that juxtapose different realities and are situated in the media themselves. In McLuhan's view, however, media extend sense from an inner consciousness.

In his introduction to Poems, Thomas Peacocke notes that Watson has regarded language as "a unique material from which to create unique effects" (Poems xix, Peacocke is quoting From Cliché to Archetype). Peacocke suggests that these "unique effects"

these interventions into the soundscape represent the final "triumph" of modern "man" over nature, they only betray the nihilistic motive of destroying the natural soundscape by putting something in its place or overlaying the hi-fi sounds with the lo-fi rumblings of machinery.*

Furthermore, Schafer associates progress with the attempt of shutting out the natural soundscape while still taking in the visual pleasures of the outside world: "We lived in glass houses hundreds of feet in the air" (MIC 69). Recently, Schafer has expanded his thoughts on this modern trend in living. In an article entitled "The Glazed Soundscape," he describes how the increased use of

* I use "hi-fi" and "lo-fi" to describe the soundscape. In The Tuning of the World, Schafer defines "hi-fi" as an "abbreviation for high fidelity, that is, a favorable signal-to-noise ratio. The most general use of the term is in electroacoustics. Applied to soundscape studies a hi-fi environment is one in which sounds may be heard clearly without crowding or masking." "Lo-fi" is an "abbreviation for low fidelity, that is, an unfavorable signal-to-noise ratio. Applied to soundscape studies a lo-fi environment is one in which signals are overcrowded, resulting in masking or lack of clarity" (The Tuning of the World 272).

come about largely through performance:

> In the poems in the sorrowful canadians, I begin with counting, mass on cowback, and now in riddles, there is for me a performance imperative. (Poems xviii)

Seeking a vehicle to achieve that "performance imperative," Watson turned first from the mythopoeic Friday's Child to theatre and then in the 1970s with The Sorrowful Canadians and Number Grid Verse to performative poetry. In the 1980s, Watson combined theatre and performative poetry in his play Gramsci x 3.

"A Manifesto for Beast-Poetry" can be seen as Watson's way of sketching what he is trying to achieve as a Canadian artist. His vision of beast-poetry projects an indigenous and original Canadian art form that is best realized in performance and that has an apoca-

glass in our society causes a division between "here" and "there" that matches a division between the senses. "Some of the glass in which we have sheathed our lives [must be] shattered" in order to heal the division that prevents us from "inhabit[ing] a world in which all the senses interact instead of being ranked in opposition" ("The Glazed Soundscape" 5).

With regard to the northern soundscape, the results are devastating. Yet modern society's impact on the arts is no less concrete because Canadians restructure their arts in imitation of those of the colonial powers. The results are at first negligible, to say the least:

> We set up institutions just like theirs: art galleries, orchestras, arts councils. We published books and made films just like them. We copied them carefully and lifelessly. . . .
> They did not read our books or look at our paintings.
> We did not read our books or look at our paintings.
> Our culture products went into everybody's waste basket. (MIC 68)

Eventually, however, as Canada becomes economically more powerful, modern Canadian art gains international recoglyptic air about it as indicated by the reference to W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming":

> It is excusable in a Canadian to believe that the great beast-poetry slouches towards Toronto to be born. (55)

In "Sermon on Bears," the beast metaphor is further extended but specified to the "mystery of bears . . . poets of our wilderness" (57). In this poem, Watson suggests that the apocalypse of beast-poetry may fail to come about because there is neither freedom nor wildness left in our "machine" (58) of living. The sanctuaries we have set aside for the poets/bears compromise everything we cherish in them, namely "the beast we never are" (57). In this way poets/bears could only survive if we changed radically:

> let us therefore abandon . . .
> those whom we cannot save--without a revision
> of heart we obviously have no mind for;

nition too: "Our novelists were translated into forty languages and were read on Korean buses and in Bulgarian barber shops" (68). Modernist high art manifests similar claims to universality as does colonialism. But soon thereafter the lifestyle of Canadians jeopardizes this achievement:

> Artists disputed over the importance of individuality.
> Some still painted originals, but the successful ones did everything in multiple copies, and the really popular ones printed everything up in lots of a billion.
> Artists who continued only to produce originals remained poor after poverty had been abolished.
> It was a tricky situation.
> They argued that true art was labour-intensive, demanding hours of work in production and appreciation.
> It suddenly became clear that labour and art were correlatives. (70)

In Schafer's view, the result is that popular postmodern culture replaces high modern art. The former has the additional advantage of fitting into the market economy; in other words, art as entertainment turns a profit for its creators, who manage it like a business:

> Let us borrow the dead word "art," . . . and use it to transfigure entertainment. . . . The reason for getting into these fields is to be financially successful. (71)

> knowing at the bottom of our hearts, that with progress all poetry ends. (58)

However, Watson stops short of suggesting how we could "revise" our hearts to save the bears. This is the more damaging since Watson identifies "progress" as the adversary of poetry. Hence the bears/poets provide access to anOther of progress. This Other is a freedom and wildness not found in a progress-oriented society, which is why the bears/poets are in a liminal position. In "Sermon on Bears," human society is about to eradicate those occupying that liminal position and to lose access to anOther. The poem is a bleak warning; a loss occurs, and Watson does not make any attempt to fill the void that the loss bestows on us all.

The three allegories in the "Sermon on Bears" section

Once Canada reaches this point of cultural development, Schafer mentions the credo of the modern world: "You can't turn back" (72). This dictum shelters several connections to modern progress. In his essay "A Post-Historic Primitivism," Paul Shepard poignantly describes some of these connections:

> "You can't go back" shelters a number of corollaries. Most of these are physical rationalizations--too many people in the world, too much commitment to technology or its social and economic systems, ethical and moral ideas that make up civilized sensibilities, and the unwillingness of people to surrender to a less interesting, cruder, or more toilsome life, from which time and progress delivered us. This progress is the work of technology. When technology's "side effects" are bad, progress becomes simply "change," which is, by the same rote, "inevitable." (42)

On the one hand, Schafer gives the dictum a somewhat more hesitant form than Shepard in saying "You can't <u>turn</u> back" instead of "You can't <u>go</u> back." On the other hand, he makes it more forceful than Shepard by avoiding the "physical rationalizations" of why we cannot turn back and confronting the readers with the eventual (and natural) decline of Canada. In this way, Schafer forces sketch a program that I describe as follows: The Canadian poet must try to create a performative paradigm to which her or his Canadian audience can actively (rather than passively and sentimentally) respond. If this paradigm cannot be achieved, Canadians had better give up all efforts at creating indigenous poetry.

I think it is fair to say that Watson intentionally obfuscates his program by means of an ironic subtext. His intention to be enigmatic will emerge in his plays as well, where he hints at his refusal to take a stance. Watson conveys his position more directly in an article on his collaboration with Marshall McLuhan. Apparently the two men developed very different strategies for approaching their project:

his readers to "turn back," at least for a moment.

Schafer describes the beginning of the end, as it were, in terms of another "change" to the soundscape:

> A loudspeaker dangled from every lamp-post providing a relaxed background of 'moozie' through the streets. (MIC 71)

To Schafer, this degenerated soundscape symbolizes the ultimate decadence of the leisure society. When the North assaults Canada with cold, snow, and wolves, this society cannot put up much resistance. The people can only choose to leave (which millions do [73]) or "to surrender to a less interesting, cruder, or more toilsome life." Tongue in cheek, Schafer repeats the dictum of progress four times, as though probing it for its truth content, until he adds the decisive and shattering tag question:

> You can't turn back.
> You can't turn back.
> You can't turn back.
> You can't turn back, can you? (72)

The struggle for Canada ends significantly with the howling of wolves. Schafer then transforms this howling

> Marshall McLuhan's insistence was on the book, and getting it written. Mine, I confess, was on the dialogue, wherever it might lead us to. ("Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness" 198)

To Watson, it seems, the arguments that McLuhan wanted to foreclose, write down and fix on paper were still in flux, open for discussion, which implies open for revision too.* Of course, being open to ongoing revision is a stance that takes knowledge and wisdom as constantly changing and not in need of definition. The ironic tone of Watson's allegories serves to subvert and question any fixed stance we may want to attribute to him.

At the end of the poems, the readers often return to the titles in order to find the crumb of illumination that the

* The different approaches of McLuhan and Watson led to a number of problems in their collaboration, see chapter 4.

into numbers--not into the quantifying numbers of the "Canadian" age, but into the absence of quantity:

> Wolves howled derisively at
> night--0000 0000 0000
> Zero
> Zero
> Zero
> Zero. (73)

Out of this absence of quantity grows the absence of (mechanical) noise: "All is still" (73). In Schafer's view, this is the perfect stillness for the few people left to contemplate what went wrong and how to start anew. Those who stay behind "turn back" in that they integrate into their lives elements of older, perhaps even "primitive," societies, such as sitting around a campfire:

> Around the campfire sit young men looking forward to the future and old men looking back at the past.
> But the middle-aged man looks in both directions. That is his advantage. The last word will be his. (73)

Situated between future and past as though undergoing a rite of passage, the middle-aged man is in a position of liminality. He alone, Schafer claims, is capable of learning from past mis-

poem itself withheld. Perhaps a reconsideration of the title in light of the entire poem will further unlock its significance. There is indeed some merit to such reconsiderations because of the many generic titles in Watson's poetry. As we shall see, these titles manipulate the reading process in subtle ways.

A generic title describes either form or generic content or both of the poem. Watson has assigned generic titles to many of his poems. For example, in Friday's Child, 13 out of 31 poems bear generic titles. Some of them describe the form of the poem (song, ballad, lines, letter); some describe the generic content (admiration, valediction, contempt, curse), while others describe both form and generic

takes and of projecting a better future.

At this point, Schafer recovers the "I" that he lost to the "we" earlier on. The "middle-aged man," the "I" and Schafer himself become indistinguishable in the conclusion of Music in the Cold because the middle-aged man is survivor, inventor (of "unknown instruments"), and artist in one person. The middle-aged man/"I"/Schafer seeks to occupy a liminal position because liminality situates him "outside" the system--outside any system. He recognizes what was wrong with the art of Schafer's Canada, but at this point he is not speaking about Canada or, for that matter, any modern society: "Art within the constraints of a system is political action in favour of that system, regardless of content" (74). The middle-aged man/"I"/Schafer, finally, reminds us of seemingly timeless values. As well, he remembers a concept of time that is rooted in space or in the natural rhythms of a region:

content (invocation, canticle, love song).

In the "Bawl of Wool" section of Poems, which follows chronologically after Friday's Child, the generic titles are clearly dominant: 99 out of 101 poems bear such titles. All poems in the subsection "Letters to the Bach. of Wire" appear to bear the generic title "letter" because all 34 poems have the title ". . . to the bachelor of wire." The 67 poems in the subsection "poems by Jenny Blake" have the following generic titles: pome (46), lines (11), poem (3), ode, song, epilogue, sonnet and dialogue (each 1).

In Sorrowful Canadians & Other Poems / Les Malheureux, 39 out of 47 poems bear generic titles. Watson here employs

> The old technology of waste is gone.
> What then remains?
> The old virtues: harmony; the universal soul; hard work.
> I will live supersensitized, the antennae of a new race.
> I will create a new mythology.
> It will take time.
> It will take time.
> There will be time. (74)

In the last section of Music in the Cold, Schafer continues what he began in the first, but with the additional experience of what can go wrong. The last and first sections serve as orientation points that help us to anchor Schafer's vision; they constitute an unchanging frame within which some aggressive developments occur. Their calmness contrasts with these developments. Schafer wants us to take our time to consider this contrast and find some comfort in the confidence with which he speaks at the end. The monotonous, almost hypnotic, repetitions at the end of Music in the Cold are hard to escape. They express the confidence that we need to weather the "new ice age" announced at the beginning.

To be sure, one can explain the breakdown of Canada on the level of his new "modular"* form of composition in which he differentiates the components of the poem by using a number of typefaces. Frequently, such modules consist of a single line alternating with other modules of lines. Thus, the modular composition explains the prevalence of the title "lines," which occurs 32 times. Other generic titles are: poems (4), song, birthday lines and postscript (each 1).

Of the 77 poems in the NGV-volumes I Begin with Counting and Mass on Cowback, 55 bear generic titles. I also include "re," which occurs 32 times, because it aids in describing the form (e.g. "re counting") or the content of a poem (e.g. "re ducks").

* The term is Watson's (Scobie 287).

content as the eventual and natural breakdown of an artificial construct that simply does not work. However, I think another reading of Schafer's vision complements the one thus far given in that it tells us something about Murray Schafer the artist and his methods of composing his works.

When Music in the Cold was republished in 1984 in On Canadian Music, Schafer included a prefatory paragraph giving some background information on the text. He writes:

> In 1974 I moved with my wife to an abandoned farm in south-central Ontario near Algonquin Park. . . . The natural and social environment of my life changed completely. . . . We shared the fields and forest around the house with birds and wild animals, often not seeing people for days. The soundscape was ideal. The rhythms of this life were beginning to affect my musical thinking even though the influence was not yet precisely evident in the works I was writing. Music in the Cold was written as a kind of manifesto in advance of the work I knew would follow. (MIC 64)

Schafer's depiction of Music in the Cold as "a kind of manifesto" raises several questions. On the one hand, it adequately pinpoints the enunciatory qualities of the text. To the extent that the text announces a "new mytholo-

The most recent of Watson's published poems are the NGV riddles, which make up the last section of Poems. Of the 40 poems in this section 37 bear generic titles: riddle (32), sonnet (6), haiku and re (each 1).

The reading process for Watson's poetry is often circular in that it starts and ends with a consideration of the titles. In most instances, readers expect titles to provide some indication of a poem's form or generic content, either concretely, abstractly or metaphorically. They turn first to the titles and return to them once the poem is finished in order to probe whether the titles may add another dimension that went hitherto unnoticed.

Generic titles provide a context for the readers' ex-

gy," it is indeed a statement manifesting Schafer's position on art and life in what he believes to be North. But enunciatory qualites are not alone constitutive of manifestoes. For this reason, one could say that Schafer was misguided when he called Music in the Cold a manifesto.

However, I contend that Schafer questions this strong link in his text. In "Re-Introducing Canadian 'Art of the Theatre': Herrman Voaden's Manifesto," Sherrill Grace describes the manifesto as a vehicle of "explication and as empowering act of validation" for avant-garde movements (62, n.1). For Schafer, the manifesto gains new importance as a vehicle not of an avant-garde but of another entity. This entity is not in any way linked to a certain modern concept of progress as an avant-garde unavoidably is. To the contrary, Schafer utterly discredits progress in the modern sense. As a result, it seems unfit to serve as a concept to govern a culture, and Schapectations. It may be very broad, as in "pome," which suggests an orthographic variation of the word poem as well as a fruit of the apple family and is a reference to James Joyce's Pomes Pennyeach. "Pome" in this way merely reminds the readers that what they are about to read is one artistic step further away from a factual account of the subject matter and, metaphorically speaking, has a kernel (of meaning) hidden inside. "Re" also evokes a broad context. As with "pome," "re" points out that the poem is a construct of words, under no circumstances to be mistaken for an immediate description of the subject matter--Watson merely wrote it "with regard to" some subject matter.

Yet the context may also be more specific, as in "riddle,"

fer insists upon a revaluation of the central position of progress in our current view of the world. At the same time, he asks us to validate an attitude that would bring us "back" to nature.

The work that ultimately did follow Schafer's move to south-central Ontario included several parts of the Patria cycle which share a specific type of allegory. Beginning with the prologue to the Patria cycle, The Princess of the Stars, Schafer embarks on an allegorical project that attempts to instruct the audience in a number of rituals. What causes this will to instruct or, more pertinently, what causes this will to assert authority?

Schafer's desperate state of mind leads him to assert the authority of allegory. The vision and intense contemplation of a fundamental loss generate this state of mind that is a form of melancholy. An example of loss is in The Princess of the Stars the loss of ritual in our daily lives. Music in which situates the recipient in the position of the ignorant but eager-to-learn riddlee and the poet in the position of the knowing and eager-to-teach riddler.

Two of the three poems sketching Watson's allegorical program bear generic titles, namely "manifesto" and "sermon." In "Re-introducing Canadian 'Art of the Theatre': Herman Voaden's 1930 Manifesto," Sherrill Grace characterizes the manifesto as topos and practice. Watson's "Manifesto for Beast-Poetry" presents and explains his stance on creating poetry in Canada and is an assertion of his position because it sets his (coming) poetry off against other poetry written in Canada at this time. But it is itself not an example of "beast-poetry" or of the envisioned

the Cold focuses on similarly fundamental losses, such as on the loss of the natural soundscape, on the loss of the human capacity to appreciate the natural soundscape while we can, and on the loss of regional standards in favor of universal ones.

In Music in the Cold, Schafer gives a number of clues as to how his melancholy transforms his attitude and how he intends to redeem the loss. Because modern Canada in his view has spoiled the natural soundscape of what he considers North, it must decline so that the allegorist can start with a tabula rasa, as it were, and inscribe his meaning in a "new mythology." The constants of this mythology will be place, myth and ritual. By means of his new mythology, Schafer will enlighten and instruct his audience on how to develop better ways of living in harmony with nature.

At this point, we gain an insight into Schafer's relationship with the authority of allegory. Schafer depends performative paradigm. Grace also describes a strong link of the manifesto with an avant-garde (62, n.1). This link is problematic in "Manifesto for Beast-Poetry" because an avant-garde defines itself through the new. Beast-poetry, on the other hand, is far too dependent on "passionate mindlessness" (Poems 50) and an overall regression to the beast the human animal once was. Still, Watson uses the generic title to set a context for the readers' expectations. He partly confirms and partly rejects this context in his poem.

"Sermon," as well, sets up such a context. It suggests more of an atmosphere than a content: the readers expect to listen to someone who can provide moral guidance. This atmosphere attains its full impact only after readers have

on convincing his audience of his authority, which will guarantee the validity of his new mythology. He exhorts his audience to take a leap of faith. We must accept Schafer as "creator" of a new mythology that will speak for all Canadians or Northerners. In accepting his authority, we all become his beings, constructs of his ideal world. Which is why it is not unwarranted to refer to the middle-aged man/"I"/Schafer as a trinity speaking "truth" to us. Without this leap of faith, Schafer's art will remain ineffective and unable to build on the underlying framework that broadens it from an aesthetic sphere into a socio-political sphere. It is only in the latter effort that Schafer can achieve what he calls for with his allegorical project.

Insofar, then, as it is a "kind of manifesto," Music in the Cold enunciates a program of socio-political action that, nevertheless, remains confined to a pre-paradigmatic stage which usually defines itself in opposition to read the last words of the poem, reconsidered the title, and realized that they are a representative of the "ultimate monster" (58). That realization gives voice to Watson's exhortation of his readers to change their ways.

It is significant that Watson gives in to two opposing impulses: on the one hand, he displays the impulse to give up on the bears/poets and to pray for their re-entry into heaven, and, on the other, he acknowledges the impulse to call for change so that the bears/poets may survive. Also significant is that Watson almost stealthily hints at the second impulse. This stealth reminds me of one of Suzi Gablik's assertions:

> [Deconstructive artists] often work by stealth, assuming the posture of . . . a sort of trickster figure, who is not going to get us out of the mess we are in but will engage in the only legitimate cultural practice possible for our

the status quo (in Music in the Cold through the use of manichean dichotomies). But I also suspect that in the more recent Patria works, Schafer breaks through to a new paradigm of thinking which is in harmony with the natural soundscape and in which humans repossess a place in nature that is not a privileged place at all but merely one that allows us to take part in what Schafer has so fittingly described, in another context, as the "supreme activity called life" (The Tuning of the World 112).

> time--which is . . . the chance, labyrinthine, manipulative play of signs without meaning. ("The Reenchantment of Art: Reflections on the Two Postmodernisms" 179)

It seems to me that Watson's stealth works both ways; that is, in the poem, it embraces a deconstructive, nihilist view in which no change is possible, but in the space between poem and title the trickster complements the deconstructive view and reconstructs a resistance to the outcome projected in the poem.

The prevalence of generic titles in Watson's poetry, then, reveals a will to control both readers and the reading process. This will to power is an integral part of Watson's work and has its roots in his allegorical method.

Chapter 3

Foundations:

The Postmodern Continuum and the Allegorical Gesture

"Wer das Unverhoffte nicht erhofft, wird das Erhoffte nie erreichen."[1] *(Ernst Bloch)*

"Allegories of the Postmodern"--the first part of my title brings the two terms into a relation of derivation or reference. Hence allegories <u>of</u> the postmodern are not necessarily postmodern allegories; they can also be allegories <u>about</u> the postmodern. I want to use the intersection of these concepts as a starting point for my discussion of the postmodern continuum and its deconstructive and reconstructive impulses.

On the one hand, the relation of derivation addresses allegories of the postmodern as aesthetic phenomena. In my view, the impossibility of an a-political aesthetics, however, is especially conspicuous with regard to allegory. As I understand it, the allegorical gesture provides allegorists with considerable authority because it enables them to fill what they consider a meaningless entity with their own meaning. The meaningless entity is defenseless in regard to the allegorists'

[1] Except where otherwise noted, all translations are my own, and the original passages appear in footnotes: "Whosoever does not hope for the unexpected, will never attain what s/he hopes for."

re-inscription that either ties the entity in complicity to the status quo or engages it in redemptive projects of filling the void of a perceived loss. Both types of re-inscription inflate the allegorists' authority beyond the entity in question and reach out to the recipient whom allegorists try to overwhelm with their newly gained authority. The redemptive projects aim at accomplishing aspects of a process that a number of theorists have described as the "reenchantment" of the world. Suzi Gablik views the reenchantment of art as the constitutive process of an alternative, "reconstructive" postmodernism. Once I have theorized the postmodern continuum, I can situate Watson and Schafer with regard to deconstructive and reconstructive postmodernism.

On the other hand, the relation of reference identifies the postmodern as a broader cultural phenomenon about which allegories of the postmodern make an allegorical commentary. This allegorical commentary depends on the author(ity) of allegory that may decentre the work (as deconstructive allegories tend to do) or provide a centre to the work (as reconstructive allegories tend to do). However, the authority itself is contingent on being accepted by the recipient in a <u>leap of faith</u>. Deconstructive and reconstructive postmodernists affirm this leap of faith in different ways; while the former solipsistically claim to manifest a crisis of meaning, the latter claim to fill the void resulting from a loss of meaning.

But before approaching the postmodern, I want to outline my understanding of allegory. I build on Walter Benjamin's

theorizations of modern[2] allegory because I contend that the principles he ascribes to modern allegory (loss, melancholy, reinscription, and authority) hold for postmodern allegory as well.

In Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels, Walter Benjamin views the allegorical gesture as based upon the emotive state of melancholy. He describes how Lutherism denied good deeds any special powers to salvage the soul from damnation. People were thus solely dependent on their belief in God's grace. According to Benjamin, this rigorous morality had far-reaching consequences:

> By denying "good deeds" the spiritual force to work miracles, Lutherism implemented in the people a strict obedience to duty but in the great men it led to melancholy.[3]

The root cause of this melancholy is a loss of a belief, here the belief in the salvation powers of good deeds. But the loss was not confined to theological matters. Because of an underlying dark belief in fate that has its roots in Germanic lore, that loss gradually broadened into an existential loss of the belief in good deeds altogether. As a result, human ac-

[2] "Modern" here refers not to modernism, but to modernity; that is, to the socio-cultural conditions that came into being with the Renaissance.

[3] "Indem [das Luthertum] die besondere geistliche Wunderwirkung [den "guten Werken"] absprach . . . hat es im Volke zwar den strengen Pflichtgehorsam angesiedelt, in seinen Großen aber den Trübsinn" (119).

tions were robbed of value and an empty, meaningless world came about.

The "great men" of that age felt the existential impasse of a meaningless world acutely. They mourned the devaluation of life:

> Because those [the great men] who dug deeper saw themselves thrown into a being filled with ruinous, half-hearted, false actions, Life itself protested against that.[4]

Benjamin encapsulates an essentialist notion of life in his description of the allegorical gesture. It is this essentialism that makes Benjamin's theorization of allegory compatible with Gablik's notion of reconstructive postmodernism (see my discussion of Gablik below).

In a gesture of protest, the "great men's" melancholy fills a meaningless world with new meaning, so that their melancholy emerges as a condition for a certain type of creativity, namely an active rewriting of the world:

> Mourning is the mental outlook in which emotion enlivens the emptied world like a masque in order to gain a riddle-like satisfaction from gazing at it.[5]

The emotion Benjamin mentions in this passage needs further reflection for it is the foundation of the allegorical gesture as Benjamin describes it and as I use it to describe postmodern

[4] "Denn die tiefer Schürfenden sahen sich in das Dasein als in ein Trümmerfeld halber, unechter Handlungen hineingestellt. Dagegen schlug das Leben selbst aus" (120).

[5] "Trauer ist die Gesinnung, in der das Gefühl die entleerte Welt maskenhaft neubelebt, um ein rätselhaftes Genügen an ihrem Anblick zu haben" (120).

allegory. In a complex proposition, Benjamin suggests that this emotion occurs independent of the empirical subject and instead attaches itself to the materiality of an object. The mourning intensifies the underlying intention of this emotion:

> Every emotion is bound to an apriori object and its presentation is its phenomenology. The theory of mourning . . . can thus be developed only in the inscription of the melancholist's world. For the emotions, as vague as they may appear to self-apprehension, respond in mechanical attitudes to an objective structure of the world. . . . A mechanical attitude that has its determined location in the hierarchy of intentions and is called emotion only because this location is not the highest. Being comparable only to love among the emotions (and not lightheartedly either), the surprising persistence of the intention determines this location. For [mourning is] capable of a particular intensification and continuous, profound thought of its intention. Profound contemplation is appropriate primarily for the sad person.[6]

As a result of the intensification of intention, the reinscription of the world appears all the more forceful and potentially coercive to the recipient. These characteristics of reinscrip-

[6] "Jedes Gefühl ist gebunden an einen apriorischen Gegenstand und dessen Darstellung ist seine Phänomenologie. Die Theorie der Trauer . . . ist demnach nur in der Beschreibung jener Welt, die unterm Blick des Melancholischen sich auftut, zu entrollen. Denn die Gefühle, wie vage immer sie der Selbstwahrnehmung scheinen mögen, erwidern als motorisches Gebaren einem gegenständlichen Aufbau der Welt. . . . Eine motorische Attitüde, die in der Hierarchie der Intentionen ihren wohlbestimmten Ort hat und Gefühl nur darum heißt, weil es nicht der höchste ist. Bestimmt wird er durch die erstaunliche Beharrlichkeit der Intention, die unter den Gefühlen außer diesem vielleicht--und das nicht spielweis--nur der Liebe eignet. Denn [Trauer ist] zur besonderen Steigerung, kontinuierlichen Vertiefung ihrer Intention befähigt. Tiefsinn eignet vor allem dem Traurigen" (120).

tion are contingent upon the peculiar alliance between allegory and authority.

Inscribing a dead world with new and deliberate meanings, Benjamin says, is the principal allegorical gesture. I argue that inscribing the world can be seen as an encoding of language in order to show that the allegorical gesture primarily responds to a crisis of meaning.

The metaphor of encoding is particularly appropriate to clarify the allegorical gesture: encoding signifies the conversion of a message from plain text into code. What allegorists experience as a dead world (namely, the meaninglessness of it[7]) can be mapped onto the plain text that is to be converted into code. The allegorists' inscription constitutes the code in which they store the dead world. New meaning (of the inscription) and the stored plain text (of the dead world) make up the cipher. The gaze of the melancholic authors forces objects in the newly inscribed world to exhibit, in a double gesture, both their demise and resurrection as signifying entities. That is why the manner of encoding information in allegory is contingent upon the melancholic gaze. The allegorists control the new meaning. This meaning is anOther of the object, and, as a consequence, the allegorical gesture provides allegorists with privileged access to a normally hidden knowledge. Hence they

[7] I use meaning in a way that foreshadows several connotations that Gablik assigns to the term. Meaning, to her, has a quasi-biological function in human life: without it, we cannot exist (see my discussion of meaning below).

revere the allegorical object, not only as an emblem of this hidden knowledge, but also as a store of authority.

Allegory, then, can be seen as a mode of encoding language with another (or anOther) meaning.[8] It may defer meaning either to another level of contemplation or even endlessly if the authors choose (for whatever reasons) not to provide a key at all. I understand the postmodern primarily as a crisis of meaning. The deferral of meaning in allegory exhibits this crisis and explains the prevalence of allegory in the postmodern.

At this point, I want to broaden my discussion of allegory by comparing briefly Linda Hutcheon's and Suzi Gablik's theories of the postmodern. Hutcheon's work is an important starting point for any discussion of the postmodern in the Canadian context, but Gablik offers a broader understanding that I find particularly useful, especially when her theory of the postmodern continuum is read in conjunction with Benjamin's theory of allegory. Benjamin and Gablik also build their theories on essentialist notions with which Hutcheon's position is incompatible.

At the beginning of her book on The Reenchantment of Art, Suzi Gablik admits freely that hers is not so much an "academic, scholarly work" as it is a "sustained meditation [with] a visionary bias" (1). She then sketches the coor-

[8] This is also Angus Fletcher's initial observation (3).

dinates of a postmodernism that she calls "reconstructive" and views as diametrically opposed to "deconstructive" postmodernism. However, "diametrically opposed" to her does not mean that the two postmodernisms are not in subtle ways contingent on each other. On the contrary, Gablik writes, our culture reveals itself best in the interplay of its opposing tendencies (9), which is why she strives to construct the two postmodernisms, not as antagonistic movements, but as complementary components of a larger project in which many disciplines remap the modern paradigm.

The term "deconstructive" postmodernism warrants clarification. In her use of the term, Gablik does not refer directly to Jacques Derrida because in her view, it is Jean Baudrillard who "has been most influential in orchestrating the art world's whole deconstructive scenario" (31). Nonetheless, the type of poststructuralist philosophy she holds responsible for the deconstructive impulse in postmodernism also reveals Derrida's influence, especially when she discusses the crisis of meaning, which to her is triggered by the deconstruction of meaning.

In The Politics of Postmodernism, Hutcheon outlines her understanding of postmodernism and its politics, but a decisive difference between Hutcheon and Gablik is that where Gablik be-

holds "meaning," Hutcheon sees "representation."[9] Postmodern meaning, for Hutcheon, is always already and endlessly deferred so that we can only access it through representation:

> What postmodern theory and practice together suggest is that everything always was 'cultural' . . . that is, always mediated by representations. (34)

By deflecting the issue of meaning into one of representation, Hutcheon says, postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation. For her, the key question is this:

> We may see, hear, feel, smell, and touch it [the 'real'], but do we <u>know</u> it in the sense that we give meaning to it? (33)

But her question assumes that meaning is dependent on a chain of representation that moves from the "real"[10] via sensory experience and knowledge to meaning. Suzi Gablik, however, suggests another approach to meaning.

"Meaning" is a key idea in the aesthetics Gablik proposes. At the end of <u>The Reenchantment of Art</u>, Gablik expresses her

[9] Hutcheon's approach towards meaning and representation also explains why she only mentions Murray Schafer's <u>The Characteristics Man</u> without alluding to the <u>Patria</u> cycle. Looking at <u>The Characteristics Man</u> in its larger context within <u>Patria</u> would precisely lead to those aspects of meaning that go beyond representation, namely the participatory rituals. Excluding those aspects seems to be a blindspot in Hutcheon's view of the postmodern. For a discussion of <u>The Characteristics Man</u> and its context see ch. 5.

[10] As Hutcheon's quotation marks signify, the "real" itself is a doubtful category that is not fit to serve as a foundation. Nonetheless, it points to realism which seems to be the yardstick against which she measures everything: "What postmodernism does is to denaturalize both realism's transparency and modernism's reflexive response [to realism's transparency], while retaining (in its typically complicitously critical way) the historically attested power of both" (34).

hope that her book is a first step towards an aesthetics or even theory of a hitherto only marginal movement, that of the "reenchantment" of art. She writes:

> My sense is that the artists in this book who have moved beyond protest and oppositional mind to embrace reconciliation and positive social alternatives do not represent merely the response of isolated individuals to the dead-endedness of our present situation. They are not a movement in a vacuum. They are prototypes who embody the next historical and evolutionary stage of consciousness, in which the capacity to be compassionate will be central not only to our ideals of success, but also to the recovery of both a meaningful society and a meaningful art. (182)

In this passage, Gablik summarizes key issues of the new aesthetics she envisions. One of these is "meaningfulness." Gablik initiates her discussion of meaning in modern and postmodern paradigms by quoting Albert Camus, who maintains that "the question of life's meaning <u>is</u> the most urgent question of all."[11] Gablik takes Camus's dictum as evidence that there is

[11] Qtd. in <u>The Reenchantment of Art</u> 29. Gablik repeatedly relies on Albert Camus to explain key terms. Another example of this reliance on Camus is the monological encapsulation of artist and observer that reconstructive postmodernism must overcome in order to become more "dialogical" and establish a "relational dyad" of artist and audience. Her reference to Camus is as follows: "'Art cannot be a monologue,' Albert Camus wrote in <u>Resistance, Rebellion and Death</u>. 'Contrary to the current presumption, if there is any man who has no right to solitude it is the artist'" (Qtd. in <u>The Reenchantment of Art</u> 158). Gablik views Camus as a signpost of the modern aporia with regard to existential questions. I do not think that the words "dialogical" and "monological" should be seen as references to Bakhtin because of the ethical overtones of Gablik's argument. She clearly seeks to integrate Camus into an ethical argument on the impact of these existential questions on the human condition and how we can respond to them under current circumstances. Her treatment of Camus is similar to Watson's; see ch. 4.

a "will-to-meaning" that she understands to be a "fundamental drive of human life," so much so, that a framework of meaning is an "essential biological need" for the human organism (29). According to Gablik, however, poststructuralist philosophy enacts a radical break with this drive and undermines the "very legitimacy of meaning itself" (29). Hence, she perceives a crisis of meaning on two levels.

The first level concerns the way that signs or images may be deconstructed to destabilize the symbolic order. In this way, deconstructive postmodernists question the union of signifier and signified, a union which is necessary to convey a specific meaning. She argues that

> life presents itself, in our current society, as an endless accumulation of meaningless spectacles, originating in the loss of any unifying narrative of the world. (31)

As a result, postmodern works of art tend to exhibit a crisis of narrative meaning and social function. In the paintings of David Salle for instance, Gablik says, "anything goes with anything, like a game without rules; images slide past one another, dissociated and decontextualized, failing to link up into a coherent sequence" (30). She distinguishes this deconstructive working method from that of the Surrealists, who also created disjunctive and decontextualized images but in order to spark new and unexpected meanings. Salle's paintings, however, perform without "expressive or manipulative intent" (30). She concludes that "Salle's images exist without any referent" (30).

Deconstructive postmodernism, however, subverts meaning on yet another level that, to Gablik, represents an even greater risk to meaning. She defines this risk as follows:

> There is also the greater loss of a mythic, transpersonal ground of meaning in the way that our particular culture transmits itself. It is the spirit, or "binding power" holding everything together, the pattern connecting and giving significance to the whole, that is lacking in the underlying picture we have of our world. (30)

Gablik describes this level further with regard to different ways of looking at works of art. On the one hand, the audience remains passive in front of a spectacle. This passivity, she says,

> is the very opposite of waking up, looking at events critically, seeing reality and feeling responsible--that is to say, <u>responding</u> to what is going on. Responsibility implies that one is carrying out intentions, shaping the environment, influencing others. (33)

In a world determined by television and computer screens where vastly different events appear on a single plane of electronic flow, we are confronted with more and more information and less and less meaning so that "the 'will' to meaning often deliberately courts meaninglessness and even finds satisfaction in it" (33-34). Gablik extends the metaphor of "courting" in terms of a "dance" and "staying in free fall [in a] sense of dizziness" (30).[12] According to Gablik, then, deconstructive postmodernism exalts in declaring its own meaninglessness.

[12] She entitles her third chapter "Dancing with Baudrillard: Postmodernism and the Deconstruction of Meaning" (29-40). The expression of the "sense of dizziness" is an allusion to Baudrillard.

The concepts of "meaning" and such adjectives as "meaningful" or "meaningless," then, appear to be charged in Gablik's prose with specific connotations. When she discusses the crisis of meaning in the modern world, she spells out this connotation. She says:

> [Theodor] Adorno's meditations on the social implications of Auschwitz led him to the belief that any idea of harmonizing with the world, of striving for a positive or meaningful relation to it, is cheap optimism, like the happy ending in movies, obtained by repressing the reality of radical evil and despair. . . . The shock administered to modern society by the presence of the concentration camps made the notion of a benevolent, or meaningful, universe seem naive and unrealistic forever. (31)

Yet this modern view of the world is out of focus, according to Gablik, because it epitomizes the Cartesian philosophies that "carried us away from a sense of wholeness by focussing only on individual experience" (7). The modern focus is misguided because it does not allow for a holistic vision of the world that in Gablik's view alone can restore the benevolence of meaning. This benevolence of meaning is the irreducible starting point of her reflections on the postmodern. As a result, Gablik persistently describes the crisis of meaning as a loss of meaning. "Meaning," to her, is an inherently benevolent term so that any critique of meaning as such, and not merely of a particular kind of meaning, represents a nihilist, or life-denying, gesture that can only end up in complicity with the forces causing

modern alienation.[13] At this point, it becomes clear that her book itself should be seen as a part of what she defines as reconstructive postmodernism. In my view, it is an instance of a new intuitive theorizing that adheres not primarily to the principles of logical rigour but projects in a visionary mode of thinking what is possible in a world that has not given up hope. But where does this hope come from?

Gablik contends that hope is the key issue when it comes to distinguishing the two postmodernisms. While reconstructive postmodernists "continue to aspire to transforming our dysfunctional culture," deconstructive postmodernists "believe such a hope is naive or deluded" (18-19). But Gablik does not meet the deconstructive objections to hope directly; rather, she points to the benefits of hope--providing that hope is still possible.

Gablik points out that there are some artists, such as Mary Beth Edelson, to whom hope is a matter of belief. When asked whether she felt optimistic about our society moving in the direction of ecological and cooperative stability, Edelson replied:

> It doesn't make a difference in my behavior whether there is a chance that this will succeed or not. I will still behave as if these goals were a possibility, regardless of what my doubts are. . . . The opposite of not hoping is what we have--

[13] On the other hand, in The Politics of Postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon claims that it is one of the strengths of postmodernism to undertake precisely such a "complicitous critique" (passim).

> extraordinarily paralyzing, cynical alienation. If we sit back and say, "We are not going to do anything because it's useless," obviously nothing is going to happen. What makes things happen is believing that they can happen. What some people call fooling ourselves may be our only hope. (Qtd. in The Reenchantment of Art 25)

Reconstructive postmodernism envisions a social renewal that is dependent on a human effort which is itself motivated by optimism.

Optimism, Gablik reminds us, is the leap of faith that William James saw as rooted in life itself. Although Gablik does not provide a specific reference, I think James's The Will to Believe corroborates her statement. Arguing against what he calls "scientific absolutism," James proposes an alternative that is able to address moral questions whose solutions cannot wait for sensible proof. He contends that "the question of having moral beliefs at all or not having them is decided by our will" (22-23). One of his examples is that of a man climbing in the Alps and maneuvering himself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. If the man believes he can make the leap, that belief will create subjective emotions without which the successful leap would be impossible. If, on the other hand, the man mistrusts his abilities, he will hesitate so long as to lose his confidence and miss his leap. James concludes from this example that,

> the part of wisdom clearly is to believe what one desires; for the belief is one of the indispensable preliminary conditions of the realization of its object. There are then cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe, and you shall be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall

> again be right, for you shall perish. The only difference is that to believe is greatly to your advantage. (97)

Gablik interprets the current crisis of meaning as having the same structure as James's moral questions. In this way, she maintains that reconstructive belief is right and deconstructive doubt is right; the difference is that to believe is "greatly to [our] advantage" for it opens a space where reform of aesthetic and socio-political realities is possible.

Hutcheon, however, does not see the current crisis of meaning as an ethical issue. As a result, her notion of postmodernism as instances of "complicitous critique" cannot open a space where reform would be possible. To her credit, she admits as much:

> While the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political action, it does work to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalizing critique. (The Politics of Postmodernism 3)

This de-naturalizing critique makes her theory of postmodernism cynical and hopeless because it removes the ground on which to build any ethics of action. In the following passage, Hutcheon describes the de-naturalizing critique of postmodernism:

> The postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact 'cultural,' made by us, not given to us. (2)

Hutcheon, of course, chooses her examples carefully. Critics have attacked capitalism, patriarchy and liberal humanism in recent times so that the thought of a de-naturalizing critique

of these entities is not as far-fetched as she may want us to believe ("they <u>might even</u> include"). Furthermore, why are only "<u>some</u> of the dominant features of our way of life" de-naturalized? Hutcheon does not say which ones nor does she describe the criteria for selection. And what happens if the postmodern also de-naturalizes not only "dominant" features but still marginal ones, such as environmental protection, equality for women and minorities? Such a de-naturalizing critique would indeed throw out the baby with the bathwater because it would remove the grounds on which such movements as environmentalism, feminism and multi-culturalism can take action against current injustices.

To come back to Gablik, I still see a flaw in her theory of reconstructive postmodernism. She points out that there are neither prescriptions on how to achieve hope nor logically coherent explications of where hope comes from. The best Gablik can do is to point to the belief that originates in a <u>leap of faith</u>. She does not theorize the leap itself.

Gablik's theoretical blindspot in my view is as serious as that of Hutcheon, who does not admit an ethical dimension to her argument. The consequences, of course, are almost diametrically opposed because Gablik ends up holding a position that facilitates political action on ethical grounds, while Hutcheon denies such action can be taken in or with the postmodern.

Often, and especially in reconstructive postmodern allegories, I contend that this leap of faith is contingent on a

desire to replace a lost object. Allegorists count on this desire in their audiences to bring about a trust in the author(ity) of allegory. Without this trust, these allegorical works remain meaningless (in Gablik's sense of the term).

To Gablik, the benefits of hope materialize most clearly with regard to a particular role-model of the artist that she finds convincing. In this way, she quotes Jungian psychoanalyst Marie-Louise von Franz, who says: "A civilization which has no creative people is doomed . . . . The person who is really in touch with the future is the creative personality" (qtd. in The Reenchantment of Art 24). Gablik concludes from this that "those artists who are in touch with the necessary psychological tasks of a culture prepare the way for the culturally supported solution to a conflict to emerge, or for the healing of a psychological defect" (24). To Gablik, of course, the modern paradigm presents such a defect. More specifically, the modern defect is that of the Cartesian separation of the observer from the observed. It is this separation that reconstructive postmodernism attempts to overcome by instating "a more participatory aesthetics of interconnectedness" ("The Reenchantment of Art" 180).

Gablik views the Cartesian worldview as positing a rigorous distinction between subject and object. Modern aesthetics sanctifies this distinction in that it adheres to the monologic encapsulation of author and audience in separate, non-interactive spheres. The autonomy of modernist art further

reinforces this encapsulation because the work of art is there to be passively observed (which is why it is bound to the issue of representation). It cannot, however, interact with the world it represents; it is aloof, without impact. Says Gablik:

> Our culture's most cherished idea remains the aggressive insistence on freedom for its own sake, freedom without praxis--the kind of freedom that makes picking up the garbage valid as art only if you want to "romance" the trash (that is, use it for an aesthetic effect), but not if you step beyond the value vacuum to try to clean up the river.[14] (The Reenchantment of Art 135)

As soon as a project tries to have an impact within the environmental ethics Gablik describes, modern aesthetics discredits it as "work" and refuses to call it "art."

The notion of art as compassionate action depends on shamanic consciousness that does not permit us to experience the world as apart from ourselves. Richard Rosenblum's Manscape sculpture, according to Gablik, upsets the dualism of the Cartesian worldview: "The boundary between self and world has been allowed to dissolve, and the figure of a man becomes a walking landscape" ("The Reenchantment of Art" 185; see also fig. 1).

[14] The latter is a reference to an art project of Dominique Mazeaud, who in 1987 began "The Great Cleansing of the Rio Grande River" (see The Reenchantment of Art 119-21). This project includes Mazeaud--sometimes in the company of friends, sometimes alone--removing garbage from the Rio Grande River in a ritual, occasional exhibitions of the "treasures" found that way, and a journal that she calls "riveries." Gablik cites this project as an example of "art as compassionate action."

Fig. 1: Richard Rosenblum, "Manscape," 1984-85. (Photo courtesy of Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts.)

("The Reenchantment" 187)

Another instance of shamanic consciousness, this time in a modern, urban setting, is the performance art by Mierle Laderman Ukeles, artist-in-residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation. In Touch Sanitation, a performance that lasted eleven months, Ukeles shook hands with everyone in the Sanitation Department. Gablik claims that through this "compassionate gesture of the hand which embodies a non-threatening openness to others, a space of enchantment is opened up, if only for a moment" (190).

In another performance, Following in Your Footsteps, Ukeles followed the workers and pantomimed their movements, "as a way of showing her appreciation for what they do, and acting as a stand-in for all the people who do not do this work" (190). Ukeles's two performances allowed her to become a part of the community of sanitation workers. The parameters of her art are neither autonomy nor monologic encapsulation, but empathy and healing. Gablik comments:

> The image of the shaman strikes at the roots of modern estrangement: merging her consciousness with the workers, she converses with them, learns from them. There is no critical distance, no theoretical violence, no antagonistic imperative; but as something more than art, her work becomes an exercise in model-building, in the construction of an alternative to the professional role model. When one develops the worldview of a shaman, one becomes a healer in all one's activities. (191)

It seems that reconstructive postmodernism, especially when it employs rituals, obliterates the distinction between the aesthetic and the social realms of society. This distinction, however, only came into being with the advent of the Cartesian

worldview and its division of society into realms of different tasks. Obliterating this distinction is another attack on the Cartesian worldview.

Gablik's examples emphasize a consistent bi-partite trait of the reenchantment of art or of reconstructive postmodernism: on the one hand, enchanted art challenges the rigidity of the modern paradigm and its alienating principles, while on the other, it offers an alternative to deconstructive postmodernism, which she sees as an extension of modern nihilism. Social and environmental ethics charged with responsibility provide Gablik with the basis for her concept of reconstructive postmodernism.

The aesthetics Gablik is proposing entails a movement from observation to participation. Observation, of course, is entangled in the issue of representation; however, Gablik never confronts the issue of representation directly. In her view, nature or the "non-cultural real" (as Hutcheon calls it [34]) can be experienced in our intuitive responses[15] to participatory rituals that partake of the new aesthetics she envisions in opposition to the one built on Cartesian dualism.

I see a relation between Gablik's unwillingness to confront the issue of representation and her unwillingness to

[15] These responses allude to the cluster of connotations Gablik assigns to the term "responsibility," namely "waking up, looking at events critically, seeing reality and feeling responsible--that is to say, <u>responding</u> to what is going on. Responsibility implies that one is carrying out intentions, shaping the environment, influencing others" (33).

theorize the leap of faith that is so important to her concept of reconstructive postmodernism. Gablik hesitates to engage in the theoretical discussion of issues when she has to argue with the claims of deconstruction. A possible explanation for this hesitation is that such an argument with deconstruction would impede the intuitive flow of her argument, which deals with much more important issues, for instance, creating a fertile ground for reconstructive postmodern art in the name of environmentalism. The ethical imperative of trying to press on with this project leads her to neglect doing the meticulous groundwork usually needed to make such an ambitious project credible. Ultimately, I think, Gablik's blindspots are flaws in her concept of reconstructive postmodernism. Hence I am going to address the issue of representation in reconstructive postmodernism in an effort to make Gablik's theoretical base more accountable to critical questioning.

Craig Owens has described how art history, for instance, has constructed representation either as symbolic action (Vorstellung) or else as theatrical presentation (Darstellung). In the former, the image substitutes for an absent object, while in the latter it creates the illusion of a presence of an object. Owens comments:

> Art historians have always located representation in terms of the poles of absence and presence which, as Derrida has shown, constitute the fundamental conceptual opposition upon which Western metaphysics is based. ("Representation, Appropriation & Power" 13)

What is needed, Owens suggests, is not a new theory of representation but a critique of it. Gablik, I think, would agree

with Owens, but with the reservation that it is far more urgent in our historical moment to move beyond representation and Cartesian dualism. Engaging in a critique of representation seems to lead merely to a certain stagnation that Gablik expresses thus: "The question is no longer how did we get here and why? but, where can we possibly go, and how?" (3)

I maintain that Gablik's way of answering that question relies on the author(ity) of allegory. Gablik herself provides a telling illustration of this reliance. Saying that "artist and audience form a relational dyad," she cites an installation by Beverly Naidus, who in Apply Within set up a simulated employment agency that promised employment for everyone. Thinking it was a real employment agency, people entered the gallery and sat down in the "waiting room" where an audiotape of voices recited clichés and stereotypes about working. Gablik writes:

> According to Naidus, the experience of listening to the tape had an extraordinary effect on people. Many of them hugged her or shook her hand, and began to tell her about their dismal search for a decent job. They were thankful that someone understood their dilemma and could identify with their sense of isolation and humiliation. . . . Only once, Naidus recounts, when she wasn't there, a woman, who came in looking for a job and was told that she was not in an employment agency but in an art gallery, became angry and left. Obviously, it was important for the artist to be there. (The Reenchantment of Art 159, emphasis added)

Without the presence of the author, Naidus's installation does not achieve its goal, which is the allegorical transformation of an art gallery into a site of compassion (and meaningful-

ness). The author(ity) of allegory, for these reasons, warrants closer scrutiny.

The allegorist's will is a will to create, thus a will to power. This will can be situated at the intersection of a past (and now lost) significance and a new, deliberately assigned meaning for the object. The allegorist's melancholic disposition provides access to traces of this lost significance as well as to the reinscription of meaning. Melancholy, thus, functions as the origin of the allegorist's will to power. It is here, in the will to power, that we can trace differences and similarities between premodern allegory, modern symbolism, and postmodern allegory. Allegory and symbolism are the primary modes of representation in these eras, although Gablik contends that postmodern allegory, in its reconstructive dimension, goes beyond representation.

A profound difference between premodern and postmodern allegory is that in the Middle Ages, authors, or more accurately auctores,[16] would situate their works in a tradition that established the founding rules and principles for the disciplines of learning. In other words, the auctores could refer to a system of certitude that was outside their work and to whose

[16] "The word 'author' derives from the medieval term auctor, which denoted a writer whose words commanded respect and belief. . . . Over the centuries the continued authority of [the auctores] derived from medieval scribes' ability to interpret, explain, and in most cases resolve historical problems by restating these problems in terms sanctioned by auctores" (Pease 106).

authority their work would contribute by subsuming a personal event into the realm of the authority:

> The continued authority to make events meaningful in customary or traditional ways provided all the evidence necessary to sustain the auctores' power. . . . The relationship between these authoritative books and the everyday world was primarily an allegorical one. (Pease 106)

Postmodern allegorists cannot assume similar systems of certitude outside of their work because, as Max Oelschlaeger points out,

> historically considered, certainty has been found in God (religion), in phenomenological experience (phenomenology), in empirical observation (natural and social sciences), and in the beliefs of common sense. But today, because of the irreducibly textual character of our beliefs, all arenas of certainty are in question. In other words, recognition that language plays a central role in all knowledge and thought, indeed, in culture and therefore life, has also called into question claims to absolute certitude. (The Idea of Wilderness 325)

The result of this "textual character of our beliefs" is a relativism that violates the key concepts of the premodern and modern paradigms, namely religious and objective truth respectively. To reinforce or to overcome this relativism means to celebrate or to go beyond the postmodern crisis of meaning. Deconstructive postmodernism gives in to that relativism and maintains that any notion of belief that goes beyond a purely textual character is illusory. Reconstructive postmodernism, on the other hand, resists that relativism not by recovering a lost concept of truth or certitude but by creating a new certainty. This certainty relies as much on the subjective "truth" of the allegorist, consisting of a mixture of experi-

ences, research, and beliefs, as on the authority of allegory to inscribe that truth on the dead object.

Reconstructive postmodern and premodern allegories are similar in that they are both based on the organizing principle of correspondence. With the discovery of the "New" world, the auctores could no longer subsume all everyday events under the authority of the traditional books because the accounts of the New World had to react to a difference from and no longer to a correspondence with the authoritative books that were based on Eurocentric experiences that could not account for those of the Americas. As a result, the auctor experienced the loss of his cultural authority and authors "declared their right to be represented on their own terms rather than in the words of the ancient books" (107-08). The point is that the authors of the Renaissance and with them the explorers, colonizers, merchants, et al. needed a more direct method of representation than the indirect encodings of allegory in order to recognize what was new and different about the New World. They found it in symbolism, whose advantage over allegory was its immediacy (as the Romantics later argued) that manifested itself in a "natural bond" of signifier and signified (as Saussure maintained[17]).

[17] Saussure substituted the sign for the symbol because "one characteristic of the symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified" (Course in General Linguistics 68). Arbitrariness, to Saussure, was the benchmark of the sign: "The term ["arbitrary"] should not imply that the choice of the signifier is left entirely to the speaker . . . ; I mean that it is unmotivated, i.e. arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified" (69).

By acknowledging freely its political underpinnings in ecology, reconstructive postmodern allegory relies on correspondence with environmental and social practices that we used to follow and that were less hazardous to nature and ourselves rather than difference to more recent practices that have brought us to the brink of extinction on more than one level of being. The will to power in reconstructive postmodern allegory overcomes the modern paradigm of thinking in differences by establishing a correspondence of dead object with a new, deliberately assigned meaning. That this new meaning appropriates, even violates, the dead object is an indication of the potential coerciveness of the allegorical gesture.

What is at issue when we talk about the author/ity of allegory is not only the coercion of the object into signifying and thus revealing anOther, but also the potential coercion of the recipient into reading the text in a certain way.

By providing access to a lost entity, reconstructive postmodern allegory reveals a nothingness and leads to the implementation of a didactic effort that is as much the author's as it is the text's. In medieval allegory, the revelation was in the books of the auctores and their tradition. In postmodern allegories, the revelation is in the "intratextuality" between individual sequels of trilogies or cycles.[18] This in-

[18] I think the term "intratextuality" is warranted by the internal relations in multi-sequel works where the individual instalments are autonomous but gain in meaning if the recipient knows the larger context of the cycle.

tratextuality invites the recipient to pursue textual relations between the sequels either in the form of leitmotives or in the form of shared structures, themes, images, or signs.[19] These works tend to branch out into systems of texts that include not only the allegorist's artistic works but also his scientific and personal writings.

These allegorical systems, however, differ in deconstructive and reconstructive postmodernism with regard to the structure of authority. In deconstructive allegory, the code of authority is centrifugal; that is, it does not provide the object with a meaningful centre so that the recipient is left without the means to engage in a meaningful reading. As argued above, we end up with a play of signifiers without signifieds. In reconstructive allegory, on the other hand, the code of authority is centripetal in that it focuses the recipient's energy on the author who acts as a mediator between text and reader. By means of didacticism, the allegorist seeks to make the recipient supply an ultimate signified in a leap of faith, which to the allegorist is the successful outcome of the allegorical ritual and an expression of the underlying ideology of allegory, which strives to reinstate the author in a position of power. In their respective roles as shaman and initiate, reconstructive allegorist and recipient then share an ideology

[19] Examples of such multi-sequel works are Glenn Gould's "Solitude Trilogy" and Robert Wilson's Civil WarS.

that may encourage actions that are in line with the allegorist's underlying program and go beyond the framework of the work of art, such as changes in convictions held and even changes in life-styles.

In "The Will to Allegory in Postmodernism," Paul Smith criticizes the reinstatement of authority in postmodern allegory. In his view, Benjamin's dialectical view of symbolism and allegory does not do justice to the epistemological commitment that both modes of signification make to some notion of fixed truth and value, a natural truth for symbolism and a conventional one for allegory (106). What is important in allegory throughout the ages, Smith contends, is the authority of the truth and not the truth itself:

> [The strategies of allegory that Benjamin describes] construct no intersubjective faith in the value of the real, but rather they propose a reliable (though arbitrary) typological authority. Such an authority --all that is ever really essential to allegory--is the fixed stay of allegory's discourse: a fixity of its underlying reference is vital for its accurate functioning. (107)

Smith is correct in maintaining that allegory does not construct intersubjective faith; nonetheless, it is possible that the recipient accepts the author/ity of allegory in a leap of faith.

Smith goes on to describe a development in the history of allegory. After the decline of the "shared referential, metasemantic system" of medieval allegory, modernist allegory imposes upon the reader some specific directive to construct or invent such a system in the act of reading itself. The goal of

modernist allegory to foreground the reader can be seen, according to Smith, as one of the goals in modernism, namely to eliminate the traditional author/recipient hierarchies. Smith's examples for such modernist goals are "Mallarmé's elocutionary disappearance of the author, or Flaubert's perfect work on the subject of nothing at all" (118). Recognizing that modernism could never have achieved these goals, the era of postmodernism declares these modernist goals illusory and argues that they may "best be conceived as a simple reaction to those modernist aims" (118).

As I have explained above, the allegorist's melancholic gaze appropriates objects by inscribing them with a new meaning. This gesture, the principal allegorical gesture, marks a desire for authority, offering its new meaning "as always 'more true' than that which it replaces" (115). Because postmodern allegory, however, cannot claim access to a shared referential system, the allegorist "arrogates to himself a power that immediately exposes neither its own tenets, nor the actual 'truth' of its bans" (115):

> The allegorist's work is placed, then, in order to interpellate the reader, who knows that some power is at work but with a veil before it, and that the discovery of its tenets demands his compliance. This onerous role given to the reader in postmodernism is crucial because it is necessary to the allegorist's power that it be furnished with an audience willing to realize the devastation of the old regime--without necessarily understanding the nature of the new replacement. Thus, truth and the exercise of power retain their mystique in contemporary allegory, and the traditional author/reader hierarchy undergoes a peculiarly new reinforcement. (115)

What Smith describes as "compliance," I call a leap of faith. Both appelations hint at the coercive potential of postmodern allegory once its author/ity has been accepted.

The allegorical text bears in it a memory of the meaning it pretends to devastate. To Smith, this is a serious fraud because the allegorical text suggests that its new meaning is the only possible one. Smith concludes:

> The methodology of postmodern allegory thus consists ultimately in a purblind and vain gesture of will, inscribing itself in a dialectic with previous modes but still operating on the same level of ideological control. (115)

Yet the memory inherent to allegory can also be seen in another light.

American poet James Applewhite intervenes in the debate on postmodern allegory with his article "Postmodernist Allegory and the Denial of Nature." He proposes a classification of the postmodern similar to Suzi Gablik's. On the one hand, he argues that the postmodern denies nature and replaces the real with representations of the real. According to Applewhite, critics who describe the postmodern in this way are Jean Baudrillard and Craig Owens.[20] On the other hand, Applewhite is happy to report a current trend in all domains of art and culture that subverts the denial of nature in postmodern allegory. Although Applewhite does not name that trend, he describes it as follows (I quote at length to provide a sense of

[20] It is safe to include Hutcheon in this list because she also denies nature and replaces it with representations.

the pathos with which Applewhite speaks at the end of his article):

> In spite of all that has been said by theorists of postmodernism and postmodernist art, a depth of memory and involvement remains available, for artists who insist on breaking through the surface imagery which has been electronically deposited, like a glossy film, over contemporary experience. . . . It is possible still for artists--painters, sculptors, composers, poets, novelists, dancers--to endorse life by refusing the compression of the time sense and thus of history which is implicit in our commercialized culture. Postmodernist theory may call into question the relation between sign and referent, but that very problematizing of relation may provoke an emotive reaction, an authentic anger and refusal of complicity. Artists, citizens, even politicians, have the power to insist on the still-great dimension of human memory and its long association with the earth. They may continue to ground their art and their lives in the medium behind the culture which <u>seems</u> our nature. We know that the first nature is still there, because we breathe. It is possible to breathe back an art which relates to this origin, celebrates the glory of our original association with it, and directs what may become an effectual anger at the forces which paper our horizons with money imagery; value illicitly dissociated from a referent in nature. (16-17)

I see a link between the pathos echoing through such phrases as "the still-great dimension of human memory and its long association with the earth" and Gablik's "empowered new vision" and its dependency on ritual, mythic thinking, and mysticism. Gablik's new vision and Applewhite's memory are accessible most readily to the melancholic through the allegorical gesture. With that gesture artists and critics can inscribe their new visions on a reality they perceive as dead and meaningless.

The move from a modern aesthetics of observation and monologic encapsulation to a postmodern "ethics of participa-

tion"[21] is the primary feature of the postmodern remapping of the modern paradigm Gablik envisions:

> Whereas the struggle of modernism was to delineate self from other, in the emerging realm of quantum inseparability, the world becomes a place of interaction and connection, and things derive their being by mutual dependence. When everything is perceived as dynamically interconnected, art needs to collaborate with the environment and a new sense of relationship causes the old polarity between art and audience to disappear. . . . Interaction is the key that moves art beyond the aesthetic mode: letting the audience intersect with, and even form part of, the process, recognizing that when observer and observed merge, the vision of static autonomy is undermined. (150-51)

The postmodern struggle to undermine the modern vision of static autonomy is also a struggle to transform modern authority. Gablik notes that this authority often relies on "a kind of compulsive masculinity" (127) and cites as an example Clement Greenberg's construction of art history in an interview in which he refers exclusively to male artists.[22] Against this masculinity, Gablik holds as a new principle the feminine that "breaks through the illusion of separateness and dualism" (128).

Suzi Gablik is my primary source when it comes to theorizing the postmodern continuum. She believes that "artists will gravitate toward different activities, attitudes and roles than

[21] This is Gablik's term, see The Reenchantment of Art 126.

[22] She comments wryly: "At least for Greenberg, art history seems to consist entirely of male walruses" (127).

those that operated under the aesthetics of modernism." She continues:

> It is important to understand that any remapping of the modern paradigm has both a deconstructive and a reconstructive dimension; they need to be seen not as opposites, with sharp boundaries drawn between them, but as components in a larger process, operating simultaneously like the complementarity principle. (27)

Discussing the postmodern continuum thus necessitates bringing together materials of a discontinuous nature. In a personal addendum, Gablik writes:

> I personally see the contradictions between the two postmodernisms as very productive, since it allows us to investigate both the darker and the lighter paths to the future without accepting the inevitability of either. (27)

It is in this spirit of investigation that I wish to bring together Watson and Schafer. In my view, both artists' works contain elements from the whole postmodern continuum so that--by taking Watson and Schafer as case studies--I can discuss the postmodern in both its darker and lighter aspects.

Chapter Four

The Work of Wilfred Watson

Last Judgements

In "On Radical Absurdity," Wilfred Watson describes a problem he faced in his first major play:

> I couldn't really get started until I'd killed off all the human characters and reassembled them in a sort of limbo, where I could confront them with an atypical absurdist impasse, the fact that when you are dead you cannot die. (37)

This statement reveals, in an exemplary manner, the attitude of the melancholic playwright: he perceives a dead world or, indeed, has caused such a world, which he then fills with his new meaning. Connected to this new meaning is a didactic purpose that determines Watson's allegorical intent. The aim of this section on two of Watson's plays from the 1960s is to analyze how Watson uses his authority as allegorist to inscribe his new meaning and achieve his allegorical intent.

When looking at the plays Watson wrote during the 1960s, one cannot help noticing the prevalence of trials and trial-like settings.[1] While the drama of court proceedings is a main

[1] Watson incorporates trials in a number of his plays from the 1960s: Cockcrow and the Gulls (3.4), The Trial of Corporal Adam (act 2), O Holy Ghost DIP YOUR FINGER IN THE BLOOD OF CANADA And Write, I Love You (2.20), and Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan (scene 4).

Watson incorporates a "trial-like" setting in Another Bloody Page from Plutarch where the triumvirate spends a sizable portion of act one discussing a list of 200 "enemies of the state" whom they intend to execute.

type of the documentary drama of the 1960s, Watson's plays are not documentary in nature. Documents of historical events are the basis for documentary drama. It searches for truth to such an extent that the search seems more important than a truth bound to or prescribed by authority.[2] The focus of documentary drama on the search rather than on the truth is profoundly anti-allegorical because the be-all and end-all of allegory is the truth that the allegorist inscribes on a dead object.

In "Documentary Drama: Form and Content," Clas Zilliacus too maintains that one way of sketching a history of the documentary genre is in opposition to allegory. The gradual reduction of societal restrictions in Europe (and especially in the Federal Republic of Germany after the morally rigid and conservative 1950s), he argues, led to an upsurge in documentary drama. As a consequence, the documentary drama could aggressively present counterfacts to the ones distributed

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In the plays of the late 1970s and early 1980s, too, Watson employs trial-like settings. The Woman Taken in Adultery, which draws on the medieval mystery play of the same title, counterpoints the medieval view of a New Testament incident and Watson's view of an Edmonton shopping mall. Some Edmonton lawyers ask Jesus how to punish the adulteress. Once she is released according to Jesus' advice, she and a group of women find the lawyers guilty of trying to discredit Jesus by having her punished. The women then decide to stone the lawyers.

In Gramsci x 3, Tiu Gramsci provides a long report of an unfair trial against him (Plays 461-66), and Mussolini takes on the role of the unjust judge who sentences Gramsci to the prolonged suffering of a calvary.

[2] In "Prozeß oder Schauprozeß," Otto Best makes similar observations, see esp. 70.

by the powers that be without having to fear the censorship that plays like Jean Paul Sartre's Les mouches (1943) forestalled through allegory.

However, the dividing line between documentary and allegorical methods is not as straightforward as Zilliacus suggests. In his "Prozeß oder Schauprozeß," Otto Best argues that the documentary playwright has to walk a fine line between being what he calls a "maieutic author" (an author who furthers critical rationalism as a means to find truth) and being an agitator because the documents are objective but their organization for the stage remains subjective. "The tribunal," Best concludes, "develops into a show-trial; the observer is not enlightened but manipulated and reduced."[3] In Best's view, then, the dramatist Socratically assists in delivering the reactions of the audience. Of course, the didacticism of maieutic authors does not go as far as that of allegorists who also assist in delivering the reactions of the audience but in addition want to impose their moral standards on the audience. Maieutic authors, it seems, are content to evoke moral outrage at the events represented by the documents and their organization.

In "The Expressionist Legacy in the Canadian Theatre: George Ryga and Robert Gurik," Sherrill Grace argues that "many of the sixties' plays use the courtroom as their primary set-

[3] "Gericht wird zum Schauprozeß, der Zuschauer nicht aufgeklärt, er wird agitiert, reduziert" (71).

ting . . . in part because the tribunal constituted a perfect metaphor (as Kafka also knew) for a century on trial" (49). Let me add to this that a metaphor extended to cover an entire work is an allegory.[4] Furthermore, a trial makes a near perfect vehicle for allegory because of the clearly defined roles of judge, prosecutor, counsel for the defense, plaintiff and accused. The rigidity of the roles in a trial enables the allegorist to move easily from mimesis to allegory because the recipient tends to apprehend the role rather than the character embodying the role. The trial's diametrically opposed positions of plaintiff and accused also allow the author to advance one set of moral standards, while simultaneously discrediting another. A further advantage to the allegorist are the clearly defined relations of authority between the trial participants. An allegorist may wish to exploit these relations for his purposes as well as include the recipient in any of these roles or co-opt the recipient into taking sides ("The Expressionist Legacy" 49).

One is reminded here of Angus Fletcher's Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode in which he points out that "allegory makes an appeal to an almost scientific curiosity about the order of things" (68). A trial's discursive structures, such as submitting a plea, gathering evidence, questioning witnesses

[4] I am thinking here of Quintilian's definition of allegory and of Roman Jacobson's two linguistic axes where the one veering towards metaphor becomes increasingly allegorical.

and exercising cross examinations, surely comes very close to such a "curiosity" about a set of circumstances. Hence I understand Watson's trials not as manifestations of documentary drama but as allegories.

In the plays I analyze, Watson links the trials with the theme of the Last Judgement. The trials are invariably set in a world removed in some way from everyday reality: either they take place in a nether world or in heaven.[5] Furthermore, in all trials, more seems to be at stake than the events on stage at first indicate; indeed, humankind itself is on trial. The outcomes of the trials seem absolute and associated with (eternal) damnation: either the accused are sentenced to crucify God or are forfeit to an allegorical death. These characteristics of the Last Judgement further dichotomize the stereotypical roles of the trial's participants. At the same time, however, they encourage the audience to take sides with the accused because all are human. The integration of the trial with the theme of the Last Judgement, therefore, tightens the allegorist's authority and control over the audience.

In order to understand the full allegorical import of the trials in the plays, we need to take a closer look at a number of characters who have allegorical significance. In a prefatory "Note re script" to his second play, The Trial of

[5] In Watson's Let's Murder Clytemnestra, a trial takes place in an absurd mental clinic-cum-prison, see below.

Corporal Adam, Watson includes an enigmatic comment on his first major play,[6] Cockcrow and the Gulls: "The name 'Cockcrow' had made, at a single stroke of the pen, a realistic treatment of an action dealing with a series of homicides allegedly located in Nanaimo, impossible" (Plays 109). This remark refers to the allegorical implications of the name "Cockcrow" which need further explanation.

Cockcrow has the first experience of "life after death," or represents the cockcrow of this nether world, after OReilly, Alice and Higgins discuss life after death. Cockcrow joins the discussion and promises to get "DEAD drunk" and to report back to the living what death is like:

> No one has ever come back from death to tell us
> unimpeachably what death is [. . .]
> Very well. I shall this evening be dead.
> Since you have requested it,

[6] A short play, The Whatnot, was produced at the Interfaculty Drama Festival at the University of Alberta Studio Theatre in November 1957 but remains unpublished. The Whatnot is of interest because it contains most of the features that would mark Watson's plays of the 1960s, such as extreme violence (on and off-stage), unrealistic settings, absurd humor and ecstatic, bizarre endings.

The play opens on a rather realistically portrayed retired couple living in Edmonton. Soon, however, the play leaves realistic conventions when the couple has an argument about whether to stay in Edmonton. The husband suggests to his wife that he saw her into little boards in order to build a whatnot. Having never liked life in Edmonton, the wife happily agrees because, as a whatnot, life would be bearable for her anywhere. The remainder of the play features various visitors who all admire the couple's solution to their problem. A rich American buys the whatnot. When it is removed from the house, it leaves a hole which the characters try to cover up. The last scene shows them dancing ecstatically while singing "we don't care; we don't care" (Box 6, ts., Watson-archives, Special Collections, U of Alberta, Edmonton, 36).

> I shall look about me, when I AM dead,
> And see . . . what, exactly, death is.
> And this
> I will come back and tell you.[7]

Cockcrow, however, can only keep the first of his promises; he returns after his death to give a few hints to his friends, such as, "I am here by miracle, to tell you all" and "I am at the beginning" and "It was like the day of wrath" (57,58,60). But when pressed to expound on these hints, he is at a loss for words to describe life after death. Thus, like a cock announcing daybreak, Cockcrow merely announces the beginning of the nether world. Watson reduces Cockcrow to this one function: his character remains undeveloped, and he only participates as one among others in other actions, such as the nailing of the scarecrow or the incantations at the end of the play where his only non-choric utterance, "I am here by miracle" (104), repeats his earlier report (57), thereby again reminding the audience of his function as announcer of the nether world. His inability to tell those who are still alive about his new world is indicative of his new status: he has become <u>a part of</u> the nether world and his communicative abilities seem restricted once he leaves his world.

The name "Cockcrow," then, is a metonomy. According to Fletcher, synecdoche and metonomy contain the full range of allegorical part-whole relationships. The former labels <u>static</u>

[7] <u>Plays</u> 36. Because Watson and Schafer use ellipsis regularly, I mark my own ellipsis in quotations from their literary works henceforth by square brackets.

relations of classification (the sail is a qualitative subclass of ship; it is a part thereof), while the latter labels dynamic interactions between part and whole (the sword causes violent death) (87). These two tropes allow us to distinguish the whole from the part and, in this way, call to mind the larger organization with which the parts may bear an integral relation. The allegorical implications of the name "Cockcrow" are to be seen in the bridging of the gap between image (of the nether world) and agent (the character Cockcrow) and lead the recipient towards an allegorical reading of the play.

Let us now turn to the allegorical significance of another set of characters in Cockcrow. At the outset, a character named Pride addresses the audience and introduces the protagonist of the play, Cyril Higgins, and himself:

> Regard the pot of geraniums.
> May
> I, before the play
> Deviates any further into allegory,
> Introduce to you the owner of the pot of geraniums?
> He is one Cyril Higgins.
> He is looking for his father.
> So I gather. A queer kid.
> As for me--you all know me, my Christian name is
> . . . Pride.
> I was most religiously begotten.
> My mother was a Christian gentlewoman.
> She baptized me, Pride.
> Here endeth my aside. (Plays 17)

Pride here superimposes the specific performances of Cyril and himself onto the allegorical dimension of their roles. Pride also points to his individual performance whenever introducing an abstract category: "May I, before the play deviates any further into allegory," and "As for me--you all know me, my

Christian name is . . . Pride" (emphasis added). Thus he stresses the ontological metamorphosis of the abstract quality of pride into his individual human character. This metamorphosis signals personification.

In The Fiction of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative, Carolynn van Dyke reminds us that personification is one of the markers of allegorical drama. She uses beginnings and endings of allegorical plays to formulate a taxonomy of allegorical drama. She contends that allegorists tend to frame moralities in some version of a superimposition of universal truth on the human performance or vice versa (110). According to van Dyke, a concrete example of this superimposition is the beginning of Everyman, where a messenger addresses the spectators in a prologue to inform them about the content of the play:

> For ye shall here how our heven Kinge
> Calleth Everyman to a generall rekeninge.
> Give audience, and here what he doth saye. (2.19-21)

In the ensuing dialogue between God and Death, the allegorist authoritatively categorizes Everyman as a representation of every man. The individual character of Everyman, however, is unaware of this categorization until Death stops him with the words, "Everyman, stande still!" At this point, according to van Dyke, "the condition of every man is about to come home to Everyman" (108), which is a shock of recognition for both Everyman and the audience. Van Dyke argues that the "dramatic" in the moralities does not arise from a conflict of characters,

as it usually does in drama, nor from a confrontation of abstractions, as it does in narrative allegory, but

> the dramatic moment is the one at which an abstract category becomes a human character. That kind of drama, based on ontological metamorphosis, is peculiar to allegory. (108)

In Cockcrow, the Five Sins (Pride, Wrath, Sloth, Envy, and [Nunsclip] Lechery) seem to be personifications of Cyril's motivations for murdering his father and a number of "innocent" bystanders as well as for committing suicide.[8] Another indicator of this relationship between the Sins and Cyril is the latter's stammering because it can be seen as a conceptual marker of the Sins' creation. Cyril's stammer in this way occurs only at the beginning of the play; to be more precise, it only occurs up to the point where the Sins take on more self-sufficient roles and lose some of their status as Cyril's motivations. For these reasons, Cyril's stammer signifies a linguistic diminishment that simultaneously serves as an origin for the Sins.

In his study The Poetics of Personification, James Paxson describes a similar psychic or linguistic diminishment among human personae in medieval personification narratives. This diminishment is manifest in a particular psychic, physical and spiritual condition that overcomes the narrator at the outset

[8] Watson omits two of the traditional Seven Deadly Sins, Covetousness and Gluttony, perhaps because they are not as relevant to Cyril's character and his motivations as the other vices; indeed, there is nothing in Cockcrow to suggest that Cyril desires wealth or food.

of the text. Paxson calls this condition dorveille. He goes on:

> The psychic [or linguistic] reduction concomitant upon dorveille . . . gives rise to the narratorial apprehension, or more accurately, the narratorial invention or generation of personified abstractions, objects, or places. Personification characters enjoy a metaphorical "emergence" from the mind of the diminished actant or narrator. (95)

In explaining this emergence of personifications, Paxson incorporates Fletcher's psychoanalytical approach into a broader phenomenological one. If a personification grows out of a generating consciousness that ends up as a psychic vestige or a fragment, then the invention of personifications entails a critique of the myth of "holism" attributable to the human consciousness. This critique, according to Paxson, is at the heart of all phenomenology (97). Angus Fletcher, in fact, provides a psychoanalytic reading of personifications as psychic "daemons" or as the literary images of the obsessive-compulsive or the manic-depressive consciousness in its manic phases.[9] Paxson reinterprets Fletcher's complementary characterological ratios into a phenomenological formula which contrasts the diminished character with the personifications:

> Fletcher's . . . characterological descriptions, therefore, are really phenomenological equations wherein personifications, as fragments or facets of an ostensibly "whole" human consciousness, function as synecdochal emblematic images of this super-

[9] See Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, ch. 1 "The Daemonic Agent" and ch. 6 "Psychoanalytic Analogues: Obsession and Compulsion."

> ordinate consciousness which is itself incomplete. (98)

Paxson's remarks help to clarify the function of the Five Sins in Cockcrow. I understand Cyril's stammer as the linguistic diminishment that Paxson describes as dorveille. Stammering, which adds vowels and consonants to words, and babbling, which removes them from words, represent the two poles of linguistic disfiguration whose spectrum mirrors consciously invented figuration and disfiguration.[10] Paxson concludes:

> As the product of the diminished human consciousness, [unconsciously disfigured language] becomes the conceptual marker or signal flag for the parallel creation of animational figures--the walking and breathing prosopopeias of allegorical narrative. (116)

A similar process occurs in Cockcrow, where Cyril's stammer is the conceptual marker for the creation of the Five Sins.

Yet the Five Sins do not only function as allegorical personifications; they also develop into more self-motivated characters who urge Cyril to avenge his mother by killing the murderer, namely his father Higgins. Watson here uses the vices in a role that resembles that of the classical Erinyes, or Furies, who are agents of divine retribution, seeking both justice and vengeance for wrongs done to kinsfolk. The Erinyes appear in Aeschylus' The Eumenides, where they pursue Orestes

[10] This mirroring may be accountable for the fact that in the medieval ages stammering was considered an expression of divine inspiration and a vatic activity. This also explains the expression "prophetic stammering."

after he has killed his mother. In one of their choral speeches to Orestes, they announce their purpose as follows:

> This the purpose that the all-involving
> destiny spun, to be ours and to be shaken
> never: when mortals assume outrage
> of own hand in violence,
> these we dog, till one goes
> under earth. Nor does death
> set them altogether free. (lines 334-40)

The last sentence shows that the Erinyes are active in both this world and the next, a characteristic Watson transfers to the vices in Cockcrow.

Once the scene shifts to the nether world in act four, Cyril's vices are more active than the Erinyes. At the beginning of The Eumenides, the Erinyes are asleep right next to Orestes, who is awake, and have to be awakened to pursue their vengeance. Chiding them for allowing Orestes to escape their vengeance, Clytemnestra rouses the Erinyes from sleep and reproaches them further: "Oh, whimper, then, but your man has got away and gone / far" (lines 118-19). In Cockcrow, Watson ironically reverses this situation (Orestes awake, Erinyes asleep): Cyril is asleep and the Sins are awake. Pride and Wrath rebuke Cyril in the same way that Clytemnestra rebuked the Erinyes: "Wake up. Wake up. Wake up. / Pursue. Pursue. Pursue" (Plays 71).

That Cyril kills not only Higgins but also OReilly, Alice, Greta, and Iris suggests that the vices' function goes beyond that of the Erinyes. The vices develop into cynical creatures who urge Cyril to pursue and kill indiscriminately anyone who

criticizes his revenge. This latter role aids the vices in counselling Cyril to take his own life in order to bring the others to ultimate justice:

> WRATH. They've got away from you
> CYRIL. How?
> PRIDE. You've got them on the lam . . .
> Ergo, chase after them
> CYRIL. How?
> PRIDE. sweetly
> You have a key in your hand to open a door in your brow
> WRATH, PRIDE. Then you can plough
> Them right
> Up to the very judgement seat. (69)

The "key" is, of course, the pistol and the act suggested is suicide. The "judgement seat" is a reference to the Revelation of St. John, where the dead will be judged from a white seat according to their works (20.11-15).

The accused in the trial are Cyril, Higgins, Cockcrow, Greta, Iris, Alice and OReilly, now chained together as prisoners. The charges are as follows: homicide (Thomas Higgins), patricide, wanton homicide and suicide (Cyril Higgins), prostitution and disorderly living (Alice, Greta, Iris, Cockcrow), and procuring and living off the proceeds of prostitution (OReilly) (Plays 81-82). Convinced that he drove the others to the judgement seat, however, Cyril protests his own arraignment by pointing out that his father made a murderer of him. He contends that he is not to blame. But Pride disregards Cyril's objections because "there is no addition to the evidence here" (77) and proceeds with sentencing the prisoners. In light of the Sins' origination from Cyril's consciousness

and their subsequent alignment with Cyril, it is highly ironic that Pride sentences him first: "I will punish the young man first / to Cyril Look this way. / I sentence you to be hanged" (77). That the Sins thus turn against him can be seen as a further development in the status of the personifications. Generated from the dorveille of Cyril's consciousness and, as such, manifestations of parts of his consciousness, they begin to separate themselves from their origin in order to constitute self-sufficient characters. Significantly, once the Sins take on the roles of the Erinyes, the conceptual marker of their origination, Cyril's stammer, disappears. The development from personifications to characters begins when the Sins turn into Erinyes and reaches its climax when the Sins blind Cyril.

Once the Sins detect hesitation on the part of the prisoners to punish God according to their sentence, they punish and torture Cyril by blinding him:

> WRATH. Let's put out his eyes
> CYRIL. It will be just like King John
> mimics Higgins
> "And wilt thou with thine hands put out both mine eyes?"
> "And I will"
> "Wilt thou?"
> "And I will"
> COCKCROW. Let's get it done
> HIGGINS. Won't you stand firm behind me, mates
> WOMEN. Why don't they do what is wanted
> HIGGINS. We'll call their bluff
> WOMEN. speaking quickly . . . as Wrath and Envy present Cyril
> to Pride
> Maybe they'll call ours
> PRIDE. puts out Cyril's eyes
> There.
> And there
> throws eyeballs on ground

> LECHERY. <u>picks up eyeballs and holds them on the flat of her hand</u>
> O boy, he's making eyes at me
> CYRIL. <u>miserably</u>
> Whoopee.
> Now for the first time I can see. (<u>Plays</u> 90)

This blinding scene deploys many literary allusions. One is to Shakespeare's <u>King John</u>. The original passage occurs in act four, scene one of the play in which Hubert has orders to blind young Arthur. Their long dialogue consists of Arthur's pleading and Hubert's growing unease with his task. Finally overcome with mercy for Arthur, Hubert refuses to blind Arthur and sets him free. I quote the lines Watson alludes to:

> ARTHUR. Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes?
> HUBERT. Young boy, I must.
> ARTHUR. And will you?
> HUBERT. And I will. (<u>Jn.</u> 4.1.39-42)

Watson's repetitions of "Wilt thou" and "And I will" emphasize ironically the repetitive nature of Arthur's pleading.

Cyril's blinding also parallels Gloucester's blinding in Shakespeare's <u>King Lear</u>. Cyril's remark, "Whoopee. Now for the first time I can see," is doubly ironic because it expresses the fate of Gloucester, who must first be blind to "see" the intrigues and evil surrounding him, and because it expresses the misery of this breakthrough. Yet Watson's blinding scene is also reminiscent of Jean Paul Sartre's <u>Les mouches</u>, where the Erinyes are intent on punishing Orestes for the murder of his mother by blinding him. Zeus, however, does not allow this punishment.

Cyril's blinding has another precursor in Prudentius' Psychomachia where the precise demolition of eyes, teeth, and tongue reverses the movement of personification. According to Paul de Man, this movement of personification is

> the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, prosopon poein, to confer a mask or a face (prosopon). (qtd. in Paxson 69)

Destroying the face that personification confers signifies in the Psychomachia the Vices' defeat and the Virtues' victory. In Cockcrow, the Sins' punishment of Cyril can be seen to commence reversing the movement of personification. Perhaps, this reversal is one of the primary goals of the Sins because it would establish their end as personifications of Cyril's motivations and their beginning as autonomous characters. By destroying Cyril, the Sins could declare victory too.

Because of Higgins's intervention on Cyril's behalf, Cyril remains the only one to be sentenced, which seems to indicate another shift in the Sins' role. While the Sins appeared at first as Cyril's personified vices and then as Erinyes, instigating Cyril's revenge, during the trial they appear as Cyril's judges, holding him accountable for those deeds that they themselves advised.

The development of the Sins attests to a chain of control that begins and ends with the authority of the allegorist. Watson inscribes his melancholy in Cyril's dorveille that in

turn generates the Sins. The development of the vices takes its course from being personifications of Cyril's motivations to self-motivated characters who turn against Cyril and sentence and torture him. At the end of the play, the vices provide the play with its final allegorical and ironical twist, namely with the mockery of redemption.

But before turning to the end of Cockcrow, let us have a look at the trial in The Trial of Corporal Adam. In this play, act one leads to the trial that takes up the entire second act of the play. Corporal Adam stands accused of misappropriating death. Watson personifies the latter as Deth, who brings charges against Adam before God. But God insists on showing mercy:

> GOD. If this my creature, Adam,
> Has faults (and he has) still I have mercy
> DETH. Yes, deity. But you will find he has more blemish
> Than you have mercy for. [. . .]
> Well: let me ask what fault he must engrave
> Upon his soul, to forfeit it?
> Killing a brother? Raping a sister?
> Robbing? Cheating? Brawling? Rioting?
> Stealing from helpless widowkind?
> Waging wars unjust, and murdering little children
> Before their infant gums have pricked their teeth?
> Would these be faults enough? [. . .]
> GOD. I am merciful. Has he other faults?
> I can forgive him these. (Plays 116)

In light of such all-encompassing mercy, Deth seems to feel increasingly powerless; nonetheless, God concedes that Adam "shall answer for his faults," not by being forfeit outright to Deth, but in a trial: "You shall not hang him without trial" (117).

In The Trial of Corporal Adam, all legal roles seem unambiguous: Adam chooses Deth to be his judge. Deth then calls on Holy Church to be the prosecutor. When it comes to finding a counsel for the defense, Deth can only think of one, namely Mefistofilis, whom Adam accepts as a "paramour of legal wit" (130) against the warnings of his wife. However, a closer look reveals that Watson introduces considerable ambiguity by aligning separate legal roles with the same characters. Thus, the judge of this trial, Deth, is also the plaintiff. Furthermore, the counsel for the defense is in secret league with the judge (or plaintiff) and the prosecutor turns out to be more of a counsel for the defense. As a result of these role duplications, Watson creates dramatic irony by making the audience aware of the secret pact between Deth and Mefistofilis even before the trial begins. In this way, the audience realizes that the trial is fundamentally flawed and unjust.

In Cockcrow, Alice assumes that the judge of their trial must be God (as it is prophesied in the Revelation of St. John). Pointing at the presiding judge, she says:

> overcome by the awfulness of it, word by word
> Cockcrow . . . is . . . that . . . man . . . there . . . God? (Plays 77)

The "awfulness" of this realization lies in the fact that the Sins are the judges with Pride presiding. That Pride is the chair of this bench seems to be based entirely on his physical strength: he is the one to win the quarrel with the other Sins about who gets to sit at the centre of the bench and hence

declares himself to be chosen the chair "unanimously" (76). Watson retains the characteristic of the medieval moralities, according to which Pride is the "chief of the sins."[11] In Cockcrow, the vices are "members of a local jazz orchestra of some reputation, THE FIVE SINS" (17) of which Pride is the maestro.[12] Of the vices, he is on stage most often.

Watson prescribes only the legal roles of judges and accused. The roles of plaintiff and counsel for the defense change with the situations. For instance, after Pride sentences Cyril to be hanged, Higgins clumsily defends his son:

> We ain't not one of us done what we ought to have done.
> And we've all done what we oughtn't to have done,
> Eh, mate? I don't accuse no one,
> But if I had a stone of accusation
> In my hand, to hurl it, mate,
> It's environment I'd hurl it at.
> Environment's to blame. (78)

[11] Mackenzie 34. In the medieval classification of Sins, Pride (superbia) is seen as the origin of all other sins (radix vitiorum), see, for instance, St. Viktor passim.

[12] The Sins' association with jazz adds an element of lasciviousness to their appearances: they are familiar with the red-light district because they are jazz musicians and are employed there. Thus, in the first scene where they assemble in a "street of brothels," they make fun of Cyril's embarrassment (17). Only on one occasion do the vices play their instruments directly, namely when they try to rouse Cyril from his sleep (71). But they sing (105) and dance (85). Watson often extends the performative aspect of his plays to include music but leaves the extent of the musical aspect to the discretion of the director. Examples are Cockcrow, Make Love Not Wasps (in which he uses musical bridges), and The Rock Hook (which is a dramatization of Sheila Watson's The Double Hook for theatre ensemble and a rock band). Murray Schafer, on the other hand, stays in control of the extent of music in his theatrical works.

But soon after Higgins attempts Cyril's defense, Cyril accuses Higgins and thus slips into the role of plaintiff:

> HIGGINS. It's environment that is to blame.
> CYRIL. points finger at Higgins
> It's that swine there that's to blame. [. . .]
> He emptied a teapot on my mother. (79)

These role swappings and the notable confusion they create in the courtroom and, in extension, among the audience nonetheless support the dichotomy of judges and accused, a dichotomy which itself is never in question. This dichotomy determines the underlying power structure of the trial. It is only in the conclusion of the play that Watson's irony subverts the dichotomy of judges and accused in favor of a third entity, redemption.

Pride is responsible for the verdict of the trial in Cockcrow. The fact that he pronounces judgement in overriding Wrath's objections certifies both his position as chair of the bench and the hierarchical dichotomy of judge and accused. Taking up Higgins's defense that the "environment is to blame," Pride pursues this line of argument further. Stating first that "Environment is the world" and then that God made the world, Pride says that "if the world's to blame for what the prisoners severally have done, / Then God's to blame" (78). Wrath objects to this argument, but Pride is adamant in pursuing it:

> What the accused have done . . .
> Is--
> Compared to the organized crimes of civilization,
> The Seven Years War; the Thirty Years War;
> The Hundred Years War; the Napoleonic War;
> The Crimean War; and the First World War;
> The Spanish Civil War; and the Second World War,

> With its mass extermination of the Jews at Belsen and elsewhere;
> The mass bombing of Berlin and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki;
> The turning of live steam on rioting prisoners;
> The lynching of negroes; and the sterilization of vagrants in California;
> The PACIFICATION of Hungary--for a few examples--is . . .
> A drop of water to the ocean.
> We must keep a sense of proportion. (82)

As a result, Pride sentences the prisoners to crucify either God or else a scarecrow that may serve as an image of God. He also turns this crucifixion into a ritual, complete with repetitions and choric incantations:

> Say it out loud!
> All of you, repeat these words after me:
> "In crucifying this scarecrow . . ."
> <u>they repeat the words, only Higgins silent</u>
> "We have put God to death."
> <u>repeated</u>
> In nailing this scarecrow through the hands, we have nailed God through the hands
> <u>repeated</u>
> In nailing this scarecrow through the feet, we have nailed God through the feet
> <u>repeated</u> [. . .]
> In putting this scarecrow to death, we have put God to death
> <u>all, except Higgins, repeat</u> (92-93)

Once they drive more nails into the scarecrow, "to make sure" as Pride demands, the scarecrow begins bleeding. Cyril only participated in the crucifixion through his verbal (and spiritual[13]) support. In spite of the ill omen of the

[13] Cyril aids Cockcrow, who nails hands and feet of the scarecrow to the cross, by providing spiritual guidance: "I will be your eyes. / I have eyes in every drop of my blood / To see that it is God-- / Let us forgive ourselves, / But first we must punish God" (92).

scarecrow's bleeding, Cyril says, "They have crucified God. / Now let us forgive ourselves." But forgiveness is beyond OReilly, who remarks while leaving, "I can never forgive myself" (93). Hence the state of the characters seems to be one of (eternal) damnation, a judgement corroborated by the cheerless Alice, who says:

> I will pick myself up and take myself away
> And deposit myself somewhere
> And having abandoned myself there,
> There will be no need to forgive myself [. . .]
> I'll be rid of myself. (94)

Alice expresses well the desolation she feels when considering her situation. Watson knows that something more is needed than a mere appeal, like Cyril's, to forgive.

In the last act, Alice appears to have gone mad; she practices "outward forms of graciousness [so that] heaven will flow into [her]" (95). The logger, now dressed as a shepherd, sympathizes with her (he bows to her whenever she bows to him), and gives her a pearl with which to cross herself. He also aids her with the crossing and then says, "now take it, and set free the others" (97). She immediately complies and asks Greta and Iris:

> Where is Master Cyril and Mr Higgins?
> And Cockcrow? And Father OReilly? [. . .]
> And Mrs Higgins? And Queenie?
> And Mother Loving, and all the peoples of the
> world. . . . (97)

By asking first for Cyril whose motivations the vices at first personified, Alice hints at a struggle between personified virtues and vices to win the favor of "man."[14]

Until the final scene, Watson favors the vices over the virtues. The vices control through Cyril's actions the other characters. The enigmatic logger who turns shepherd in the last act represents the virtues' side. As a logger he refuses to participate or even witness the crucifixion, and as a shepherd he provides the pearl that will redeem them all. That he appears as a shepherd recalls the Christian metaphor of Christ as shepherd of humankind, a metaphor here supported by the pearl, a sacred object, which leads to a direct confrontation with the vices in the final scene where the belief generated by the pearl creates an invisible protective wall against which the Sins rage in vain (103-04). The pearl could be seen as the kingdom of heaven, thus drawing on the medieval English poem Pearl which itself draws on the gospel of Matthew.[15]

[14] This struggle aligns the play with the tradition that began with Prudentius' Psychomachia and reached its climax in the miracle plays and moralities of the middle ages. While in the Psychomachia the virtues took on the vices in one-on-one combats, in the later miracle plays and moralities the treatment of the vices became gradually less formulaic and more complex until they developed in Shakespeare's age into characters who were no longer one-dimensional and no longer focused on one vice only--an example would be the eponymous hero of Richard III.

[15] In Pearl, the narrator grieves the loss of a pearl. But this pearl stands for his daughter who died as an infant. She comes to him in a dream to convince him that his grief is extravagant and out of place. Instead of grieving for his daughter, he should try to attain that pearl for himself which the jeweller in the gospel of Matthew sought and found (see "The parable of the pearl" in Matt. 8.45-46). The daughter

In Cockcrow, the pearl is a threat to the Sins because it cancels the damnation with which they sentenced the prisoners. The pearl generates the belief that holds the vices in check (104) and sparks the rituals and incantations which accompany the handing on of the pearl and establish a new and positive community. The choric lament of "Cor meum . . . contristaretur" changes to the choric incantation of the Agnus Dei (103), signifying, as it does in the Catholic mass, the redemption of human guilt through Christ's suffering. The manner in which the pearl makes its round further supports this sig-

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says:

> 'Jesus called his disciples mild,
> And said his realm no soul could win,
> Unless he arrive there just as a child,
> Or else nevermore will he enter therein.
> Innocent, honest, and undefiled,
> Without stain or spot of polluting sin,
> When such there knock, far from earth's wild,
> Keepers shall quickly the gate unpin.
> Therein is bliss in constant spin,
> That the jeweller sought through gems to bless,
> Selling all his wool, and linen thin,
> To purchase a pearl of spotlessness.
>
> 'This spotless, matchless pearl bought dear,
> For which the jeweller gave all on hand,
> Is like the realm of heaven clear,
> So said the Father of sea and land;
> For it is flawless, pure, without peer,
> Endlessly round, so fair and grand,
> And common to all who right revere.
> Amid my breast it now does stand;
> My Lord, the Lamb, whose blood death banned,
> Placed it there, his peace to impress.
> Forsake this world with madness spanned,
> And purchase your pearl of spotlessness. (Vantuono, 13, st. 1-2)

nification: Alice holds it up, then puts it in the mouth of the kneeling OReilly as though it were the wafer of the Eucharist.

Alice's language in its breathless fragments reflects her ecstacy:

> breathlessly [. . .]
> I bring you . . . this pearl
> holds it up
> Stand still in my words. Look.
> I had it from. When in the morning
> White as. This pearl mild as babies' milk.
> I give it you. Because . . .
> Stand still in my words. Put it in your mouth
> Let your tongue. I lay it there.
> In the suck of. Who gives this pearl keeps it.
> All the money. Money in the world.
> All money cannot buy this pearl.
> Stand still in my words. (103)

Soon after he receives the pearl and while still kneeling, OReilly replies: "Lord, I am not worthy, but speak the word only" (104), a phrase taken verbatim from the Catholic liturgy. Furthermore, when he puts the pearl in Cockcrow's mouth, OReilly's language becomes fragmented like Alice's:

> Take this. This pearl. In your mouth.
> On your tongue. It is sweeter than.
> Who gives the pearl keeps it. (104)

Cockcrow gives the pearl to Cyril, who instantaneously regains his eyesight. Because of redemption, the vices have lost the battle for Cyril.

The key issue in both Cockcrow and Corporal Adam is the redemption of the eponymous characters and the groups of characters associated with them. In both plays, a deus ex machina prompts redemption after the characters have been charged, tried, found guilty, and sentenced. Although the tri-

als exhibit some parallels to an absolute and binding Last Judgement, Watson also makes clear to what extent these trials and their verdicts are unjust and flawed. At first sight, then, these acts of redemption appear to correct the outcome of the trials; yet, redemption is also flawed because it too is unjustified.

The shepherd gives Alice the pearl and releases her and the others from the guilt of having crucified an image of God and at the same time releases them from the power of the vices. There is no underlying rationale for the shepherd's actions, except the implication of an all-encompassing love for humankind, which can be seen to originate in the shepherd's Christ-like status. But Cockcrow and the others have not done anything to deserve that love.

Likewise, the eponymous character in Corporal Adam does not deserve the all-encompassing mercy of God-the-father. Watson points out that we should see this mercy as a comment on the "flower-power" movement of the 1960s. The play thus ends "with a repentant Everyman forgiven by the flower-children's god, a smooth-faced father, theologically younger than his son" (109).

The two kinds of redemption Watson has chosen for his plays lead, in Cockcrow, to the Eucharist and, in Corporal Adam, to complete reconciliation between Everyman and God. However, the plays do not end on these harmonious notes. At the end of Cockcrow the Sins deliberately reduce the dramatic

distance of the spectators by prompting them to join in their ritualized mockery:

> writhing in the hangrope, as they try to get free of it, and use it for a lash, and leaping and waving their arms in frustration and mockery of Cyril and the others, and at the same time, inciting the audience to join in their mockery, which gets louder and louder, until as the curtain falls, they reach the utmost possible fortissimo
> I am Higgins the King
> I am Cyril the murderer
> I am OReilly the pimp and procurer
> I am Alice the whore
> in unison
> Lord have mercy upon us
> Lord have mercy upon us
> Lord have mercy upon us. (105)

The last words, "Lord have mercy upon us," are also taken verbatim from the Catholic liturgy. They include the audience and have a retrospective universalizing effect on the entire play: we are all Cyril, Higgins, OReilly, and Alice, and we all bear their guilt which Watson inflates into a collective guilt analogous to that of an "original sin." In this way, he encourages the audience to distrust the redemptive powers of religious ritual. The irony, however, lies in the fact that the audience voices their distrust in religion by pronouncing a phrase from the liturgy.

In the original ending of Corporal Adam, Watson stages a similar mockery of redemption when Mefistofilis intones a prayer:

> in voice of intense scoff, half child's sing-song, half nanny-goat's sacerdotal bleating or baaing
> [. . .]
> How-er faa-ther,
> Whichart tin nev-ven,
> Haa-alow-wed be -- ee

> Thy-yi na-ame, etc.

Then Mefistofilis too addresses the audience:

> then in ordinary voice to audience
> Am I the only one praying? Amen . . . amen. . . . (160)

But the strongest doubt in redemptive mercy occurs in the "Epilogue 1988," where Mefistofilis tells Deth that "This trial of Corporal Adam as a war criminal / Will go on and on until a wall / Has been found for his public execution" (161). Thus the zeal of Adam's enemies is as resilient as God's mercy is encompassing and the play appears in retrospect merely as one installment of Corporal Adam's ongoing suffering.

In both plays, Watson approaches the pursuit of truth and responsibility through treatments of the Last Judgement. These treatments take on qualities of an ultimate or final allegory that will put an end to all allegories because the Last Judgement promises to provide access to an ultimate signified, in this case divine and absolute justice. For Watson, divine justice is an ethical signified that would settle once and for all the issues of truth and responsibility. However, he cannot attain that signified because his allegories can only construct an intermediary moral sphere between the objective world (which all characters leave) and the transcendental signified of divine justice. This intermediary sphere helps to situate the subject by means of arbitrary truths and illusionistic certainties because it is an arbitrarily constructed sphere based solely on the authority of allegory. As an arbitrary

construct that is the site of that authority, this sphere is ideological through and through.

According to Paul Smith, postmodern allegory tries to subvert and replace the ideology of symbolism. Smith's argument is based on Benjamin's Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels which describes the romantic dichotomy of allegory and symbolism in dialectical terms. Once the allegorist recognizes that his construct belongs to the same dialectics as the one it replaced and is ideological too, allegory has failed:

> Because of its moral base, allegory is doomed to an endless circularity in which its destruction of one morality and truth is followed by the realization that its own morality and truth belong in the same arena.[16] (P. Smith 119).

Watson, it seems, is fully aware of an "endless circularity" in his plays; he has heard the devil's laugh, which is why he overturns last judgements by redemption and ridicules that redemption in the last scenes of his plays. What remains is the endless struggle of life itself which is also the life of

[16] Paraphrasing Benjamin, Smith says that at that point the allegorist hears the "devil's laugh." The passage in Benjamin is not as straightforward, since he links allegoresis to materiality: "Just as the earthly sadness belongs to allegoresis, the hellish merriness belongs to a desire that the triumph of matter prevents from occurring. . . . The astute versatility of the human expresses itself and holds against the allegorist the mocking laughter of hell. This versatility transforms its materiality in the most far-fetched maze into a human-like self-consciousness." ["Wie also die irdische Traurigkeit zur Allegorese gehört, so die höllische Lustigkeit zu ihrer im Triumph der Materie vereitelten Sehnsucht. . . . Die kluge Versatilität des Menschen spricht sich selber aus und setzt, indem sie im verworfensten Kalkül ihr Materialisches im Selbstbewußtsein menschenähnlich macht, dem Allegoriker das Hohngelächter der Hölle entgegen" (203).]

the recipient because Watson encourages the audience to join in the mockery of ultimate answers to the questions posed by life.

For Watson, the ideas of a last judgement and of complete redemption appear to represent two highly suspect and problematic "solutions" to the issue of original sin. The last words of Cockcrow and the "Epilogue 1988" of Corporal Adam demonstrate that Watson believes above all in the reality of a collective guilt and a continuous trial. In this context it is significant that Mefistofilis calls himself more "real" than God (145-46). Indeed, to Watson, Mefistofilis is more real because neither does he believe in redemption (because he knows he will continue the prosecution of Adam), nor does he believe in the possibility of achieving Adam's "public execution" (because he knows God will intervene in Adam's behalf), although he claims that possibility to convince Deth to continue the struggle. The allegorical essence in these plays, then, is the belief in original sin or a collective guilt that we cannot escape. All that remains is a continuous struggle. Watson tries to convey this belief to the audience by reducing dramatic distance between stage and audience at the end of both plays because this reduction--provided it really occurs in the production at hand--makes the audience side with characters who reject Last Judgements and redemption. In this way, then, Watson achieves his didactic purpose: the audience joins him in his belief in a radical Catholicism whose credo is neither the Last Judgement nor redemption, but the continuing condition of original sin.

With these two plays from the 1960s, we are at the threshold of Watson's postmodernism. His allegorical vision is still very close to that of the theatre of the absurd. Watson later coined the term "radical absurdity" for his theatre, and I will show in the last section of this chapter how he situates his new theatre in extension of as well as in opposition to the theatre of the absurd. The traits of his radical absurdity, already visible in the early 1960s as a spirituality marked by a profound belief in original sin and a near obsessive rejection of last judgements and final redemptions, will be bent in the late 1960s towards secular rituals through which he tries to convert the audience to his view of multi-consciousness as a possible key-experience in the postmodern era.

But before moving on to Watson's secular rituals of the late 1960s, let us look ahead to his ritualistic treatment of the calvary in the early 1980s. This detour will clarify Watson's allegorical method by analyzing his attitude towards history. Watson views the McLuhanesque "global village" as fundamentally ahistorical. That is why he implements atemporal rituals into his treatment of the calvary. There are also some gender specific rituals which deserve special attention because they reveal Watson's profound ambiguity towards women. This ambiguity will again be at issue in the last section of this chapter.

Meaningful Reversals

In Gramsci x 3, Watson transforms a biography into an atemporal (and ahistorical) ritual. I understand this transformation as allegorical because Watson starts with the biographical information (for the most part gleaned from Giuseppe Fiori's Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary) but goes on to distort this information until he gives us a version of Gramsci's life that is entirely a construct of Watson's imagination. In other words, he re-inscribes the biography of Gramsci with a new content. This re-inscription occurs in the allegorical gesture in which he replaces the temporality of history with a ritualistic, McLuhanesque pattern recognition. Furthermore, he uses the reversals of the calvary and of chronology to support his allegorical construct and to arrive at a truly (which for Watson means ahistorical) postmodern global village.

Why does Watson choose Antonio Gramsci to undertake his deconstruction of biography? He provides a clue in the epigraph to Gramsci x 3, a quotation from James Joll's Gramsci that addresses a paradox in Gramsci: "The greatest Marxist writer of the twentieth century, paradoxically, is also one of the greatest examples of the independence of the human spirit

from its materialist limitations."[17] What Joll describes as a paradox is the seeming contradiction between Gramsci's philosophy and his life. The former is based on materialism, while the latter shows how Gramsci transcended the materialist conditions of his imprisonment in order to survive and produce writings of a high intellectual calibre. Watson exploits Gramsci's transcendence of his materialist limitations by turning him into a Christ-like figure suffering through an atemporal and thus endless calvary. Antonio Gramsci is an ideal vehicle to deconstruct a biography because of the tensions between his life and his philosophy.

In the first edition of Gramsci x 3, Watson included an "Acknowledgement," but he subsequently expanded it to a "note re script" for his 1989 drama-collection. As in the notes to the 1960s plays, Watson uses the "note re script" to hint at and explicate an allegorical meaning of the play that may otherwise be too obscure. Furthermore, Watson contends that to "translate the life of a revolutionary into an allegory about theatre as a revolutionary art" required a fair amount of poetic license when dealing with his source material. Watson directs attention to two words ("revolutionary" and "allegory") he uses to describe the translation process. He points to the McLuhanesque understanding of "revolutionary," maintaining that

[17] Qtd. in Plays 431. I quote Gramsci x 3 from Plays. Gramsci x 3 consists of the three plays: "The Young Officer from Cagliari," "Finding Tatiana," and "The Doing-to-Death of Antonio Gramsci."

revolutions "always [signify] re-inventing the wheel." Gramsci, in Watson's view, attempted to re-invent self-sacrifice, an insight which prompted Watson to use the calvary as a theatrical ritual and extend the metaphor of the calvary (which Fiori uses once [219]) into a full-fledged allegory describing Gramsci's imprisonment. This allegory then involves, by virtue of its ritual, the recipient in Gramsci's "victimization to the machinocracy which rules us all," thereby turning Gramsci into an Everyman with whom we can and should identify.

The poetic license Watson reserves for himself is evident in a number of details. Examples are Tiu Gramsci's detailed report of his trial (Plays 461-66), which is only mentioned in Fiori's biography (15); Tatiana's letter to the Gramscis (498-500), which may be fictional because it is not mentioned in any of the sources I consulted, and the guard "Marco of Paulilatino in Sardinia," who engages in conversation with Gramsci in "The Doing-to-Death of Antonio Gramsci" (594) and is most likely inspired by a brief comment in Fiori's biography about a guard from Paulilatino observing a visit by Gramsci's brother (252).

But there are four changes Watson undertakes that go beyond mere detail, and it is those we shall look at first to examine their dramatic importance with regard to the process of translation from history to allegory. These four changes are:

(1) Edmea's and Teresina's age and relationship to Antonio Gramsci;

(2) The officer of Cagliari;

(3) Gramsci's speech to the deputies and its circumstances; and

(4) The relationship between Tatiana and Mussolini.

The first major change concerns Edmea and Teresina. While in "The Officer from Cagliari" they are both granddaughters to Tiu Gramsci, in reality only Edmea was a granddaughter to Tiu (Fiori 290) and Teresina was one of the three daughters of Tiu (19). Teresina was, according to Fiori, closest to Antonio Gramsci, a claim he suppots with letters in which Antonio reminisces about their playing together as children. Furthermore, in "The Officer," Teresina is seventeen years of age, while in Fiori's biography we read that Edmea was seventeen years at the time of Antonio's death (290), while Teresina's age is not given. Fiori mentions, however, that she married a postal official in 1924 (19) and that at the time of writing the biography, she was in her seventies, which would make her about 40 at the time of Gramsci's death. The officer from Cagliari at one point alleges that Antonio Gramsci has a sister named Teresina upon which Teresina replies, "she is my aunt" (Plays 477).

These ambiguities can be seen as Watson's way of assimilating the biographical material provided by Fiori to his own allegorical purposes. Watson thus establishes his authority by letting his imagination fly and altering the historical information his play is based upon.

His method is that of the melancholic allegorist: he takes Teresina, for instance, and assigns her a new meaning in his play. The scenes between Teresina and Edmea may gain some tension by virtue of their adolescence. This is the case in scene two, where Teresina and Edmea talk about Teresina's first menstruation (437-38), having babies (440-41), or Teresina's ambition to emulate her uncle Antonio Gramsci (438-39).

Another major addition in "The Officer" is the eponymous character. While Cagliari stands in front of Mussolini's portrait consulting his notebook, the chorus, which consists of women from the neighbouring villages, announces Cagliari's arrival:

```
CH/ABBASANTA.  It's 1 the
                       YOUNG 2 officer
                        from 3 Cagliari . . .
CH/SEDILO.              It's 4 the
                                young 5 POLICE
                     officer 6 from
                       Cagliari . . . 7
CH/OTTANO.                             christ,
                        it's 8 that
                                            young 9
                 cocksucker 1 from
              Cagliari . . . 2
CH/SEDILO.                   the
                       young 3 police
                     officer 4 from
                       Cagliari . . . 5
CH/DUALCHI.                            young
           cocksucker . . . 6
CH/NEONELI.                  police
                        officer . . . 7
   etc.                                cocksucker
(467)
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In this choric flurry of voices, the appelation "cocksucker" seems to compete with, if not replace, the term "police officer," and it conveys the women's perception of an underlying

homoeroticism in fascism. This homoeroticism is amply documented with regard to fascism's Führerkult.[18]

Cagliari's intention is to harass the Gramscis. He orders Teresina to undress because he claims that she is really Antonio Gramsci. Teresina at first tries to comply, but then she turns to the chorus of women, blurting out "I'm menstruating" (486). Without any hesitation, the women seize Cagliari and accuse him: "You came here with the intention of sexually molesting the Gramsci girl" (487). Dismissing suggestions for funnelling coal-oil in Cagliari's mouth, they intend to use it for sexual tortures:

> Let's dose him with it first . . .
> No, pour it on his balls . . .
> Rub it into his genitals . . .
> Rub it up his asshole [. . .]
> Jerk him off with it. (489)

The women go on to torture the young fascist in retaliation for his ill-intent towards the menstruating Teresina. The tortures appear as Watson's sexual fantasy of a women's solidarity that avenges an attempted sexual crime against a woman with another sexual crime.[19] Cagliari attempts to dominate Teresina but is in turn dominated by the women.

[18] See, for instance, the homophobic moral outrage William Shirer manifests whenever he discusses "notorious" homosexuals among the Nazi leadership (307). Because Shirer's is an early study of fascist Germany (1950) inhibited by the anti-gay bias of its times, I take his discussions as unacknowledged demonstrations of homoeroticism in fascism and especially its leadership cult.

[19] The tortures in Gramsci x 3 parallel the ones at the end of The Woman Taken in Adultery, where a similar women's solidarity comes about and leads to the stoning of the male lawyers for their attempt to punish the adulteress.

A possible reading of this scene is that Watson uses the graphic, sexual tortures to express the Old Testament notion of justice, namely revenge.[20] This notion of justice ties in with Watson's rejection of final redemption because the "eye for an eye" justice does not allow for any forgiveness or rehabilitation. As such, the women's actions portray an empowerment of women. They stand up against injustices done to one of their own, and they fight back. The gender coding of the tortures, however, suggests a reading that focusses on the complex processes of Watson's identification with the torturers and/or the tortured.

To begin with, it seems that Watson identifies with Cagliari because, like Cagliari, he is awaiting the wrath of women who stand up in solidarity for those women he has abused in the many instances of chauvinism or even misogyny in his plays;[21] Watson and Cagliari, therefore, are brothers in crime and in punishment. Through his identification with Cagliari, Watson is punishing himself, which, psychologically speaking, is a form of masochism. At this point, however, Watson en-

[20] Incidentally, this could also be argued for the stoning of the lawyers in The Woman Taken in Adultery, where the lawyers' "hurling" of accusations against the adulteress is avenged by the women's hurling of rocks against them.

[21] See for instance the brutal transformation of the wife in The Whatnot into a piece of furniture that is sold by her husband and the aging and rebirthing rituals in Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan (see also below).

counters a moral impasse: how can he identify with a model-fascist and still continue to present Gramsci as an unjustly suffering victim of the fascist state? As a result of this moral impasse, Watson represses his desire to identify with Cagliari and channels this energy into supporting the women's solidarity and their tortures; in other words, he deflects his masochism into sadism so that these two aspects of his attitude merge into a form of sadomasochism.

In the course of torture, the experienced, older women initiate the young Teresina into their ranks. Sèdilo, for instance, shouts to the hesitant seventeen year old: "Teresina, come and see what a Fascist prick looks like" (489). This concern for initiation strengthens the women's solidarity, which is expressed in the increasing violence of their intentions towards their victim:

> Let's set fire to his joystick! [. . .]
> Let's burn off his genitals. . . .
> Let's drag him outside and set fire to him publicly. (491-92)

When the women drag Cagliari eventually from the house, they carry him hanging, tied by his feet and hands, from a pole. Watson thus adds another turn to his fantasy of women's solidarity in that he portrays Cagliari as the prey of a barbarous hunting tribe. Identifying the ritual of barbarous, sexual torture with women indicates a denigration of women because it classifies them as belonging to a less developed evolutionary stage of humanity than that of his male charac-

ters.[22] This denigration undermines the empowerment of women. If fascism can be seen as the epitome of brutality, institutionalizing, as Watson maintains very compellingly in "The Doing-to-Death," government-condoned tortures, then the women's portrayal as a torturing tribe emerges as a descent to the status of that of fascism--at best a dubious empowerment.

It is also significant that there are no other gender-specific rituals in Watson's plays, a fact that emphasizes his ritualistic defamation of women and appears to be another side of his male chauvinism.

The references to anal stimulation (through massage or induced diarrhea) denote a possible anal-retentive character disposition in Cagliari. Indeed, he is very concerned and even obsessed with keeping order. That he meticulously documents in his notebook what he perceives as disorder also reveals his urge for order: in his notebook, he redefines any disorder into issues that fascist law can (and will) control (see, for instance, Tiu's outcry ("Murderers and assassins!") that Cagliari promptly writes down [470]). Cagliari can be seen as a model fascist or as the stereotypical fascist who does not emerge as a character in his own right but rather as a type representing a political era.[23]

[22] Even Cagliari, the model fascist and exponent of a system based on brutality and suppression, is never shown on stage engaging in brutalities. He merely verbalizes his intentions of doing harm to Teresina.

[23] In some of his plays from the 1960s, Watson peoples his plays with "caricatures," indicating that they are not fully developed characters, but rather one-dimensional farcical

In "Finding Tatiana," Watson takes considerable poetic license when he creates Gramsci's speech to the Chamber of Deputies and an ensuing meeting of Gramsci and Mussolini. Gramsci's first and last speech to the Chamber of Deputies was on a Fascist law ostensibly aimed against Freemasonry but also disciplining the activities of associations and clubs in general. Gramsci, according to Fiori, was "no resounding orator" and the Fascists had to keep quiet for once in order to understand acoustically what he was saying, a circumstance that did not keep them from interrupting (193-96). Watson changes the topic of Gramsci's speech into a response to the Matteotti affair, which happened some time before Gramsci's speech. The Matteotti affair caused the temporary exit of all communist deputies from the Chamber to protest Mussolini's involvement in Matteotti's murder (170-74). Watson counterpoints Gramsci's speech with Julka's and Tatiana's dialogue on Gramsci's destiny and how it draws others into serving it. The theme of the dialogue is highlighted in the hostility of Gramsci's direct accusations of Mussolini because they will also endanger his wife and child.

The last point comes clearly across in scene 13, a dialogue between Mussolini and Gramsci in which Mussolini congratulates Gramsci for a "very good" speech but also inquires about Gramsci's wife and baby. Furthermore, Mussolini says

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types.

that all through Gramsci's speech, he found himself worrying about Gramsci's health which appears to be a veiled threat. Watson uses an anecdote in Fiori as a starting point for the encounter between Mussolini and Gramsci. However, in Fiori's account no dialogue between the two men existed:

> It has often been said--though there seem to be no direct witnesses of the incident--that Mussolini saw Gramsci immediately afterwards, having a coffee in the parliamentary bar, and went up to him with outstretched hand to congratulate him on his speech. Gramsci continued sipping his coffee indifferently, ignoring the hand held out to him. (196)

Based on hearsay, Fiori's account can be seen to romanticize Gramsci by stressing his stern anti-fascism. However, Watson's version of having the fascist and the communist amiably chat with each other can be seen to level political oppositions. This levelling can be seen as a conservative strategy and would support my contention that Watson is sympathetic to fascism, as indicated above in his repressed identification with Cagliari.

Watson sacrifices accurate observance of his sources for greater dramatic coherence, since introducing the historical topic and background of Gramsci's speech would no doubt disperse the dramatic tension that Watson gradually increases after Matteotti's murder in scene 5.

In "The Doing-to-Death of Antonio Gramsci," Tatiana engages in an extended dialogue with Mussolini and becomes his mistress, not only to save Gramsci but also to save herself "from the sickness unto death, the Kierkegardian desperation, of [Gramsci's] senseless sacrifice" (Plays 586). I could not

find anything in Watson's sources to substantiate such a relationship between Tatiana and Mussolini; however, Gramsci's sister Teresina sent a personal letter to Mussolini asking him to permit a medical examination and a stay in a prison hospital. The fascists granted both wishes but only under the harshest conditions (Fiori 233). In Gramsci, James Joll describes Tatiana's activities:

> [Tatiana] remained in Italy and assumed the responsibility for giving [Gramsci] such help as she could by writing, by visiting him and--often against his wishes--by trying every legal, political and personal means to gain his release or at least to obtain proper medical care for him. (73)

When positing an amour between Tatiana and Mussolini, Watson is letting his imagination fly to explore a possible underlying reason, namely the Kierkegardian desperation, for the efforts of sister and sister-in-law to achieve a more "humane" imprisonment for Gramsci, even if that meant compromising his political stance and their personal integrity. Gramsci's letters substantiate Watson's analysis to a certain degree. He wrote to Tatiana:

> On the whole you like to picture me as a man insisting on his right to suffer, to be a martyr, unwilling to be defrauded of one single second or nuance of his punishment. You see me as another Gandhi desirous of bearing universal witness to the torments of the Indian people, or as another Jeremiah or Elijah (or whatever the Hebrew prophet was called) deliberately eating unclean things in public to draw the wrath of the gods down upon him. (qtd. in Fiori 220)

Fiori himself, however, goes on to refute Gramsci's view of Tatiana:

> In reality, Gramsci was extremely conscious of the practical result and meaning of all forms of action,

> and had always felt repugnance for inconclusive gestures. The rhetoric of self-sacrifice was a sentimental trap he was unlikely to fall into. (220)

Fiori supports his assumption by pointing to Gramsci's attitude of never enduring any unnecessary suffering if he could avoid it by appealing to laws and regulations. However, he also grants that Gramsci never appealed for anything beyond the law from the Fascist state for fear of receiving personal clemency. Watson quotes the other corroborating letter of Gramsci as an epigraph to "The Doing-to-Death." It is in his letter to his brother Carlo that Gramsci talks about Tatiana's efforts on his behalf and distances himself from her efforts if they made the Fascist regime look as though they granted him a "personal concession" for which he would have to write "an official request, giving as reason that [he] had changed [his] views, now recognized this, that and the other, and so on" (qtd. in Fiori 221).

In "The Doing-to-Death," the Fascist prison doctors ask Gramsci to sign as "a mere formality" a form stating his agreement to work on a critique of the Fascist myth according to the wishes of Mussolini, who wants to keep Gramsci alive until such time that this critique is finished (Plays 573). Gramsci refuses to sign this form but the doctors tell him that "you are one of us [. . .] IRREGARDLESS of whether you sign it or not" (572).

It seems as though the characters peopling Gramsci x 3 have lost their historical significance in exchange for a new significance in Watson's imaginative construct. A loosening of

referentiality marks the translation process from biography to allegory. Here we see the melancholic gazing at the historical events as related in a biography and experiencing a loss of an awareness for ritual patterns. The allegorical gesture originates in his ensuing mourning and fills historical events, characters etc. with a new, deliberate significance.

Watson's Gramsci x 3 culminates in "The Doing-to-Death," which is a depiction of Gramsci's imprisonment in terms of the stations of the cross. The idea for such a treatment may have occurred to Watson when he saw how Fiori introduces Gramsci's imprisonment. Fiori writes: "The long calvary of Antonio Gramsci was beginning" (219). However, Watson used the stations of the cross as an organizing metaphor before writing the Gramsci plays. The last poem in I Begin with Counting is in this way a blueprint for "The Doing-to-Death." "Returning to Square One" is a number grid verse for two voices. These voices take turns, one voice announcing the movement from station to station, while the other announces the event each station signifies. Only at the last station does Watson break this pattern, and both voices announce the events of the station.

On the one hand, Watson uses the calvary to present Gramsci's imprisonment in order to present Gramsci as the victim, as the lamb, as Jesus Christ. Because of our identification with Gramsci, assisted by the fact that Christ was crucified on behalf of us in order to begin a new covenant be-

tween God and "man," we can all claim to be victims. In his "note re script," Watson fosters this identification by speaking of the "victimization to the machinocracy which rules us all" (Plays 433). As well, identification and participation are key features of his 1960s plays where he encourages the audience to break down dramatic distance.

On the other hand, Gramsci could be accused of sharing in the guilt of his plight, and, if we identify with him, we can all be accused in this way. We all bear the guilt, for that is what Christ's suffering symbolizes in the first place. According to the Christian belief, Christ took on himself the guilt of "mankind" and died on the cross for that guilt.

Significantly, Watson reverses the stations when he uses the metaphor of the calvary: starting at the fourteenth station, he moves back to the first, adding "it is here we must begin" (Poems 289, Plays 601). This reversal is ironic. For Watson, the end is the beginning. And the beginning is not only the first station of the calvary, but it is also "square one," or the forum in the global village of his McLuhanesque world in which human interaction is possible and where the direction of events is still undetermined.

Yet the events are also interminable because any end is merely another beginning. It seems that Watson inscribes a similar allegorical meaning to the calvary as he did to the rituals he integrated into his plays from the early 1960s. In Watson's world, the end of the calvary is the beginning of yet

another or even the repetitions of the same calvary. Watson in this way not only endlessly defers but altogether frustrates the hope that Catholics place in the calvary as preparation for the redemption of the Second Coming of Christ. What remains is a struggle that may even have the added desolation of repeating Sisyphus-like the same calvary time and again.[24]

Let us take a look at the spiritual content of the calvary. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, "the object of the Stations is . . . to make in spirit . . . a pilgrimage to the chief scenes of Christ's suffering and death" (569). The author of the Encyclopedia entry reaches this conclusion:

> It may be safely asserted that there is no devotion more richly endowed with indulgences than the Way of the Cross, and none which enables us more literally to obey Christ's injunction to take up our cross and follow Him. (571)

Using the term "literally" here seems curious because this literalness gives way instantaneously to the allegorical, namely to an identification with and acceptance of the plight of "mankind" that Christ offset with his suffering through the calvary.

[24] As a matter of fact, Watson's reversal of the stations of the cross is historically accurate. Before the end of the 15th century, the general practice was to retrace Christ's steps in Jerusalem, but in the opposite direction to Christ's. Thus, the pilgrims would commence their walk at Mount Calvary and then proceed back to Pilate's house. It was only by the beginning of the 16th century that the church regarded the "more reasonable" way of traversing the route as more correct and prescribed it in the 17th century in that order (Catholic Encyclopedia, v.15, 569).

The reversal of the calvary directs attention to the question of who is responsible for Gramsci's/Christ's death because the play/calvary now ends with Mussolini/Pilate declaring his innocence:

> GRAMSCI. [The medical officers'] achievement has one flaw.
> They have totally de-humanized me, except for this one adversary truth: I know I have been de-humanized. . . .
> MUSSOLINI. And I believe him.
> Tatiana, take comfort. This crumb of illumination is for you, not me.
> I wash my hands of the blood of this mistaken man. (Plays 602)

Gramsci's self-knowledge undermines his "total de-humanization" so that Mussolini construes it as comfort to the one whom he perceives as responsible for Gramsci's state.

Watson uses Antonio Gramsci's notion of ponziopilatismo. To Gramsci, ponziopilatismo signified an action designed to avoid responsibility. Watson takes Gramsci's metaphorical concept and "literalizes" it by applying it to Mussolini's/Pilate's actions. As a result, Watson presents Mussolini/Pilate as the unjust judge whose trial of Gramsci/Christ is a parody of justice. Mussolini's gesture of blaming Tatiana for Gramsci's death is a further injustice.

Watson also links Mussolini's gesture to the Electra-Orestes theme introduced in "Finding Tatiana." Gramsci comes to Rome with Julka's instruction to find Tatiana. When Gramsci and Tatiana meet, they address each other as Orestes and Electra, a greeting they reiterate in consecutive encounters. Julka repeatedly criticizes Tatiana/Electra for provoking

Gramsci's fateful actions by encouraging him to pursue his course rather than to change his mind. Julka first introduces the motive of Gramsci's audacious pursuit of his course when she suggests that Eugenie marry Gramsci because she would "make him / set limits to his determination to martyr / himself to the lost cause of Italian / communism" (515). Because Eugenie cannot accommodate Julka's request, Julka makes a similar plea to Tatiana: "You must persuade him Tatiana that he can't help matters by simply throwing himself as a sacrifice at fate" (544). When Tatiana too does not act as requested, Julka accuses her: "You have made things much more difficult. . . . You have made him totally selfish by concentrating his attention upon himself." Tatiana responds, "What he does is done according to his destiny" (547). Her choice of words reveals that Tatiana has accepted that Gramsci follows his course even if it spells out doom for him and those close to him. Julka (like Mussolini) construes this acceptance and active support of "destiny" as guilt in Gramsci's death.

Because of her central role in "Finding Tatiana" and "The Doing-to-Death" and her subordination to Gramsci's fate, Tatiana can be seen to represent the "universal" female in a way similar to Electra in Let's Murder Clytemnestra. The continuity in the name "Electra" with which Tatiana identifies is a further case in point. Mussolini and the long discussions he has with Tatiana serve as a screen that focuses her feelings of guilt. Tatiana/Electra in turn seeks alleviation of her guilt

from Mussolini, who ultimately blames her all the more. Because of her inclination to take moral responsibility in a world in which such responsibility is an anachronism, she emerges ultimately as an outcast who does not belong and whom the world punishes with the blame for Gramsci's fate.

Gramsci x 3 moves from displaying a day in history to the presentation of an ahistorical, endless ritual that chronologically takes place before the day shown in part one of the trilogy. This internal inconsistency serves, in my view, to emphasize the trait in Gramsci's calvary that Watson brought to the foreground by reversing it, namely that the end is merely another beginning. In other words, Watson puts the day after Gramsci's death at the beginning of the trilogy although (chrono-)logically it should be at the end.

In his ordering of the Gramsci plays, Watson can be seen to comment on the logic that we commonly apply to biographies and that depends on temporality. The temporality which underlies this logic appears to have an impact on our understanding of repetitive, ritualistic patterns in the plays. What, Watson seems to ask, if temporality stands in the way of "pattern recognition" which, according to his interpretation of McLuhanesque education, is the poetry of environmental language? Environmental language consists of everything the environment communicates to us, for instance, Watson mentions the "environmental language of plush theatre seats [that keep] insisting 'be comfortable, be passive, don't respond, take it easy'" ("Education" 212, 208).

It is possible to infer the goal of Watson's Gramsci x 3. Watson wants to teach his audience that environmental language can and should replace history so that the process of pattern recognition can replace historiography and biography. This didactic message brings us back to square one, which we should think of as a spatial, not a temporal move.

To recapitulate, it is fair to say that Watson combines the loosening of referentiality with pattern recognition. In this way, he applies a McLuhanesque notion of education to the play. The new meaning he ascribes in an act of mourning emphasizes ritual and its atemporal continuity. At the same time, however, it conceals anOther, in this case, a historiography that Watson experiences as dead because it does not grasp events in terms of atemporal patterns. Grasping events as atemporal patterns emerges as the prerogative of a McLuhanesque stance that, in Watson's view, is best described as postmodern. Let us move on then to a discussion of Watson's understanding of McLuhan as well as to the issue of the postmodern. In the ensuing section, I will also speculate about the underlying motivation of Watson's male chauvinism. As it turns out, this motivation is at the root of his belief and explains why Watson rejects last judgements and final redemption in favour of the eternal struggle of a radically absurd world.

Postmodern Multi-Consciousnesses

Wilfred Watson has been influenced throughout his career by Marshall McLuhan's theories. This influence culminated during the 1960s when Watson and McLuhan co-authored From Cliché to Archetype. Notwithstanding his admiration for McLuhan, Watson was not an uncritical disciple of McLuhan's theories. Inspired by their collaboration, Watson developed a view of multi-consciousness rooted in McLuhan's ideas which at the same time went beyond McLuhan in significant ways. One can only speculate as to why not more of Watson's ideas found their way into From Cliché to Archetype, but there is some evidence to suggest that McLuhan failed to accept Watson as an equal partner in the final stages of the production of the book. In Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger, Philip Marchand describes their collaboration and concludes that the problems started once they sat down to dictate a draft to McLuhan's secretary:

> McLuhan did most of the dictating and ignored almost entirely every idea that had developed in the dialogues with Watson, reverting to his original thoughts on the subject. . . . As the year went on, McLuhan seemed less and less tolerant of Watson's participation. . . . The "dialogue" had gradually become two monologues. (219)

In "Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness," Watson's description of the process of writing corroborates Marchand's conclusions:

> When we started to write in real earnest . . . the dialogue came to a standstill. Marshall McLuhan commenced to dictate, and, as for me, my role became advisory--to find a word or to recall some point we'd made in preliminary discussions. (198)

Fortunately, Watson has also published a number of articles on McLuhanesque topics. For my argument, I rely on these articles, rather than on From Cliché to Archetype.

According to Watson's account of McLuhan's theory and of their collaboration, the principal disagreement between the two men was that McLuhan insisted that the media are extensions of the human senses while, in Watson's view, the media are multiplications of the senses. Watson suggests that McLuhan was so rigid in defending his view because it relied on utopian thinking:

> By thinking of perception as extending sense, Marshall McLuhan could suppose that human beings are integrated one with the other through the imagination, which he says in The Gutenberg Galaxy, "is that ratio among the perceptions and faculties which exists when they are not embedded or outered in material technologies. When so outered, each sense and faculty becomes a closed system. Prior to such outering there is entire interplay among experiences." ("Education" 216)

McLuhan's utopia is the belief in an unmediated and integrated perception prior to the extension of the senses in media and technologies. Thus the media extensions (or the "outering" of senses in them) constitute to the Catholic McLuhan a fall from grace. Watson continues:

> Ultimately, for McLuhan, the extensions of man are evil, as we can note in the immediate sequel to the text I have just quoted: "When the perverse ingenuity of man," McLuhan goes on to say, "has outered some part of his being in material technology, his entire

> sense ratio is altered. He is then compelled to behold this fragment of himself 'closing itself as in steel'." (216)

For Watson, on the other hand, interface or "the radical juxtaposition of opposites" fosters perception (216). The technique of interface underlies "metaphor, paradox, montage, wit, possibly even sex, yin and yang, happenings" (216) and is thus creating sense (or new constellations) rather than extending it. In Watson's view, then, perception goes from fragmentation (the juxtaposition of opposites) to integration (the emergence of new constellations).

Both McLuhan and Watson hold onto the Catholic belief that the inescapable affliction with an original sin marks the human condition. Yet they still provide this belief, and hence their theories, with different emphases. To McLuhan, the outering of the senses in media and technologies constitutes an original sin that destroyed the utopian plenitude of an integrated perception. This utopian plenitude is the key to McLuhan's way of thinking. It can be seen either as a "fall from grace," which is how Watson construed McLuhan's stance, or else as an unattainable future condition. Both interpretations introduce a temporal element into McLuhan's media theory that is irreconcilable with an atemporal global village where only the present counts. To Watson, on the other hand, the continuous struggle triggered by original sin is atemporal (as in a "true" McLuhanesque global village), so that thinking about original sin itself and what preceded it does not make sense. The key

to Watson's thinking is the continuous struggle that we cannot escape, neither in a Last Judgement nor in redemption. The only thing left to do is to face the struggle and bear the collective guilt.

As early as the 1960s, Watson viewed the media as a "systemry of awareness" ("Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness" 202). As a result, he came to see every medium as a "psychophysical means" to observe the world and as a part of human awareness or consciousness. The multiplicity of senses, media and technologies making up consciousness leads to what Watson calls "multi-consciousness." Because the media and technologies make sense, no two human beings can have the same mix of multi-consciousnesses. Watson thus unmasks the metaphor of the extension of sense as a strategic one. In the conclusion to "Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness," Watson considers McLuhan's attitude a failure:

> Marshall McLuhan's reluctance to see the technologies and media as multiplications of the human senses rather than as extensions of them prevents him from reaching a satisfactory account of multiconsciousness. (211)

Watson sought throughout the 1960s to integrate thinking about and beyond McLuhan's theories with the writing of plays. He expressed this intention in "On Radical Absurdity," where he explains the connection between multi-consciousness, which is caused by the multitude of media currently available, and his general attitude towards writing plays:

> Twentieth-century man has many modes of consciousness and with these goes a freedom not enjoyed by any

> previous civilization. It is this freedom, so terrible a freedom that we don't like looking at it, a freedom we've hardly recognized to date, a freedom radically unlike any that mankind has yet known, that I find myself wanting to celebrate in absurdist plays and in satirical verse. (36, my emphasis)

This celebratory mood, in my view, can be seen as the essence of Watson's allegories in that it informs his manner of approaching his material:

> This new freedom I have been celebrating is really a very wonderful development--it dictates the very unrealistic settings I find myself using, and these, involving the use of multi-environments, determine the kind of dramatic texture I have been able to achieve [in my plays]. (36-37)

The multi-consciousness--on which the freedom he describes so eloquently is built--is itself contingent on the explosion of media and technologies in the twentieth century. He begins his scrutiny with an ontological question, namely, "where in the range of [our animal and our human] extensions do we locate our being?" (36) Watson answers indirectly by pointing to the issue of freedom. He argues that a direct answer to the question can only result in a curtailment of freedom, for if we reduce our being to one mode of awareness, we may complain of limitation. Situating our being in a single medium (be it animal or human extension) would also mean positing a unified consciousness, which, in Watson's view, the twentieth-century human no longer has at her or his disposal.

However, as Watson points out in a later essay on "Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness," the Western intellectual tradition has posited a homogeneous consciousness as an

absolute presupposition so that even a Marshall McLuhan could fall prey to it:

> Significantly enough, Marshall McLuhan referred to technologies and media as extensions of man or of the human senses, not as extensions of men or of people's senses. I cannot recall a single critic who objected to this lumping together of awareness, as if Everyman were a single person of both sexes and all ages. (209)

Watson then directs attention to the fact that with the increase in media and technologies the possibilities of differences in awareness between two men was on the rise too. The result is radical eccentricity:

> Twentieth-century man has become a radical eccentric, with his irrationalisms, angsts, hang-ups, generation and age-peer gaps, education gaps, protest meetings, guerilla activities, broken marriages, family schizophrenias. (210)

At the same time, the decline of the book-cliché--a decline which "was sufficient to produce effects of fragmentation, alienation, disorientation, and disorganization" (208)--furthered this eccentricity. A single theoretical discourse, be it "Marxism or Freudianism or Jungianism or surrealism or any single ism," could no longer convincingly explain these ruptures in contemporary life (199). Accordingly Watson says:

> All that could be clearly recognized was a multiplicity of movements and the word that best described this first post-modern decade was multi-consciousness. (199)

Watson's new postmodern eccentricity forces upon us a new concept of absurdity, for "no two men are likely to have the same mix of the multi-consciousnesses available" ("On Radical Absurdity" 41). Because multi-consciousness comes about

through multi-awareness by means of multi-media, Watson can theatrically represent multi-consciousness by means of multiple environments or milieus. This treatment in turn facilitates a certain stance towards absurd theatre:

> The collaging together of two or more milieus makes possible a treatment of an absurdist theatre not altogether unlike but by no means identical with that modern theatre movement dominated by Camus's sentiment of the absurd, where men and their questionings are answered by the blank meaningless[ness] of the world. (41)

While to Camus the absurd implies "a total absence of hope," "a continual rejection," and "a conscious dissatisfaction" (qtd. in "On Radical Absurdity" 43), Watson contends that the new radical absurdity induces in us hope, acceptance and complacency because of the impact of the new human senses and the freedom to which they lead:

> Consequently though the new absurdity ought to be enough to sober us, in fact eccentric man causes in us a sense of elation--we are for the moon, come what may. (44)

Watson in this way opposes his radical absurdity to Camus's philosophy of the absurd. In the course of his dramatic output of the 1960s, Watson tries to represent radical absurdity in a pronounced turn to farce.[25] Although the theatre of the absurd has always had a strong link to farce, Watson makes that link

[25] This turn is manifest from 1964 onward. Watson subtitles Another Bloody Page from Plutarch "A Tragic Farce." O Holy Ghost DIP YOUR FINGER IN THE BLOOD OF CANADA And Write I Love You bears the generic desciption "Flower Power Farce in 4 Acts," although the play consists only of two acts. Furthermore, there are many other unpublished plays bearing the generic description "farce" in their subtitle.

even stronger by exaggerating the oppositional character of radical absurdity and the philosophy of the absurd.

According to Leslie Smith, absurd and ridiculous situations define farce. Its starting point may be a certain normality, but routinely its authors push it further and further towards absurdity, anarchy and even nightmare scenarios (11). Norman Shapiro also detects parallels between farce and the theatre of the absurd. He writes in his introduction to four farces by Georges Feydeau that both dramatists of farce and of the absurd describe "the aimlessness and unpredictability of man's fate in a haphazard (or at least inexplicable) universe, in which things--mainly base--will happen to him for no obvious or compelling reason" (xi). Both Smith's and Shapiro's criteria for farce can be examined in the context of Watson's plays. Furthermore, these criteria clarify Watson's key terms--hope, acceptance, complacency. In Cockcrow, Watson pushes normality towards absurdity and anarchy until the characters reach a nightmarish condition in which they are sentenced to crucify God. For Watson, this state of anarchy also leads to hope in a redemption through the pearl. The last scene, however, makes this redemption ambiguous because Watson invites the spectators to participate in mocking redemption. Thus, there is no "absolute absence of hope," as in Camus's absurdity, because the hope that the characters attain is not as unambiguous as Watson describes in his article.

Critics have linked the anarchy in farce to its formal proximity to the festival (see Redmond). Plautus, the creator

of the genre, took materials from Greek comedy and recomposed them to fit the special performance demands of his day in order to please his Roman audience (53). These special performance demands were intricately linked to the venue, which was not an enclosed theatre but the ludi or games where the spectators passed freely from one festival event to another. The spectators of Plautus's farces thus stroll in and out of acting and spectators' spaces. Since classical times, farce can be seen to undermine the distinction between acting space and spectators' space, a distinction that theatre events usually respect and enforce.

At the culmination of Watson's plays, he often invites the spectators to break down that distinction by means of participation in the performance. In other words, Watson invites the spectators to accept moving into another space, similar to the spectators of a festival who have to accept moving from space to space, being mere spectators to the present performance and called upon to be active participants in the next one.[26]

In O Holy Ghost DIP YOUR FINGER IN THE BLOOD OF CANADA and Write, I Love You, Watson uses different spaces too, but without involving the audience. In this play, all actors portray multiple characters:

[26] With respect to audience participation, Murray Schafer goes much further than Watson. Schafer, in fact, takes this trend to its ultimate conclusion: in the epilogue to Patria, he de facto excludes the public from the performance. There are no spectators but only participants who are carefully selected (see ch.s 5 and 7).

> M/1. & old Richard Sunflower
> & young Richard Sunflower, referred to as the Red-charred
> & RCMP officer
> & war-worker & army officer & hangman & priest at burial service & judge, etc. (253)

From scene to scene, Watson has the actors slip into different fictive spaces defined by the characters they portray. In some instances these different fictive spaces coincide with different performing spaces:

> CHORUS/FF. She doesn't know, she doesn't know . . .
> KATERINA. <u>projecting</u>
> I don't even know what a sunflower is [. . .]
> <u>rifle fire . . . Chorus/Ff including Katerina drop down on their faces</u> (255)

Here, F/3 steps forward from the chorus and settles into one of her roles, namely Katerina, and then returns to being a member of the chorus. This dramatic method makes it more difficult to concentrate on the whole because Watson subverts the usual orientation points and dramatic continuity that stable characters provide. As a result, the play induces the spectators to concentrate on the individual scenes regardless of their connection to the whole. This dramatic method is reminiscent of Plautus's farces where the festival setting also facilitated attending to the parts rather than the whole (Redmond 57).

In Watson's radical absurdity the motive of acceptance is related to complacency and the acceptance of different spaces invites complacency about farcical anarchy. Yet the complacency Watson induces is ambiguous because at times he also encourages active participation, which is opposed to complacency. In this way, it seems that Watson's radical absurdity, with its

many connections to the farce, merely intensifies the ties between the theatre of the absurd and the farce. Besides, Watson often prescribes a destruction of plot that has always been one of the tenets of farce.[27]

Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan appears to be a theatrical response to Watson's preoccupation with the theories of McLuhan during the late 1960s. Written in a tongue-in-cheek and highly satirical manner, it is a dramatic meditation on their collaboration as well as on some of their differences. As in the earlier plays, a trial takes a key position in the play. Moreover, this trial is reminiscent of the Last Judgement because it not only decides the fate of the accused but it decides the fate of an entire age.

The setting of the play is the School of Fine Arts in Banff. Yet Watson does not establish any easy orientation points. Peopled with mythical characters, medical doctors, witchdoctors, orderlies, nurses, and student protesters, this school of fine arts seems to be a medical or mental institution or even a prison. The characters and their multiple roles introduce different milieus in such a way that it is difficult, if not impossible, to keep them apart.

[27] To wit, Plautus wrote his farces to attack the genre of Greek comedy.

In the "Prolog," Electra repeats her confession "I have murdered Clytemnestra" twenty-six times as though probing it for its truth content (Plays 345-46). Like a pedal tone in a piece of music, Electra's incantation provides rhythm, harmonical ground and mood for more elaborate thematic material, in this case Dr Psi's extended self-introduction. The mood suggested is one of self-blame and guilt. Electra only interrupts her incantation when Dr Psi provides his name. Before giving his name, he talks about himself in a self-deprecatory manner ("I am nobody, I am not even somebody. . . . I am not even influential" [345]). The unrelatedness of Electra's repetitions and Psi's discourse may be seen as indicative of the absurd world the setting and the characters represent. This absurd world has the potential to turn quickly into a nightmarish prison in which Doctors dissuade orderlies from torture and physical punishment not because it is inhuman, but because one can get results in another way. Thus, at the end of the "Prolog," when Dr Psi insists on learning Electra's last name and she cannot give it, he calls for an orderly to find out her name just to change his mind:

> DR PSI. Don't bother with her. Don't waste the back of your hand on her. Dr Kykoku will find out her name. --We can ask her brother what her name is.
> ORDERLY. to Electra
> Don't bother screaming. We'll find out from your brother what we want to know about you. (347)

The Orderly repeats and extends Dr Psi's words; he threatens Electra with a violation of her privacy.

At the beginning of the "Prolog," Dr Psi says that "This is not a court of justice" and "I am not a judge" (345). Furthermore, Dr Kykoku and Dr Psi state in scene one that "the law has been abolished" (350). Yet throughout the first three scenes Orderly Smythe keeps barking "Order, haw-der!" as though he were the usher of a court. Furthermore, the orderlies prepare for a trial by setting up a table (349), which becomes a metaphorical dividing line between plaintiff and defendant. Samuela, Dr Psi's secretary, points out that "this table divides the age of Marshall McLuhan from the age of the new charisma" and that "THIS side of the table . . . is trying the other side of the table" (352 & 350). She goes on to explain the two positions as follows:

> On our side of the table, the media, etc. are man's new senses. . . . On the other side of the table, the media are extensions of man. (352)

This description identifies the trial of scene four as based on the positions taken by Watson and McLuhan during their collaboration.

Doctors and orderlies repeatedly refer to the ancient Greeks as prisoners who are to be tried or patients who are to be dissected (there is some confusion as to whether a trial or an autopsy is about to begin [350]). Dr Psi further explains that if the prisoners are found guilty, the consequences for the age of the new charisma are far reaching:

> If . . . they are adjudged guilty, I shall have no recourse but to insist on a reformation of the whole new age of charisma at a point where it has only just begun. On this side of the table we can't admit

> there's such a thing as individual guilt. We would have to re-educate them. (354)

These consequences suggest that the ancient Greeks are tried as test cases or scapegoats for the current age, namely "the whole new age of charisma." This levelling of historical milieus is an expression of Watson's McLuhanesque world view: spatial and temporal differences seem to have vanished in the global village. At this point, it is important to point out that earlier in the play Dr Psi suggests to the Chorus, Sister Segurah Koh, who introduces the play in scene one, that the audience of the play is in the same position as the prisoners: "They keep asking for justice even though they know the law has been abolished. . . . (to chorus) I hope they (includes audience) understand their situation" (351). This gesture obliges the audience to take sides with the prisoners or defendants even before the trial has begun.

In the course of the trial, the Electra-myth is discussed in some detail. Kykoku's questions establish that Orestes' and Clytemnestra's beliefs line up with Watson's and McLuhan's positions regarding media and senses. Orestes believed that "the media make sense," while Clytemnestra believed that "the media are extensions of the senses" (382). In this context, we can try to explain the title, Let's Murder Clytemnestra According to the Principles of Marshall McLuhan. Although Orestes'/Watson's stance goes beyond Clytemnestra's/McLuhan's, it is still based on McLuhan's media theory. In this way, going beyond Clytemnestra/McLuhan or murdering her means using

McLuhan's principles to do that. The title thus emerges as an invitation to use McLuhan's theory to think beyond McLuhan.[28]

By employing characters from Greek mythology, Watson seems to suggest an analogy between that mythology and the postmodern. Greek mythology embodies an unacknowledged Other of Greek rationality, the foundation of Western rationality.[29] The analogy suggests that the postmodern is an unacknowledged Other of the modern. The positional infighting among the Greek characters (Clytemnestra vs. Orestes) parallels and represents positional infighting within the postmodern (McLuhan vs. Watson).

From the beginning of the play, Electra feels responsible for moral impasses brought about by her environment. Dr Psi and Dr Kykoku reenforce these feelings of guilt before alleviating them in rituals of aging and rebirthing. Electra could be seen in this way as the universal (and stereotypical) female, taking moral responsibility for her environment and seeking relief from male characters. Watson, it seems, reenforces this chauvinist attitude of the male characters towards

[28] The variation on the first running header, "Less moider Klukluxklanestra" (346), signals primarily an association of Clytemnestra with the Klu Klux Klan. In this way, Watson further discredits the position of Clytemnestra/McLuhan.

[29] Horkheimer and Adorno wrote, for instance, that in Greek mythology we encounter the dark side of enlightened thought which they defined not as limited to a historical period commonly called "enlightenment" but as a certain rigour of thought that the human mind applies to its methods of inquiry (see 12-16).

Electra by accepting the dichotomy of power and moral responsibility and aligning it with the male and female characters in his play. This alignment implicates Watson in the issues of power and gender. To Watson, it seems, Electra, or the female he construes, is portrayed as an anachronism that does not fit into the postmodern multi-conscious world. As a result, the advocates of the new age try to alter her in medical experiments.

Dr Psi seems to take the role of the judge since he chairs the trial, explains initial procedures, and rules who is to speak. The accused are Orestes and Electra, while Psamathe and Orestes' nurse are witnesses for the defense. The counsel for the defense has to be determined first. Electra suggests Orestes as counsel but Dr Psi tells her that a prisoner cannot represent another prisoner. Psamathe suggests that they ask "the Company of young Psychocanadians [. . .] to send us a bunch of student actors . . . to sort of represent us" (378). Psi, however, blocks this suggestion by explaining that "everyone in the age of the new charisma is a student. If you are a student, you can't represent a student" (379). This paradox leads to an impasse in which no one can represent the accused. Psi uses this impasse for his attempt to dismiss the case, but Kykoku volunteers to represent the prisoners. Psi explains to Kykoku the consequences of not dismissing this case:

> KYKOKU. If Orestes is found guilty of murder
> PSI. we shall have to re-educate--re-program him
> KYKOKU. and in order to re-educate him
> PSI. we shall have to re-educate the entire global

> community
> KYKOKU. and that will mean the end of the age of the new charisma
> PSI. before it has barely got under way
> KYKOKU. and almost before the age of McLuhan is over
> PSI. and at a time when we haven't had time--to think of what comes after the age of the new charisma! (379)

Because of the stychomythia, it seems that both speakers are fully aware of the consequences of Kykoku's actions, namely a return to temporality. The age of the new charisma, however, is atemporal: characters from Greek mythology participate in 1960ish peace dances in the spirit of a true McLuhanesque global village.

Dr Psi's reason for wanting to disallow Kykoku the defense of the prisoners is his intention to dismiss the charges in order to save the "age of the new charisma." In this way, it seems that more than the individual crimes of the prisoners are on trial, but an entire age is on trial. These circumstances turn the trial into another version of the Last Judgement. In the Last Judgement, the judge is God; in the play, Watson exploits the medical cliché of the "Gods in white" to have a godlike judge, namely Dr Psi. In light of these parallels of this trial with the Last Judgement, the outcome of the trial promises to be final, whichever way the verdict goes. However, this trial does not produce a verdict; instead, Dr Psi dismisses the charges. Yet the outcome of the trial still resembles a verdict: Dr Psi also orders Kykoku to perform an aging ritual on the prisoners. In other words, they remain in the power of the age of the new charisma.

According to Watson, media and technologies constitute new senses and not merely extensions of senses so that he can represent these new senses in peculiar pullulations of heads (Dr Psi, Electra), backbones (Dr Kykoku), legs (Samuela), tongues (Psamathe), and vaginas (Electra). On several occasions, repetitions of language accompany these pullulations. In scene one, the revelation that Dr Psi has two heads is accompanied by a prolonged doubling of utterances:

> (Dr Psi steps to one side with Orderly Smith)
> ORD. SMITH. Sir, when's this autopsy about to begin?
> Sir, when's this autopsy about to begin?
> DR PSI. Why, what's the hurry, Mr Smith?
> Why, what's the hurry, Mr Smith?
> ELECTRA. (with a shriek of surprise)
> Dr Psi has two heads!
> Dr Psi has two heads!
> ORD. SMITH. (to Dr Psi)
> They are getting very restless.
> They are getting very restless. (356)

The doubling continues with few inconsistencies until Samuela quadruples one of her utterances:

> Why doesn't the orderly get them to sign something? (does a short gallop)
> Why doesn't the orderly get them to sign something? (another short gallop)
> Why doesn't the orderly get them to sign something? (short gallop)
> Why doesn't the orderly get them to sign something? (357)

Samuela's fourfold repetition is another verbal representation of a pullulation of extremeties. It is once more Electra who discovers this pullulation saying that "Dr Psi has two heads, Dr Kykoku has two backbones, and Dr Psi's secretary who I think is called Samuela has FOUR legs" (357).

Repetitions of utterances also occur whenever the new age of the charisma administers "premature instant aging injections" or "PIAI" for short. These injections bring about "instant maturity," which fulfills the claim of the new age to educate people and teach them to be mature. Dr Psi explains further:

> On the other side of the table, student protesters like Smythe get killed. On this side of the table, the worst that can happen to anyone is, PIAI. (375)

Kykoku administers PIAI to Orderly Smythe, who develops within minutes into a senile old man. After the trial, he also administers PIAI to Electra. The whole procedure here takes place on stage and appears to be a ritualistic dance. Equipped with a "rattle of dried chicken feet" and a "baboon hair lash" and assisted by the prisoners, the nurse and the sister, Dr Kykoku performs the ritual:

> <u>He lashes at her and she retreats into the prescribed circle. As he lashes her, the lashing movement transforms into a rhythmic gesture. This gesture becomes a dance. Music. He dances round and round Electra. As he dances he chants</u>:
> Oy ee oy ee, ee ee!
> <u>Prisoners dance around Electra</u> (390)

This ritualistic dance reaches a climax in the injections:

> <u>[Kykoku] dances silently with the hypo needle raised as a dagger</u>
> PIAI in the heart.
> <u>drives needle</u>
> PIAI in the legs and the arms.
> <u>drives needle</u> (391)

Kykoku continues the injections into Electra's belly, genitals, nineteen heads and throat. Yet the "instant maturity" PIAI brings about also leads to instant old age. In Electra's case,

her nineteen heads complicate the process further as Dr Kykoku explains after the results of PIAI become evident:

> I was going to age eleven of her heads and leave eight as young as they were. [. . .]
> But oh the laughter in the tears of things--each of her PIAI's turned out differently. Every one of her nineteen heads has a different age. [. . .]
> But she has the entire gamut of female intelligence to draw on--from the moist thinking of nubile girl mind to the gravelly platitudes of an aged sybil hung up in a cage to die! (394)

In this way, PIAI results in a reduction of Electra into a number of clichés stereotyping women at different stages in their lives and in different roles. Kykoku emphasizes this reduction and hints at its sexist nature when he says, "Every shade of female cogitation [. . .] from flirt to ancient bitch!" (394).

Watson considers the outcome of the trial as flawed because of its injustice to Electra: PIAI prevents her from living her life. As a result and as in the plays from the early 1960s, Watson overturns this damnation--not in a <u>deus ex machina</u> redemption but in a ritual of rebirth that allows Electra to start her life over again. This ritual is reminiscent of PIAI: Kykoku places Electra in a circle and he, the sisters, orderlies and prisoners dance around her chanting incantations to the sole accompaniment of drums. Eighteen of Electra's heads will be turned into vaginas which the chorus' repetitive incantations foreshadow: "Plant her eyes in a lion's pole / for it to plant in a lioness's hole" (409). This first chant and its sexual explicitness and the implicit act of copulation set the tone for the remaining chants, which are not as explicit

but still build on the male-female opposition and an act of copulation. For instance, the "Brahma bull's pizzle" and the "brood-cow's twizzle" can be seen as comic neologisms for male and female genitalia. Kykoku and the others repeat this patterned chant nine times, perhaps because an eighteen-fold repetition would be too long drawn out. The result of this ritual is "the new young Electra" (415).

The reencoding ritual also attests to Watson's male chauvinism because of an implicit equation of woman with sexual organ. In Western cultures, this equation is often a way of denigrating women. Watson uses this denigration in a particularly flagrant form because Dr Kykoku transforms Electra's multiple heads into multiple vaginas in a ritual reminiscent of a rebirth. This rebirth suggests that Electra's head should be transformed into a vagina so that she would be coded 'properly' and perhaps not blame herself compulsively for a murder she has not committed.

The singing and dancing at the end of the play seem to celebrate an outbreak of peace:

> Agamemnon has declared peace on Israeli.
> Agamemnon has declared peace on Israeli.
> Israeli has declared peace on Saudi Egypt.
> Israeli has declared peace on Saudi Egypt. (423)

Orestes interrupts this chant with a long monologue in which he asks Moses, King David, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jesus what he should do for peace. All of them, except Ezekiel, who says there is nothing he can do for peace, advise him to take off

all his clothes for peace. Orestes then addresses the audience with a sixtyish appeal to do <u>something</u> for peace:

> Won't you take off all your clothes for peace?
> Won't you take off some of your clothes for peace?
> Won't you take off any of your clothes for peace?
> Won't you do anything for peace? (423)

The singing and dancing and Orestes' monologue with the implicit appeal to the audience to do something for peace seem like an interruption of the play's plot. However, the late 1960s provide a context for the play that explains the interruption. The late 1960s saw a rapidly escalating Vietnam war and a popular people's movement against it as well as an escalating cold war on a world scale. One may think of the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, held Aug. 15-17, 1969 on a farm near Woodstock, N.Y. and better known as the Woodstock Festival, as an expression of that era: 500,000, mostly young, people listened to their favorite music, which expressed directly and indirectly their opposition to the Vietnam war and the cold war.

The "peace"-interruptions, then, emerge as something akin to a more or less spontaneous "happening." One could imagine the audience joining in the chanting, dancing, perhaps even taking off their clothes "for peace." Any of these actions would collapse the defining element of the Western proscenium stage, namely the strict separation of performing space and spectator space. However, as Yi-Fu Tuan has pointed out in his article on "Space and Context," this separation is in some theatrical genres not as strict as in others. Popular theatre

at times approaches the space of a village festival where performers and spectators share a space where everyone joins in the performance. In comedies, too, the laughter of the audience shows their active participation and breaches the strict separation of performing space and spectator space, while in tragedies we tend to retain our distance by assuming the role of observer because the situations represented are too extreme and painful for us to want to become "involved" (Tuan 242).

This "happening"--if it occurs with audience participation in varying degrees--can be seen as the culmination of the farcical elements in Let's Murder. The audience's acceptance of moving into different spaces and their complacency towards the destruction of plot, which is already partially manifest in the drawn-out PIAI and reencoding rituals, are the key elements in Watson's "radical" absurdity because they expand the theatre of the absurd towards a representation of postmodern multi-consciousness. Watson still increases the anarchy of the play, to wit Dr Psi's statements that "the law has been abolished" (351,377), by means of the ritualistic audience participations. He exposes the audience to multiple spaces and experiences that represent multiple levels of awareness or consciousness. In other words, Watson's radical absurdity tries to decentre the homogeneous experience of going to see a play by turning that experience into a heterogeneous one consisting of observation of and participation in multiple worlds or milieus.

Yet the happening can also be seen in analogy to the plays from the early 1960s as an invitation to the audience to participate in the continuing struggle, since neither the trial nor the rebirth solved any of Electra's problems. The happening serves in this way as a preparation of the audience to accept the everyday reality of life in a world determined by multi-consciousness. As in Shakespearian comedy, the marker for the return to a "normal" life uninterrupted by the comic confusions just witnessed on stage is the marriage that Dr Kykoku announces at the end of the play. Electra decides to marry Dr Psi, who thinks marriage is the only alternative to PIAI and the only "compensation" for having suffered the reencoding ritual (419). If we take this marriage as a positive event, then Watson's allegorical message to the audience appears to be: sing, dance, take off your clothes for peace, or get married, but the struggle of life will go on infinitely, no matter what you do . . . However, especially with regard to Watson's construction of gender as well as his male chauvinism, we should not be deceived by a traditional happy ending and a 1960s Make-Love-Not-War atmosphere. Below the surface, Watson's message is conservative, if not reactionary. When considering the happy ending, one should immediately ask, happy for whom? Here, then, we can come back to Watson's belief in original sin over last judgements and final redemption. In the context of this belief, his male chauvinism can be seen as an affirmation of the Catholic belief in Eve's (or woman's) guilt

in the fall of "man." Time and again, Watson employs methods of characterization that transform female characters into stereotypes of "female" behavior, whether we look at the "docile" acceptance of moral responsibility in Electra or at the characters participating in the women's solidarity in Gramsci x 3 and The Woman Taken in Adultery. On closer examination, these stereotypes are vehicles for inscribing an allegorical message because they broaden the characters' significance beyond what they present on stage. Against this backdrop, Watson's allegorical message is that, ultimately, woman is to blame for the condition of the continuous struggle of life.

Thus far, I have shown how Watson's plays from the 1960s integrate trial scenes with the theme of the Last Judgement and how this integration serves to communicate to the audience and educate it that there is no end in sight to the struggle. Now I want to take these insights into Watson's plays and relate them to the process of allegorical encoding as it is triggered by the melancholy of the author.

As I argued in chapter three, a deeply felt loss is the root cause of melancholy. For Watson, the redemption of the original sin is lost. Last judgements and final redemptions are supposed to put an end to the suffering caused by an original sin, but they fail to do so. Watson experiences this failure as catastrophic. And here is the unspeakable for Wat-

son: the collective guilt that follows the original sin is irredeemable. The knowledge of this irredeemability is anOther of Watson's allegories. To quote Wittgenstein's truism here, "Of that which you cannot speak, you must remain silent," is to describe Watson's dilemma as it represents itself to me: for him, not being able to communicate anOther or to remain silent equals death. Death, however, is profoundly unacceptable and he expresses as much in his description of the "atypical absurdist impasse" ("On Radical Absurdity" 37). This impasse, namely "the fact that when you are dead you cannot die," <u>only</u> poses itself to someone who does not accept death as an end of life. Indeed Watson's characters go on living in atemporal rituals after they are fatally shot, summoned to stand trial in heaven, or have reportedly died shortly after being released from prison. Because his recognition is unspeakable, however, it is bracketed and the allegorist in his melancholic brooding focuses on that which provides continuity. For Watson, this continuity evolves from the never-ending struggle. This struggle is ahistorical because it manifests itself in timeless rituals.

Chapter 5

The Work of R. Murray Schafer

Postmodern McLuhanesque Utopianism

After looking at Watson's relationship to McLuhan, it is interesting to consider Murray Schafer's stance towards McLuhan's theories, which influenced him very much. He wrote an article on McLuhan full of praise for the man and his achievements. Primarily, he uses McLuhan's concept of "acoustic space" to introduce a new notion of genre into the history of music.[1]

Schafer states that music-historical periods thus far have been described according to minute stylistic criteria. However, moving from one acoustic space into another one is far more momentous and significant a development so that he arrives at different generic, music-historical periods and the move, for instance, from the church into the concert hall has a more profound effect on composers and their music than a period change from, say, classical to romantic music with its stylistic changes.

[1] Although I am not particularly concerned with influences on Watson and Schafer, I acknowledge that McLuhan's treatment especially of the visual/aural orientation of cultures exerted a massive influence on both Watson and Schafer. I assume this influence throughout.

Even from this terse account of Schafer's McLuhanesque reconceptualization of music history we can see that Schafer's position is closer to McLuhan than it is to Watson because of its concern with history and temporality. Watson rejects such notions in favor of an atemporal global village. But Schafer's proximity to McLuhan becomes even clearer once we look at his notion of ritual in the context of synaesthesia and its impact on sensorial experience. Schafer states repeatedly that in Patria he strives to elicit synaesthetic experiences from his audiences. In his monograph on Patria, he points to the Catholic liturgy as a model of the type of synaesthesia he tries to achieve in Patria:

> Life itself is the original multi-media experience. Single art forms amputate all of the senses except one. If we look for examples of ritualized multi-channel experiences we will find them in unusual places. Thus, the Roman Catholic mass is (or was) such an experience. All the senses are summoned up: vision--the architecture of the church, the colour of the vitraux; hearing--the music of the choir and instruments, the ringing of bells; taste--the transubstantiation of the bread and wine; smell--the incense; touch--devotion on the knee (which at times even took the form of elaborate peregrinations about the church), prayer beads in the hand, etc. What strikes us here is that at no time are the senses bombarded aimlessly; everything is neatly integrated. In the Catholic mass there is no sensory overload. It could serve as a model for study. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 32).

Schafer's description posits a similar, utopian notion of perception as the one Watson criticized in McLuhan. Schafer's utopianism is even more pronounced than McLuhan's because he maintains that we can achieve again that state of unified experience in a carefully orchestrated, synaesthetic ritual. As

well, the teleological nature of his Patria cycle (manifest in the underlying quest-theme and in the ultimately successful quest) introduces forcefully a sense of temporality into Patria's atemporal ritualistic sub-sections.

From the Stage to a Wilderness Lake and Back Again: Murray Schafer's "Patria" Cycle

Murray Schafer has been occupied with the Patria cycle for almost thirty years now. Soon after completing his first work for the stage, Loving / Toi, in 1965, he began "a series of thematically unified works under the generic title of Patria (homeland)."[2] In his 1991 monograph on the cycle, he describes it as consisting of a prologue, ten parts, and an epilogue. By early 1995, Schafer has finished the prologue and six parts and begun work on the epilogue (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 209-14; for a description of the Patria cycle, see the Appendix).

Very little academic work has been done on Patria. Even though all finished parts have been performed at least once, productions have been rare. For these reasons, I have provided comprehensive descriptions in an appendix to familiarize my reader with Schafer's creative idiom.

In order to grasp this idiom, it is first necessary to understand one of the striking features of Murray Schafer's

[2] Schafer, Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 11. The French CBC produced Loving / Toi for television in 1966. Although this work has had only a partial stage performance in 1978, Schafer maintains: "I had originally planned the work for the stage and consider that it will finally assume its destiny in this form" (14).

career, namely his many different talents and how they benefit the Patria cycle:[3]

His experience as **educator** comes from having taught not only at the university and college level but also in high schools and elementary schools.[4] As **scholar**, Schafer has published several monographs in different fields as well as editing several authors' writings on music. Furthermore, he has written numerous articles on diverse subjects. He was co-founder of the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby for which he was also the director from 1965-75. At times, Schafer contributes to the public discussion of subjects with articles published in magazines and newspapers. Many of his articles on Canadian nationalism and on opera in Canada (not Canadian opera) throughout the 1960s bear the mark of the political commentator and the **satirist**.[5] As **journalist**, he has written in lucid and non-polemical prose on subjects of general musical and ecological interest.[6] He expresses his ecological commitment as **naturalist** in a scholarly manner. As **lecturer**, he makes his research and commitment known to others. Yet the

[3] See Ulla Colgrass's "Artistic Farming: The Many Talents of Murray Schafer."

[4] Watch the documentary film "Bing, Bang, Boom" in which Schafer explores new ways of teaching music to seventh graders.

[5] To wit, see "The Limits of Nationalism in Canadian Music," "Opera and Reform," "What is this Article About?" and "The Future for Music in Canada."

[6] Read "The Glazed Soundscape" and "Music And the Iron Curtain."

most important of the various roles of Murray Schafer is that of the artist, a complex role that can be further divided into composer, writer, playwright, graphic artist, theatre producer and director.

Patria draws on every single one of Schafer's multiple talents. Most obviously, Patria poses a direct challenge to Murray Schafer, the artist. Because of the generic multidisciplinarity of opera in general and of Patria in particular, Schafer's work requires the artist in all his specific manifestations: composer, writer, playwright, graphic artist, theatre producer and director. The educator, scholar and lecturer are necessary because the cycle instructs everyone involved in an ecological commitment that calls for research and integration into his artistic vision. Finally, the political commentator, satirist, journalist and naturalist aid in the defense, promotion and dissemination of ideas related to the cycle.[7]

The multidisciplinarity of Patria and Schafer's multiple talents seem to complement each other in a near perfect way. In my view, Schafer has tailored this mega-project to fit his talents in order to keep control of as many aspects of the cycle as possible. In other words, multiple talents and multi-

[7] See the controversial handling of the theme of immigration in The Characteristics Man and his acerbic essay on the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) production of The Characteristics Man. In the latter, Schafer not only attacks the COC but also sketches a viable alternative method of production, see below.

disciplinarity are expressions of a will to power that is also manifest in the more subtle workings of allegory as Schafer employs it. In this section, I am going to analyze the author/ity of allegory with regard to the different settings of performances. The discussion of the differences, however, will lead to a discussion of similarities. It is these similarities that point to an underlying ritual that unites very different sequels of Patria. This ritual includes not merely the stage or outdoor performance but also a number of pre- and post-performance events in the lives of spectators and participants. I argue that Schafer uses this ritual throughout his cycle in order to instruct spectators and participants with regard to the function of rituals and theatre in their lives. Seen in this way, Patria emerges as meta-theatre, presenting (not re-presenting) different ways of experiencing rituals and theatre.

The status of Patria as meta-theatre emerges most clearly once we focus our attention on the monumental scope of Patria where the chronological position of a part at times does not concur with the position accorded to it within the cycle. This positional difference is particularly striking with respect to The Princess of the Stars, composed in 1981, and The Characteristics Man, which was begun about 1965 and completed in 1974. Initially, Schafer wanted The Characteristics Man to set the stage for the entire cycle. Yet as Schafer expanded the cycle, he felt it necessary to introduce Patria with a separate prologue, The Princess of the Stars. This measure prompts con-

siderable revaluation and recontextualization of Patria 1: The Characteristics Man.

Although these two works are only seven years apart, what separates them is an "evolution of thinking" in Schafer's attitudes towards art, theatre and ecology (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 11). In an essay entitled "The Theatre of Confluence," Schafer describes his changed attitudes by introducing the outlandish theatrical paradigm of The Princess. He queries Western cultural history and the values he sees emerging from it. He points out that "the rampant destruction of nature did not get underway until the establishment of humanistic philosophies, of which in the West, Christianity has been the most influential" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 91). Hence it comes as no surprise when he states: "I am concerned with environmental topics about which Christianity and humanism can teach me nothing" (91). He discerns a more fertile ground in pantheistic and totemic philosophies, such as those practiced by the North American Indians because they promote a notion of the sacred which aids in conserving nature:

> It is in [ancient and strange] sources that we will find this ability to sense the divine in all things, this reverence for life and death, this acceptance of everything in the ordering and disordering of the cosmos, this ability to go with nature rather than against her. We do not know exactly how the ancient peoples or those living far from contemporary urban centers accomplished this. We have the anthropologists' records and we have certain artifacts and ceremonies used in their attempts to achieve these vital ontological insights. There are some hints then, and if the artist can understand them they can be put to good use again. (92)

In this way, Schafer intends to be an "engaged" artist. Yet not in the traditional sense of restoring certain social imbalances, but in the sense of restoring certain ecological imbalances.

In The Princess, Schafer tries to restore these imbalances by means of a hierophany, a sacred ritual demanding certain attitudes from performers and spectators. These attitudes are to a large extent responsible for fostering the ontological insights Schafer seeks to bring about. Although it is not per se a sacred ritual that determines the performers' and spectators' attitudes in The Characteristics Man, I maintain that the conventions both of producing and visiting an opera constitute a secular ritual that is just as influential on our attitudes as a sacred one.

To do justice to Schafer's work, we should dispense with the habitual assumption that the term "ritual" is only applicable to non-Western cultures. This habit of thought arose owing to those anthropologists whose work dealt primarily with traditional societies in non-Western cultures and who coined the phrase "ritual theatre" or "ritual drama" as a convenient label for distinguishing the "otherness" of the investigated performance traditions. As Ndukaku Amankulor points out in "The Condition of the Ritual in Theatre," the term ritual serves to erect a dichotomy that implicitly hierarchizes non-Western and Western artifacts:

> The idea is to isolate those performance zones where theatre occurs as ritual as opposed to Western societies where it is practiced as art. (229)

According to Amankulor, some theatre critics reprimand their colleagues for an alleged misuse of a broadened concept of ritual that does not give in to that dichotomy:

> Though experimental and avant-garde theatre groups may pretend to practice theatre as ritual, critics must be reminded of the dangers of taking such pretensions seriously. (229)

A prominent advocate of a broader concept of the ritual is Richard Schechner. His theatre practice as well as his theoretical writings unveil the widely accepted anthropological definition of the ritual as too narrow. As a result, he defines ritual as a broader concept that circumscribes the essence of theatre itself as an artistic process. This inclusive concept of the ritual consists of both the neglected Western aspects of ritual and the narrow anthropological definition. As a result, the latter can no longer govern the concept's field and we can rethink the ritual context of western theatre.

The Princess of the Stars leaves the conventional stage and ventures outdoors, namely onto a wilderness lake. Furthermore, the work is to be performed at dawn on an autumn morning. Both spatial and temporal setting thus go against deeply entrenched habits of the audience. Schafer comments tongue in cheek:

> It will be an effort to get up in the dark, drive thirty miles or more to arrive on a damp and chilly embankment, sit and wait for the ceremony to begin. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 119)

What Schafer here alludes to takes place before the actual performance on the lake, namely the pilgrimage to the site of the

ceremony. This experience, he reminds us, forms an integral part of his work:

> Like all true ceremonies . . . you must feel it. . . . You must go there, go to the site, for it will not come to you. You must go there like a pilgrim on a deliberate journey in search of a unique experience which cannot be obtained by money or all the conveniences of modern civilization. (119)

In pilgrimage and performance, thus, nothing transpires without semiotic import. Getting up in the middle of the night, driving to the lake, walking from the road to the lake--all these actions take on a mystic if not sacred significance. Schafer decidedly strives for such reverberations as the following remark shows:

> All rituals are rooted in antiquity or must appear to be. If they have not been repeated uninterruptedly throughout the ages, archaic dress, conduct and speech can assist in creating this impression. When we performed The Princess of the Stars on Two-Jack Lake [near Banff in 1985], gaunt black-robed ushers conducted the audience from the road to their places at the edge of the lake. In a more complex handling of ritual, more elaborate preparation ceremonies, including the consecration of the site may be desirable, but here 'holy nature' and the strange timing of the event seemed sufficient.[8]

As the expression "holy nature" emphasizes, the outdoor setting of The Princess is more than merely an outlandish backdrop to a performance that could be experienced in spite of or even with-

[8] Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 115. Schafer indeed pursued such a "complex handling" of ritual in Patria 6: Ra, where he limits the audience to 75 and treats them as a group of initiates to the cult of the Egyptian sun god. Ra has an elaborate olfactory dimension and in one of the numerous preparation exercises, the Hierophant's helpers (whom Schafer calls Hierodules) teach the initiates to distinguish the perfumes of the various gods (see editing unit 10).

out the outdoors. Outdoors and timing are important aspects of this ritual. For instance, the climax of the work, which is the entrance of the canoe carrying the sundisk, must coincide precisely with the rising of the sun.

Yet what happens if the sun does not rise and remains hidden behind clouds? Here we have touched on another dimension of the environment's role. As Schafer explains, it goes so far as to overshadow the human involvement in this work:

> The living environment enters and shapes the success or failure of The Princess of the Stars as much as or more than any human effort; and knowledge of this must touch the performers, filling them with a kind of humility before the grander forces they encounter in the work's setting. (110)

Schafer does not ask the spectators to participate directly in the performance, yet within the fiction of the work, they become more than mere spectators. Once the presenter has rowed his canoe across the lake, he greets the spectators and provides them with background to the ritual they are about to witness. Then with a few magic words, he turns the spectators into a part of the environment:

> I saw you come from the forest,
> And I saw that you came in peace,
> You are welcome to our lake. . . .
> The figures you see here are not human,
> Therefore, in order that you might witness
> Without disturbing these actions,
> I shall turn you into trees.

The presenter accomplishes this action through incantation of a few magical words and carries on:

> Watch now and listen carefully
> Faithful trees,
> But of the things you witness here

> Remain silent,
> For they are ancient
> And sacred. (The Princess of the Stars 21-2)

The presenter's claim to turn the audience into trees can be seen to cause that state of perplexity in the audience that Craig Owens identifies as initiating many allegories. Owens's example is Dante's Divine Comedy where the narrator is over-tired and loses his way (see "The Allegorical Impulse" 219, esp. n.43). Only by becoming a part of the environment may humans witness the ritual of The Princess. Keeping the crucial role of the environment in mind, one can say that the participation of the audience in the spectacle is dependent more on their attitude towards the ritual than on participatory action: if they believe they are trees and as such blend in with the environment, then they are participating; if they do not believe, they remain detached human observers. The "suspension of disbelief" (Wordsworth) or the leap of faith, however, should not be construed as giving rise to a clear-cut dichotomy. In theatre and ritual, the suspension of disbelief is a complex process and we may approach it as a continuum without fixed boundaries.

Perhaps we can draw a meaningful analogy with the mental state of a Yaqui-deer dancer. Schechner points out that a complete transformation of the dancer into a deer is impossible. Still, during the dance, the dancer is neither a man nor a deer but "somewhere in between" (Schechner, Between Theatre and Anthropology 4). Schechner describes this state as one of liminality:

> At the moments when the dancer is "not himself" and "not not himself," his own identity, and that of the deer, is locatable only in the liminal areas of "characterization," "representation," "imitation," "transportation," and "transformation." (4)

The success of Schafer's project in Patria depends on transporting the audience to a state of liminality. The presenter's magic incantation changes the audience into being "not themselves" (through a willingness to undertake a leap of faith) and "not not themselves" (through the impossibility of a transformation into trees).

One could also say that the presenter's magical words enable the individual spectators to constitute a group or congregation. According to Richard Schechner, theatre and ritual are poles of a continuum of performance. Hand in hand with the movement from theatre to ritual goes an inverse movement from a number of individuals to a community:

> The move from theatre to ritual happens when the audience is transformed from a collection of separate individuals into a group or congregation of participants.[9]

For these reasons, turning individual spectators into a group of trees underscores the move from theatre to ritual.

Although Schafer frequently evokes Wagner's Ring in comparison to both structure and synaesthetic potential of his

[9] Performance Theory 142. Schechner, however, uses his terms inconsistently. Clearly, what he calls here a transformation into a group is not a permanent change and should be considered according to his own usage in Between Theatre and Anthropology a (temporary) transportation, for once a ritual is complete the group will disperse into separate individuals.

Patria cycle, he is quite aware that a Schaferian "Bayreuth" is almost impossible to achieve because of the changing requirements in setting of his work. He points out that the individual installments are self-sufficient, but, at the same time, he says that individual parts "[gain] in richness by the overlayering of themes from the other [parts]" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 209). In order to make the best use of this "overlayering of themes," Schafer makes sure that one can access parts of Patria without actually seeing them performed. He writes:

> I have always believed that [the Patria pieces] can be digested in formats other than physical performance, which is why the scores contain so many diagrams, drawings and footnotes in addition to the music. The cross-references and relationships between individual pieces exist at many levels and one can proceed to whatever depth desired to find them. (11)

On the one hand, Schafer seems to suggest that the individual installments of Patria contribute by means of their interrelations to their status as "closed" texts in Umberto Eco's terminology. Eco describes texts that aim at generating a precise response from a group of empirical readers as "closed" and texts that provide few specific response indications as "open" (The Role of the Reader 7-8). On the other hand, Schafer implicitly directs attention to what the audience brings to a performance in the way of expectations and assumptions that they acquired from various sources, such as program notes, reviews, critical writings such as Schafer's monograph on Patria, and the scores themselves. Theatre semiotics is just

beginning to explore the issue of the "advance" knowledge of the audience. Marvin Carlson's essay "Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance" suggests how research into that area might be pursued. In his conclusion, he states:

> The comparatively small amount of reception research carried out in the theatre to date has been developed almost entirely through interviews and questionnaires seeking to establish what an audience thought or felt about a performance after its completion. Almost no organized work has been done on the other end of this process: what an audience brings to the theatre in the way of expectations, assumptions, and strategies which will creatively interact with the stimuli of the theatre event to produce whatever effect the performance has on this audience and what effect they have upon it. (24)

In light of the absence of theoretical and empirical research in that field, I can only speculate as to the particular "advance" knowledge an audience might bring to a performance of The Characteristics Man. Keeping in mind, however, that this work is performed in a conventional operahouse, we can assume that the various paraphernalia accompanying an opera production would also be present here. Among these paraphernalia are the now customary pre-performance talks as well as detailed program notes that almost always put the work in question into a broader context. With respect to The Characteristics Man, this broader context would surely include some descriptive reference to the cycle's prologue and its peculiar setting. Thus even if the spectator has not actually seen The Princess, s/he would gather enough information from the various sources available to set into motion a process of recontextualization.

To begin with, The Characteristics Man is renamed Wolfman. As Schafer explains, "Wolf is the original form of the protagonist of the Patria cycle and the form to which he ultimately returns" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 47). Yet the recontextualizations go beyond thematic aspects. They also have the purpose of changing the attitudes of spectators toward the rituals they inevitably undergo with each performance.

Whether it is triggered by an actual witnessing of a performance or by other means of accessing The Princess, a contemplation of the outdoor setting and the pilgrimage makes the spectators of Wolfman more aware of the surroundings of this performance as well. The spectator, then, would become aware of his or her preparations for the performance and how the day of the performance changes because of it. The spectator would heed the cultural conventions that regulate a visit to the opera. Schafer acerbically juxtaposes the audience rituals of the modern opera to those of The Princess:

> Instead of a somnolent evening in uphostery, digesting dinner or contemplating the one to follow, this work takes place before breakfast. No intermission to crash out to the bar and guzzle or slump back after a smoke. No pearls or slit skirts. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 119)

All of these conventions make up the neglected Western aspects of ritual.

By designating The Princess as the prologue to Patria, Schafer turns Wolfman into an exploration of those conventions that constitute the Western secular ritual of paying a visit to

the opera. Furthermore, the setting of Wolfman takes on ironic overtones because now it appears to be a "return" to the (conventional) theatre. The Princess thus also functions as a "tuning into nature" for the entire cycle. We already know that in the epilogue, tentatively entitled "And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon," the cycle will return to a (or perhaps even "the") wilderness lake. Therefore, the pieces in between prologue and epilogue are explorations into bizarre territory. They are the stations in a metaphorical calvary Wolf has to undergo before he can return to the lake where his travels began. At the end of Wolf's calvary as at the end of Christ's Calvary, there is the hope for redemption. That redemption is not brought about through Wolf's efforts, but through the efforts of the animals of the forest who take pity on Wolf. As we shall see further below, Wilfred Watson reverses the calvary in Gramsci x 3 so that the end emerges as another beginning, cutting off all hope for a final redemption.

Yet in Wolfman not only the attitudes of the audience change with the recontextualization; those of the performers change too. A professional company such as the Canadian Opera Company (COC) should have no major problems in performing Wolfman, considering Schafer's meticulous score and its many illustrations, which suggest what certain scenes may look like on stage. That was also the impression under which Murray Schafer agreed to a performance of Wolfman by the COC without being himself directly involved in the production. He writes:

> The score of Patria 1 is very explicit and if the directions were followed it should be possible for a smooth machine like the COC to approach it with something like efficiency. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 68)

The COC in all its efficiency, however, compartmentalized the production by adhering to a hierarchical structure in which all tasks are exactly distributed and the participants may not transgress the limits of individual responsibility. Schafer describes that compartmentalization as follows:

> I was invited to two production meetings. I had no further meetings with the director and was not asked to attend staging rehearsals. No one was interested in anyone else's part in the production. No one was interested in the whole. There were no meetings at which the artistic team shared ideas or sought to unify their concept of the work. Everyone went his own way, appeared when required and disappeared when not required. No one wanted to learn from anyone else. The director attended no musical rehearsals. The musical director was out of the country for the first week of staging rehearsals. The designers worked in a vacuum. (69)

In my view, the COC's failure to produce Wolfman to Schafer's liking is indicative not of outrageous standards of perfection the composer applies to productions of his work but of modern habits of producing theatre that Schafer does not accept. It shows that Schafer--even at the beginning of the Patria cycle--wrote these works to be produced in a new manner, a manner best described in terms of a broader concept of ritual that emphasizes the collaborative aspects of a production.

In this way, Schafer clearly thinks that the currently accepted model of producing music theatre is no longer efficient. As a result, he tries changing it by transforming opera into

what he calls "co-opera" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 36); that is, a production of one of his works should involve all participants (performers and non-performers alike) constructively in the process. Ideally, they should all care for the result of the production and develop insights into how their individual part in the production contributes to the end-result. Such an understanding of the participants' roles hints at an underlying belief in a communal effort and a spirit of team work that Schafer would like to realize in a production of his works. We should not simply define this end-result as what occurs on stage. Rather, it entails all semiotic events partaking in the performance. Schechner, for instance, describes the whole performance sequence as consisting of seven phases: training, workshops, rehearsals, warm-ups, performance, cool-down, and aftermath (Between Theatre and Anthropology 16-21).

The communal effort and the team work, I think, circumscribe a notion of ritual that can be both secular, as in Wolfman, and sacred, as in The Princess. The various rituals in the Patria cycle thus appear as subtle explorations into an inclusive concept of ritual. The experiences that performers and spectators gain have the implicit task of instructing them in the art of recognizing their lives as a number of rituals. If this instruction is successful, they will leave the performance with rejuvenated eyes, as it were, and regard their environment in a new way. To use Schechner's terminology, the audience will leave the performance permanently transformed. In Schech-

ner's view, however, a strict separation of transportation performances (customarily called "theatre") and transformation performances (customarily called "ritual") cannot be upheld. Using the example of a Papua New Guinea initiation ritual, Schechner points out that, while the boys as a result of this ritual are permanently transformed into men, the experienced performers who are trainers, guides, and co-performers are only temporarily transported. Likewise, the performances in Patria include a cross-section of transformation and transportation.

The educational character of Schafer's Patria cycle also accounts for, or perhaps even explains, the allegorical mode Schafer uses. Allegory has always been used as a method of instruction. Seen in this way, The Princess recontextualizes Wolfman with respect to another important feature, namely the allegorical. In his article "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," Joel Fineman writes:

> The dream-vision is, of course, a characteristic framing and opening device of allegory, a way of situating allegory in the mise en abyme opened up by the variety of cognate accusatives that dream a dream, or see a sight, or tell a tale. (47)

How else could one better situate the setting of The Princess with regard to the ensuing Wolfman than by viewing it as such an opening dream-vision, a first glimpse at an uncommon sight, or else the beginning of a tale which leads us in its sequels to other similarly extraordinary places? The state of perplexity that I described above contributes to this effect. Seen as a self-sufficient theatre event, The Characteristics Man seems

to be a "straightforward" allegory about the modern theme of alienation. The Princess sets into motion a recontextualization that makes us see the broader, "cosmic" implications of what is now Wolfman, a part of Patria.

These implications (the ritualistic aspects of Wolfman) and the participants' realization of them determine the degree to which we can call Murray Schafer a reconstructive postmodernist. Indeed, his notion of "co-opera" seems to implement Suzi Gablik's "participatory aesthetics" by involving all participants in the artistic event and also by going beyond aesthetics in re-structuring interpersonal relationships. In this way, Schafer's aesthetics, like Gablik's, is not an aesthetics in the traditional sense because it includes ethical guidelines.

We should also keep in mind Angus Fletcher's seminal study Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode in which he contends that

> allegory is structured according to ritualistic necessity, as opposed to probality, and for that reason its basic forms differ from mimetic plots in being less diverse and more simple in contour. (150)

This proximity of ritual and allegory comes to the forefront of attention in Murray Schafer's Patria cycle so that the ritual as allegory also becomes the allegory as ritual. And this ritual, to be sure, is not the narrow one defined by anthropology: it is an inclusive one which circumscribes the essence of theatre by paying attention to the condition of performance in our western culture as well as in non-western cultures.

The Village Fair as a Site for the Construction of Gender

While The Princess as prologue to Patria can be seen as an opening dream vision to an allegorical quest of a male hero for his female counterpart and Patria 1 and 2 as further instalments in this quest, Patria 3 focuses on the participating spectators and their quest for meaning. Schafer uses allegorical strategies to direct that quest. We can observe these strategies by paying close attention to the ways in which hero and heroine enter and manipulate or fail to manipulate the signifying process.

In Patria 3, Wolfman signifies through his absence because Schafer gives him the power to control the signifying process in ways similar to allegorists, namely from the outside. Ariadne, however, signifies only through her presence, which keeps her from attaining a position of power because Schafer situates her inside the signifying process so that she cannot control it. Schafer links the gender-specific encoding of the signifying process in Patria 3 to the issue of violence. While he subjects the male protagonist to the abstract violence of a system of representation, the female protagonist has to suffer many direct assaults. The concrete violence against women Schafer is willing to inscribe into his signifying systems, as well as the prominent place he assigns to that violence in

Patria 3, makes it necessary to evaluate Schafer's allegorical work on the grounds of gender, violence and power. This discussion leads to a reconsideration of Schafer's reconstructive postmodernism.

Patria 3: The Greatest Show is part of a larger unit within Patria that is structured according to and held together by the principles of alchemy. This unit includes Patria 1 to 4. In Patria 3, Schafer dissects Patria 1 and 2 into fragments of themes and structures. This dissection resembles metaphorically the alchemical reduction of base metals into prima materia before their transmutation into silver or gold. That transmutation, the climax of the unit, takes place in Patria 4: The Black Theatre of Hermes Trismegistos, which stages the "chemical wedding" of the prime materials in a deserted mine.[10] Patria 3 is a preparation for the alchemical theatre of Patria 4. In its destructiveness, Patria 3 emerges as an anti-climax within the alchemical unit of Patria.

The anti-climactic nature of The Greatest Show manifests itself in a hostility to a number of artistic traditions.

[10] As in all of Patria, the physical setting of The Black Theatre of Hermes Trismegistos is an integral part of the work and has a ritualistic significance that is to aid the participating spectator to attain a liminal position. Schafer concedes, however, that it is primarily the value of an "alien location" that is important for a work of this kind (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 142). Accordingly, Patria 4 was first performed at the Festival de Liège, Belgium (March 9, 1989) in a deserted nineteenth century circus. Maple Leaf Productions undertook the Canadian première of Patria 4 in the Toronto train station in 1993.

After having participated in the first production of The Greatest Show in 1987, Schafer wrote an article to which he appended selected remarks by Italian Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) on the "Variety Theatre." I think it is Schafer's intention to highlight a number of parallels between Marinetti's theatre and the one presented in The Greatest Show by pointing to what they react against:

> I append some remarks . . . by T.F. Marinetti . . . with the hope that future performers of The Greatest Show might find them appropriate, for although Marinetti's world and ours are widely separated, some of the ghosts he wished to expel remain the same. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 132)

Marinetti aims his remarks primarily at the (traditional) passivity of audiences. Furthermore, he seeks to destroy in his theatre

> the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, and the Sublime in Art with a capital A. It cooperates with Futuristic destruction of immortal masterworks, plagiarizing them, parodying them, making them look commonplace by stripping them of their solemn apparatus as if they were mere attractions. (qtd. in Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 133)

This quotation seems to describe the alchemical process of breaking down Patria 1 and 2 into prima materia that Patria 3 undertakes. Schafer links this breaking down to questions of genre.

In a part of the introduction that Schafer also incorporates as "EDITING UNIT I3: PARABASIS" into The Greatest Show, he attempts to situate his work generically and stylisti-

cally.[11] Yet he is capable only of suggesting a broad and fuzzy outline of the work's status: based upon "the model of the village fair . . . we produce a confection of 100 atrocities; amusing, ironical, linked only in the head of the wandering visitor" (Introduction: 2-3).

In a later article, Schafer is more specific:

> The Greatest Show aims to seduce its public by plundering ruthlessly from the past, by conjoining belly dancers with tragedians, slapstick with expressionism, vaudeville with opera, voodooism with pulpit and lectern demagogy. In fact this stylistic impurity is the source of its attractiveness to a modern audience. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 126)

Schafer here links farcical genres and their performers to representatives of "high art" and a socio/political phenomenon. Belly dancing or the "cooch" was from 1893 on an integral part of burlesque shows touring North America;[12] slapstick, just like farce and burlesque, denotes broad comedy based on boisterous humor; vaudeville was a late 19th century variation of the North American burlesque that appealed to middle-class

[11] Patria 3: The Greatest Show, Category I, editing unit 3: The University Theatre, 27-29 (All future references appear in the text in abbreviated form: I3: 27-29). Patria 3 is divided into 11 categories. These categories have headings that describe their setting. Schafer subdivides the categories further into "editing units" or rehearsal units, which he uses throughout Patria. He describes them as follows: "Each editing unit has its own mood or situation, though some flow into one another and others are distinctly separate--like the scenes of a conventional drama" (Patria 2 iii).

[12] See Robert Allen's detailed account of the "cooch's" introduction to North America on the occasion of the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition (225-28). See also my analysis below of editing unit C15: "Little Araby."

taste and morals (Allen 185-86); and voodooism can be seen as a non-western "monstrosity" that the burlesque eagerly embraced and exhibited. Schafer links to these farcical acts some genres and styles (tragedy, expressionism, opera and demagogy) that together display a dialogical multi-disciplinarity, or, in Schafer's terms "a stylistic impurity," that represents a post-modern palimpsest in which neither genres nor historical styles occur in isolation or in a "pure" form. While Schafer's generic and stylistic characterization of The Greatest Show is reminiscent of Watson's ahistorical global village that levels or deconstructs historico-geographical differences, the structure of power reveals that The Greatest Show is at the heart an instance of reconstructive postmodernism. All the different acts, genres and styles point in a centripetal motion towards a centre of authority that creates an allegorical meaning in the spectacle.

The question to ask at this point is, of course, how can a spectacle such as The Greatest Show in all its fragmentation serve as a vehicle for allegory since allegory usually demands a coherent literal level of narrative. The answer can be seen in the generic and stylistic peculiarities of The Greatest Show. Seeing that Patria 3 performs the deconstruction of Patria 1 and 2, one could say that Patria 1 and 2 are the literal level to the allegory of Patria 3. In this way, Patria 3 presents disjunct parts of a narrative that the spectators are to reconstruct (if not in allegorical details, at least in rough outline) in learning about the plots of Patria 1 and 2.

Schafer's comments on the generic status of The Greatest Show emphasize the multi-disciplinary nature of the spectacle as well as a common denominator of its editing units, namely the farce. The farce draws the various media together by dint of its extra-literary nature. In her compendium on the farce, Jessica Milner Davis writes:

> From the correct reception of custard pies to the precise machinery of a complex display of fireworks . . . it is the physical skills of the actor, and the corresponding visual imagination of the dramatist, which are at a premium. Verbal and literary artifice is simply overwhelmed by physical action in farce. (17)

In other words, the visual imagination of the dramatist gives rise to an extra-literary level of meaning in farce, namely the physical action. A similar relation of visual imagination to extra-literary meaning can be observed in allegory. Angus Fletcher argues that this "doubleness of intention" (that is, on the one hand, the literal level of meaning and, on the other, a second level which is properly extra-literary and depends on allegorical interpretation) is a mark of genuine allegory and generates "a penchant for the purely visual" (239):

> A visualizing, isolating tendency is bound to appear wherever system is desired, since the perfect form of imagery for such purposes will be something like a geometric shape. . . . If reality is imaged in diagrammatic form, it necessarily presents objects in isolation from their normal surroundings, precisely what we found in the case of emblematic painting and poetry. (98, 100)

The Greatest Show relies on farce and also uses emblems.

In his "Staging Notes" to The Greatest Show, Schafer emphasizes the visualization of the fairground: "In construct-

ing the sets," he admonishes, "it is important to make use of different levels" (Introduction: 3). In his article on The Greatest Show, he specifies that,

> ideally this activity [participating in a fair] should extend vertically as well as horizontally, which is why I added a tight-rope walker and Mr. Daedalus on stilts. I wanted spectators to gawk upwards at times and at others to search the ground for shadow-clues or unsuspected tricks and traps. (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 126)

Schafer's visual imagination exhibits an isolating tendency by ordering the fairground into vertical and horizontal levels that the audience can scrutinize separately. The elicited gestures of "gawk[ing] upwards" and "search[ing] the ground" aid the spectators in arriving at an allegorical reading of The Greatest Show because they lead to a re-ordering and possible deciphering of enigmatic clues.[13]

In The Greatest Show, it appears that the dialogical multi-disciplinarity or "stylistic impurity" is linked to Schafer's visual imagination as well as to the allegorical meaning. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of carnival describes well this multi-disciplinarity. According to Bakhtin, the carnival of the Renaissance filled the "low" genres, such as fabliau, farce, Cri de Paris, etc., with new life by exposing them to

[13] There is also a purely formal and theoretical affinity between allegory and farce: both concepts can be interpreted either as a genre or a mode. This uncertainty lies at the very root of these concepts and accounts, I think, for a distinct unease in dealing with either of them on a critical footing, since uncertainty occasions a theoretical slippage that is difficult to contain in the critical act.

the people's languages rather than the "official" Latin (466). Furthermore, a vital expression of the "carnivalistic worldview" is profanation and parody of sacred texts (14-15). Carnival, Bakhtin contends, opposes established genres by exposing them to the laughter that is a key experience of carnival. This "culture of humour" combats the fear of the sacred and the hierarchically superior; it leads to a state of liminality that reduces the distance and creates a certain familiarity between humans:

> All were considered equal during carnival. Here, in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age. . . . People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind. (10)

The Greatest Show, then, by virtue of its carnivalistic nature situates the spectators in liminality. Also, the term "spectators" is only partially adequate, for at any given moment of The Greatest Show, Schafer may call on them to participate and perform. This ambiguity, Bakhtin says, is a defining feature of carnival:

> Carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. (7)

Before, however, trying to decipher the allegory of The Greatest Show, I want to scrutinize the process of reading allegorically.

The Greek roots of the term "allegory" indicate that allegory speaks otherwise or speaks (of) anOther in public.[14] Accordingly, an allegorical reading must gain access to that Otherness and often does so to the detriment of a close scrutiny of the multi-layeredness of the allegorical Other. In other words, at times it is tempting to define anOther narrowly in order to succeed at the allegorical reading and arrive at a coherent secondary meaning of the work.

In Schafer's Patria cycle and especially in the alchemical unit, the allegorical Other appears at first as the unconscious that emerges in terms of alchemy and especially C.G. Jung's integration of the alchemical trope into his psychological system of archetypes and a collective unconscious. It is easy to evoke powerful devices to implement a reading along these lines, but ultimately such a reading remains unsatisfactory for it does not address the essence of allegory.

While such readings may reveal much about the internal intricacies of the Patria cycle with regard to its Jungian underpinnings, they contribute little if anything to a scrutiny of the epistomological status of allegory within the post-

[14] Fletcher 2. "Allegory" is a compound word of Greek "allos" (other, otherwise) and "agorein" (to speak in public or in the market).

modern. I maintain, however, that it is precisely the conjunction of allegory and the postmodern that must be explored with Schafer.

Likewise, it was primarily the essence of (baroque) allegory that interested Walter Benjamin. Winfried Menninghaus points out that Benjamin displayed an avowed disinterest in single analyses of allegories:

> Benjamin "does not want . . . to know" about the singular meanings of allegorical peculiarities of baroque poetry nor "whether they are more truthful, psychologically more profound, more excusable, have a better form than in others." He is, however, concerned with the doubtlessly extremely epistemological question: "What are they [the allegories] themselves? What speaks from them? Why did they come about?"[15]

One way of addressing these epistemological questions may be by taking a closer look at the allegory meaning. However, I do not want to look at the Jungian collective unconscious Schafer repeatedly hints at and in which he stores all kinds of archetypes waiting to be revived in a postmodern neo-mythical spectacle. I want to displace this Jungian Other and replace it with a multi-dimensional allegorical Other (which I call an-Other) that demonstrates more about the postmodern than it does about a rigidly construed unconscious.

[15] "Benjamin will . . . 'nicht wissen', welche singulären Bedeutungen die allegorischen Verschrobenheiten barocken Dichtens jeweils haben bzw. 'ob sie beim einen aufrichtiger, psychologisch vertiefter, entschuldbarer, formvollendeter als beim anderen sind'. Es geht ihm vielmehr um die zweifellos mit einem extremen Erkenntnisanspruch verknüpfte Frage: 'Was sind sie [die Allegorien] selbst? Was spricht aus ihnen? Warum mußten sie sich einstellen?'" (Menninghaus [with quotations from Benjamin] 81)

I would like to draw attention to that Otherness in The Greatest Show. As his title indicates, Schafer is obsessed with the superlative and hence his treatment of anOther also shows extreme tendencies.[16] Yet we should keep in mind that it is in the extreme that allegories reveal anOther most clearly because in the extreme occur the starkest oppositions.

In the first editing unit of The Greatest Show, Sam Galuppi, the circus barker, opens the show by praising its synaesthetic qualities ("PATRIA 3: THE GREATEST SHOW / A FEAST FOR THE EARS, / THE EYES, THE NOSE / AND THE STOMACH") as well as the entertainment value ("BUT HAVE NO FEAR / FOR I, SAM GALUPPI, / AM YOUR GUARANTEE / THAT THE SHOW WILL RUN / AS GOOD CLEAN FUN" [A:3]). Before that can happen, however, the show needs hero and heroine who "HOLD THE THREAD / TO GUIDE US THROUGH THE LABYRINTH" (A:4), which is a hint at the Ariadne-Theseus myth, yet in such form that it is "we", the spectators, who are to be led through the labyrinth of The Greatest Show and that of the Patria cycle hitherto composed. The barker then picks two 'volunteers' from the audience who identify themselves as "Ariadne" and "Wolfie." At once, Galuppi

[16] As Stephen Adams point out, Schafer's initial title was The Greatest Show on Earth but he had to shorten it because of legal threats from Ringling Brothers, who have the phrase under copyright (199). Reminders of Schafer's intention can still be found in the program for The Greatest Show which is a "lurid-looking tabloid" called The Patriotic News Chronicle (see Introduction: 12-27). All references, and there are many, to The Greatest Show appear in bold letters and give the initial title: The Greatest Show on Earth.

proclaims that their individual mediocrity may add up to something more substantial: "WHAT A SPECTACULAR PAIR OF ORDINARY MORTALS!" (A:4) However, the modus operandi here is clearly their ordinariness, which is why Galuppi feels compelled to add: "BUT DO NOT DESPAIR / FOR WE CAN TURN THIS PAIR / INTO BRIGHT GLITTERING STARS / AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT" (A:4).

As it turns out, Ariadne and Wolfman volunteer for acts of magic to be performed by the show's two magicians. The black magician leads Ariadne to

> a long box, above which are suspended three guillotines, one at the head, one at the feet and one in the middle. . . . The first blade drops cutting off the girl's protruding feet. The second blade appears to cut her in half, while the third cuts off her head, which falls into a basket. (A:5)

The white magician in turn leads Wolfman

> into an animal cage. A cloth is draped over the cage and it is slowly raised into the air. . . . When the cage has reached its position, the White Magician fires a pistol and the curtain falls. The cage is empty. (A:5)

A C major flourish from the orchestra indicates the apparent completion of these acts as well as an end of the danger to the volunteers. Here, however, something goes wrong and Galuppi breathlessly comments: "VANISHED! / CUT TO PIECES! / AND THEY WERE GOING TO BE THE HEROES OF OUR SHOW" (A:5-6). In the aftermath of these events, other artists steal Ariadne's severed head and feet and integrate them into their acts. But Ariadne's other body parts will also appear throughout the show.

The dissemination of Ariadne's corporeal presence through the sliced-off fragments of her body is a key issue in The Greatest Show, just as the many traces of Wolfman's absence are. Both issues engage the spectators in an immediate manner in the fate of these characters. More than that, Schafer encourages the spectators to consider Ariadne and Wolfman as more than mere individual characters because they are "heroine" and "hero" of the show. However, the spectators' personal attitudes either subvert or confirm Ariadne's and Wolfman's heroism when it turns out that these "heroes" are rejects of a society they themselves do not understand.[17]

Time and again in the course of the evening's "entertainment" the spectators will come across editing units that focus attention on the issue of violence against women. Let me give an example:

In "The Princess of Parallelograms," Schafer presents Ariadne's sliced body:

> Among the distinguished portraits of heroes and heroines is a wall sculpture or bas-relief of the fragments of a woman. It is as if her body has been put through a meat slicer and the slices have then been arranged side by side, slightly out of phase with one another. The relationship with the vivisection of Ariadne in Editing Unit A1 should be neither too pronounced nor too ignored. (D:21)

This editing unit focusses on the concrete violence that Ariadne has to undergo in order to enter the signifying

[17] One should keep in mind that both Wolfman and Ariadne end their lives--or, at least, contemplate ending their lives--in Patria 1 & 2 respectively by committing suicide.

process. In contrast, the exhibition associated with Wolfman in the same category, "Memorabilia Gallery--Souvenirs of Our Hero," represents Wolfman by assembling some of his personal belongings:

> The cases contain relics and clothes: our hero's boots, his military jacket, his pipe, his glass eye and fake moustache, etc. Also on display are several beautifully written but quite illegible documents: his immigration papers, an old passport and perhaps a love letter to Ariadne. From his childhood are coloured pencil set, his wolf tail and rubber ducky. (D:19)

In this way, Schafer also subjects Wolfman to violence, but only to the abstract violence of a system of representation. Schafer structures Wolfman's memorabilia gallery paratactically; that is, the items are displayed side by side ostensibly without any order. The structure of Wolfman's exhibit can be seen as based on selection, which according to Roman Jakobson's contention of the twofold character of language gives rise to metaphor and tends towards allegory. Ariadne's display, however, can be seen to be based on combination, giving rise to metonymy and tending towards symbolism. A decisive difference between the respective forms of violence is that Wolfman signifies through absence, while Ariadne signifies by means of her fragmented presence. Not being able to speak for himself, Wolfman must rely continuously on others to create meaning. As we shall see, Schafer fills the void of Wolfman's absence (which resembles the absence of a signified) with a new meaning that provides access to anOther. Ariadne's fragmented presence

does not provide access to anOther because it is a symbol that can only point to a single level of meaning.

In Wolfman's exhibit, "all the objects are tersely identified by cards" so that an unordered list of either things or names of things emerges. The allegorical level can be seen in the spectator's efforts to put that list into order, which can be either chronological from childhood to suicide, or systematic from articles of clothing to toys, etc. By establishing order in that assemblage, certain patterns will arise that may lead to inferences about Wolfman and his life. In Ariadne's exhibit, however, the signifying process attempts to hide the fragmentation of her presence but in so doing Schafer pushes anOther of the abstract violence, namely the concrete violence against women, into the foreground. Ariadne's exhibit thus resists signifying anything beyond its symbolical meaning, which is the concrete violence against women. However, Schafer adds a farcical subtext in order to undercut the symbolical. This farcical subtext consists in the positioning of these exhibits in a "gallery," which is not a gallery for exhibiting art but rather a gallery reminiscent of the dime-museums of the 1870s. These dime-museums were precursors of the travelling "freak-shows" and exhibited mostly scurrilities but also photographs (Allen 181, 232-33).

The Greatest Show also features violence against women in editing units that do not relate directly to Ariadne. So in "Lieder Recital," where three men perform a crude "tonsillectomy" (A:27) on a female singer:

> Ron Muck produces a butcher's knife and the three men slit the singer's throat. Blood spurts from her mouth and covers the stage. They carry her out on their shoulders singing lustily, "STRENGTH THROUGH JOY!" (A:27)

The three men's chant is, of course, a translation of the Nazi-Slogan "Kraft durch Freude," which was the title of a social program of the Third Reich that enabled workers to relax in state-owned spas. This historical connotation contradicts the upbeat message the slogan as such attempts to communicate because it draws attention to the underlying ideology. With regard to the violence, the men's "singing lustily" sets up a strange contrast to the gory scene one has just witnessed. Such farcical elements also appear in other editing units[18] so that they may be seen as constituting a loosely connected parodical subtext to the theme of violence against women in The Greatest Show. Their effect with regard to violence against women is to diminish the visual impact of the presentation. Once the spectators smile ironically or even sarcastically, Schafer has widened the dramatic distance between spectators and presentation because the spectators begin to reflect on the nature of the farcical element rather than on the violence against women. Schafer in this way assaults his women victims a second time. Considering the brutality and tenacity of a

[18] See "Lazzi," where the Four Vaudevillians perform pantomimes in front of Ariadne's coffin, or the setting of "La Testa d'Adriane": a singing head propped up on a table. In the recording of "La Testa" one can hear some spectators screaming with laughter when the barker reveals the head.

double assault, Schafer's strategy may well be deemed chauvinistic, if not misogynistic.

The double-structure of these farcical elements helps to create another aspect of the allegorical structure that most of The Greatest Show adheres to. In these instances the allegorical doubleness of intention, as Fletcher calls it, turns into farce because one of the two structures questions and diminishes the other one.

In an editing unit entitled "Little Araby," Schafer links the violence against women to an erotic/pornographic spectacle. Ariadne's feet reappear in "Little Araby" in which a male barker presents a belly-dancer:

> ALL PRAISE TO ALLAH, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE, FOR HE HAS BROUGHT THE STOLEN FEET OF A PRINCESS . . . WHOSE VERY LIMBS WERE BORROWED FOR THIS EVENING'S DEMONSTRATION. (C:33)

Little Araby will be performing a belly dance on her borrowed feet.[19] The title of the unit, the belly dancing, and the setting of the fair suggest that Schafer has based "Little Araby" on the erotic/pornographic spectacle that found its way as "cooch" or "hootchy-kootchy" into North American burlesque shows at the end of the 19th century. This background is important in order to understand why I treat "Little Araby" as a further instance of violence against women.

[19] Alternatively, she may perform Schafer's Tantrika, a composition for singer and four percussionists (see C:33). This work is published separately and has not been available to me.

Let me briefly outline the history of the cooch: The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 was intended to introduce the American public to the science of anthropology. To accomplish that feat, the exposition consisted of two related exhibitions: one called "White City," and the other organized about the "Midway Plaisance." In White City, one could see exhibitions related to "mainstream"-American culture, while in Midway Plaisance, one could compare that culture with others from around the world. All exhibits were ordered according to an evolutionary hierarchy of racial progress so that the Black African and native Indian exhibits were farthest removed from White City. One of the exhibits in Midway Plaisance was called the "Streets of Cairo" and featured belly dancing as one of its attractions. The Chicago Fair in this way banished the naked female body from White City by carefully concealing it from the probing eye of the visitors while simultaneously displaying it in the "popular" side of the fair by means of the belly dancer (Allen 227-28). This construction of femininity tapped into a discourse on woman that situated her midway between the standards of "civilization" and "barbarism" exhibited respectively by the males in White City and those furthest away from White City.[20] In this way, woman was represented as a threat to the late nineteenth-century male in

[20] Charles Darwin, for instance, maintained that some of the physical features of women were "characteristic of the lower races, and therefore, of a past and lower state of civilization" (qtd. in Allen 228).

his quest for spiritual perfection. Still, the belly-dancer constituted no real threat because she appeared as the exotic, ethnological Other:

> The belly dancer was another kind of woman, whose expressive sexuality tantalized but whose power was contained and distanced by her exotic otherness. (228)

And it is as an exotic Other that the belly dancer gained access to the burlesque shortly after the Chicago Fair. Standard names for belly dancers in the burlesque were Fatima, Omeena, or Little Egypt (232).

In the aftermath of the Chicago Fair, the "Cooch" developed quickly into the precursor of strip-tease, which emerged in the mid-1920s. Allen links this development to the "cooch's" presence at fairs:

> Such was the competition among the tents along the Midway Plaisance that barkers hectored passersby in an attempt to entice them inside to see the "real stuff," each promising a more revealing show. (230)

Little Araby's barker similarly blusters at his potential customers:

> WATCH NOW AS SHE RISES TO THE TIPTOES OF HER BORROWED FEET TO GIVE YOU A FORETASTE OF WHAT IS TO COME. SLOWLY HER BODY SWAYS . . . SLOWLY . . . SLOWLY . . . THEN BY IMPERCEPTIBLE DEGREES WITH INCREASING VOLUPTUOUSNESS SHE MOVES . . . NOW WITH BOLD ABANDON [. . .] ENOUGH! WE DARE NOT GO FURTHER IN A PUBLIC PLACE. LITTLE ARABY, THE PRIDE OF THE EAST, PRECEDES YOU NOW TO PREPARE HERSELF FOR THE DANCE NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN THE WEST DUE TO PURITANICAL HYPOCRISY. (C:33)

Sigismundo, the male barker, does all the talking in this act. He praises the eroticism of Little Araby's body and dance. His attitude towards Little Araby helps to clarify the

qualitative position the dancer holds in this spectacle, namely that of the appropriated and dominated Other of the masculine gaze, for Sigismundo clearly stresses that she is dancing for the spectator and not, for instance, in order to present a work of art or to indulge herself. In this way, he refers to the spectacle as a demonstration, not a presentation, thus indicating that Little Araby's body is to be shown to the spectators. As a result, any kind of self-awareness, which would indeed indicate either a taking control or else an active part for Little Araby, escapes her altogether. Furthermore, he addresses the spectators no less than six times in order to point out that the spectacle takes place only to please him.

In relation to her male spectators, Little Araby's position is less an erotic than a pornographic one.[21] The gaze is

[21] The distinction between male heterosexual pornography and eroticism, I think, can be made on account of the position the woman takes with regard to the masculine gaze. If the masculine gaze appropriates her as an object only and does not permit her to be a subject in her own right, we are dealing with pornography. If she presents herself in a way that establishes her as a subject, we are dealing with eroticism. In his essay "Between Clothing and Nudity," Mario Perniola provides an example of how a striptease dancer can assume the position of a subject with regard to her observer: "In our century, the erotics of dressing and the erotics of undressing appear in porno theatres and striptease acts, but only very rarely do they achieve an effective erotic transit. This happens in striptease when, through an intense look at her audience, the stripper succeeds in inverting a relationship that is usually one-way. From the moment the spectator feels himself watched, it is as if the stripper's nudity functions like a mirror: he has to confront himself and his own potential nudity. Peep shows allow the spectator to watch without being seen, and therefore reinstate the Greek metaphysical perspective, the rights of pure theory, cutting off all possibility of transit" (259, 261).

either that of the barker who describes her to the passersby, or it is that of the spectators who finally enter the tent because they feel enticed by both the barker's words and the display of Little Araby and the implicit promise of even more to come in the secrecy of the tent. One should take note that the masculine gaze necessarily fragments anOther because it takes into account only that fraction of Little Araby which can be easily dominated and appropriated, namely her outer appearance.[22]

Little Araby's "exhibition is structured around the tension between her similarity to 'ordinary' women the male audience member sees and knows outside the tent and her fascinating otherness produced by her expressive and displayed sexuality" (Allen 235). As a consequence, Ariadne's feet assume their role in an act that turns them into extensions of Little Araby's body and the erotic/pornographic spectacle she demonstrates. The belly dancer in "Little Araby" as in the burlesque shows of days gone is silent. Any subversiveness that once may have been part of the burlesque around the 1870s was lost when female performers were silenced by a patriarchal takeover of the genre (Allen, conclusion passim). The only

[22] Allen demonstrates the peculiar lengths to which the masculine gaze can go in an example that also shows how that gaze tends to fragment its object for further study: "At one show . . . several regular marks [an insider term for the audience members of strip-tease shows] brought flashlights with them. These they used in businesslike fashion in order to examine, <u>clinically and under laboratory conditions</u>, what they 'couldn't see at home'" (236, emphasis added).

traces of subversion in "Little Araby" are the discursive traces of the violence done to Ariadne. Yet because Little Araby remains silent throughout the spectacle, these discursive traces remain confined to the barker's discourse and cannot enter the realm of the erotic/pornographic spectacle of the tent.

In the confusion after the opening act, Four Vaudevillians perform a "little pantomime" around the box in which Ariadne was guillotined (A:7). Then they carry that box about the fairground chanting "KEEP THE BODIES WHOLE" (A:7). In "Lazzi," the assemblage of the box and the Four Vaudevillians resembles an emblem. The inscription of the emblem could be seen in the letter "A" painted on the coffin (B:2). This letter reiterates, by virtue of being a metonymy, what the editing unit presents visually and what the Vaudevillians' chant proffers as an interpretive quasi-subscription to the emblem, namely that Ariadne has not been whole for a long time and that she would be better off as a whole person.

The box or coffin acquires qualities of a banner because in the finale all women on stage band together and demand from the magicians: "MAKE THE BODY WHOLE!" In a similar response to an emblem pertaining to Wolfman, all men form a group demanding "BRING BACK THE HERO" (A:41).

In his study of the allegorical mode, Angus Fletcher describes the banner as an example of an isolated emblem that in his view epitomizes allegorical imagery:

> When the allegorical author wishes to strike an immediate emblematic effect, he is likely to use something like 'a banner with a strange device' [because] the effect is often militant. Banners suggest . . . one's allegiance to a system of political or religious faith. (94)

In this way, a banner tends to reveal a hidden power. In his theoretical account of allegory, Fletcher suggests that this power divides the world into separate elements for further study and control.[23] In The Greatest Show, however, Schafer's alchemical trope embodies this power; it encodes the spectacle allegorically and provides it with an exegetical level of contemplation.

In her discussion of allegory, Gayatri Spivak makes an important observation with regard to theories of the unconscious and their function in literature:

> One has often remarked that, today, the human psychoanalytical model and Jung's theory of archetypes are attempts to instill a real, independent system of significations on which literature has based itself regarding the matter of traditional allegories, in such a way that the theories are matters of belief.[24]

Spivak focuses our attention on an allegorical trait that Fletcher only hints at ("one's allegiance to a system of

[23] Fletcher speaks of the "daemonic power" (Fletcher passim).

[24] "On a souvent noté que le modèle psychanalytique de la personne humaine, et la théorie jungienne des archétypes, sont, à notre époque, des efforts pour instaurer un véritable système autonome de significations sur lequel la littérature a pris appui, à la matière des allégories traditionelles, du fait même que ces théories sont matière à croyance" ("Allégorie et histoire" 440).

political or religious faith") and that Schafer exploits in his Patria cycle. As a matter of course, Schafer reuses and replaces belief systems that have traditionally formed independent signifying systems in allegories. In this way, he reuses and refashions the alchemical trope in such a way that it replaces the Christian system by offering alternatives to such Christian metaphors as redemption and sacrifice. Schafer leaves the teleology of these metaphors intact; that is, redemption as such is not questioned, since Patria still envisions the successful chemical wedding in the alchemical unit and the end of Wolf's quest in the epilogue. Watson, on the other hand, attacks the teleology of some Christian metaphors (redemption and last judgments) but one metaphor in particular he leaves intact, that of original sin.

Schafer also integrates Wolfman into an emblem, namely in "Timor Mortis Me Conturbat," in which "the visitor encounters the outline of a sprawling man on the ground on which has been painted in white the numeral 1" (E:16). Schafer also assigns the numeral "1" to Wolfman in The Characteristics Man.[25] In its emblematic structure, this editing unit resembles "Lazzi." The similarities are the metonymical inscription (here "1" painted within the outline, there "A" on the coffin) as well as the interpretive quasi-subscription (here the sign "NO FURTHER EARTHLING" situated above the "bloody handprints [that] climb

[25] See Patria 1, editing units 1 & 3, pp. 2 & 4.

up a wall about two metres then stop" [E:16]), which seems to say that all of Wolfman's striving beyond a certain point is in vain unless a higher power supports him. Yet a phoenix-like "beautiful bird" also supports Wolfman's striving. A number of wires connects the silhouette to the bird thus suggesting that Wolfman can and will be resurrected from his ashes.

In "Representing Writing: The Emblem as (Hiero)glyph," Richard Cavell describes the emblem as resisting interpretive closure. With reference to Derrida's notion of dissemination, Cavell states:

> The emblem can be seen . . . as a hybrid structure consisting in a chain of meanings which can extend indefinitely, one sign leading on to the next one. (168)

In "Lazzi" and "Timor Mortis Me Conturbat," the emblematic structure also partakes in that disseminating process. On the one hand, some elements lead to a "chain of meanings" (such as the letter "A" in "Lazzi" and the numeral "1" in "Timor"), while on the other hand other elements merely lead to a chain of ambiguities or traces of meanings that themselves remain enigmatic. An example would be the doubled spectacles in the coffin of "Lazzi." They refer to Patria 2 in which Ariadne uses spectacles to disguise herself, to hide behind, and to overcome the fear of embarrassment, yet their doubleness remains enigmatic.

Some of these disseminations lead to the hierarchically superior hidden meanings that only the true cognoscenti of Schaferiana discern; every detail seems to comment on other

elements of Patria. However, because of the skits that the Four Vaudevillians perform around the coffin, the editing unit may still entertain those spectators who do not grasp the hidden meanings. They would probably note the outlandishness of the props, but not see more in them than a satiric backdrop to the skits. All in all, the pundits will engage in exegesis, while others merely perceive the literal level.

That we can perceive these editing units on two levels merely confirms their allegorical mode. Fletcher says:

> The whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically; it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself. (7)

Yet Fletcher also describes the "hierarchical matrix . . . [to which] the allegorical author must inevitably turn" (239)--a matrix that suggests that the hidden level is superior to the literal one. The Greatest Show, however, mocks this hierarchy and provides general access to the privileged meanings by including a number of editing units that give exegetical explanations such as the lecture on The Greatest Show by the "noted composer and author R.M. Schafer."[26] Furthermore, the

[26] See editing unit I3. In the Peterborough Festival of the Arts production of The Greatest Show in 1987, Schafer played himself. The manner in which Schafer is introduced as well as his outward look seems to be a mild ironical spoof on some of the author's eccentricities: "Madame Shelora Guidobaldo del Monte provides an effusive introduction to the noted composer and author R.M. Schafer. For once his pants are pressed. He wears a Tibetan jacket and looks like the aging doyen of some East-West cult of marginal credibility. He reads the 'Parabasis' [from the "Introduction"] calmly and without looking at the audience" (I:27).

University Theatre in which the lecture takes place--unlike the other tent theatres--does not require an entrance pass--it is open to everyone who chooses to enter.

Ariadne's arms in "Lazzi" blend in with the other elements to form the emblematic structure of the editing unit. One should note, however, that the "long box" (A:5) has become a "coffin" (B:7); the presence of Ariadne's arms can be seen as a sign--however disseminated it may be in its context--of Ariadne's violent death. Ariadne's death then emerges as a grave subtext to this editing unit. One of the underlying texts that points to a Jungian interpretive system is the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead that also provides the mythical plot for Patria 6: Ra. In The Greatest Show, however, this text is not at the centre although it still contributes here and there to a feasible and systematic allegoresis of the show. The Book of the Dead also serves as one of the subtexts in "Lazzi." This relation becomes clear when we look at Marie-Louise von Franz's comment on the Book of the Dead:

> One of the great motifs of the Book of the Dead in Egypt is that the dead are dismembered, as was Osiris, and must therefore be reassembled before they can resurrect [sic]; they must be put together again so as to be able to rise from the underworld. (72)

Likewise, Ariadne in The Greatest Show is dismembered and according to the alchemical trope in its Jungian interpretation must be reassembled before returning to the living. All the instances of Ariadne's severed body parts in various editing units would represent her voyage through the underworld.

At the end of the opening act, "the accordionist, Giuseppe Macerollo, sneaks onto the Odditorium stage and furtively carries off the head of Ariadne (the girl)" (A:6). What he does with the head becomes clear in one of the editing units of the category entitled "Set Pieces." Schafer describes them as follows:

> This section includes pieces requiring a set environment: booth, tent, soapbox, or minitheatre. Some of the pieces are performed continuously and some are performed intermittently. (C:1)

Schafer describes the "set environment" of "La Testa D'Adriane" meticulously in the full score which is published separately (as are most of the editing units' scores). The centre of this act is the bodiless head propped up on a desk in a booth. This desk is to be carefully constructed so that it accomplishes the illusion of a severed head:

> The work depends on the effective execution of a magician's trick. In reality the singer is seated on a stool beneath the table, but this is hidden by two very clean plate glass mirrors . . . which are fastened between the front and two side legs of the table. . . . The mirrors will reflect the inner walls and floor of the kiosk . . . but the reflections will be taken by the audience to be the back wall. ("La Testa" 66)

Walter Benjamin describes what could be seen as a model for "La Testa." He recounts the development of the feast of the dead, the Todtenmahlzeit, in which a duke takes revenge on his opponents by beheading them and subsequently arranging the heads on a table as though they were a feast. At first, this spectacle is only recounted in the baroque plays Benjamin is considering, but gradually it finds its way onto the stage too,

namely by using an "Italian trick"; that is, one cuts holes into the surface of the table and conceals the actor's bodies behind the protruding table-cloth. Benjamin says that the allegorist takes the "soul" from the corpses of the duke's victims by not allowing them to signify for themselves and making them attest allegorically to the cruelty of the duke. According to Benjamin, these feasts and other displays of corpses in baroque drama tie in with a more general allegorical feature of objects that have to give up their own meaning in order to function in an allegorical way. Benjamin thinks this step is one of devaluation (195). A similar devaluation is at work in every allegoresis because it disregards and hence devalues the literal meaning of an object in order to arrive at an allegorical reading. In "La Testa," we find a devaluation of Ariadne's head. We have to take a closer look at the editing unit in order to read Ariadne's head allegorically.

Still outside the tent, the accordionist, who is also the barker of his act, tries to lure passers-by into stopping at his booth to follow his presentation. His name, Giuseppe Macerollo,[27] denotes that he is Italian (or at least of Italian descent)--a fact that might also be responsible for the

[27] The name of the accordionist is inspired by the Toronto accordionist to whom Schafer dedicated "La Testa," Joseph Macerolo. Macerolo performed this role in the Peterborough Festival of the Arts production in 1987.

metathesis[28] from Ariadne to Adriane. Once inside the tent, the head on the table does not move, but the barker assures the onlookers that "SHE IS NOT DEAD. / SHE SLEEPS ONLY" (C:12). Furthermore, he says, "NOTHING STIRS HER. / BUT SHE CAN BE AWAKENED. / MUSIC . . . MUSIC TOUCHES HER DISTANT SOUL / AND DRAWS IT BACK TO THE LIVING WORLD" (C:12). So he plays and she awakens.

What follows is a composition for voice and accordion that uses a whole range of vocal sounds which found their way into vocal compositions only in the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century.[29] In conjunction with the accordion, an instrument usually given to neither new nor "serious" music, the composition as a whole can be seen to store the repressed others of traditional, "serious" music.[30] The sort of popular and "hammy"[31] music of the introduction, which seems only to amplify the verbal enticements of the barker ("LADIES & GENTLEMEN! PREEEEESENTING: LA TESTA D'ADRIANE!" ["La Testa" 68]), does not readily submit to music-theoretical analysis. That is

[28] In an interview on The Greatest Show, Schafer uses the mathematical term "permutation" to describe what is properly a linguistic metathesis ("Schafer on The Greatest Show" 37).

[29] See Anhalt ch. 5.

[30] By traditional and "serious" music, I mean German-Austrian tonal music from the 18th to the early 20th century. This period comprises European classical and romatic styles.

[31] This term is Schafer's. He used it in an interview on "La Testa" to talk about the character of the introduction, which he sees as a parody on the music of two popular Canadian composers.

to say, an analysis must also take into account the circumstances of the setting as well as the function of the piece. Thus, all the distractions of the fairground, be they visual or acoustic, have an impact on this music because it must defend its own importance against these ubiquitous distractions.[32] "La Testa" mounts a defense against the soundscape of the fairground by choosing the farcical and the popular as a medium of representation.

What Adriane's head is uttering gives expression to the other of communicative speech, namely sounds that do not yet combine the phoneme and the concept in a communicable meaning. In following Jakobsen, Anhalt compares the sounds uttered in "La Testa" to the "sounds produced by young children in the various stages of language acquisition" (197). The soprano ut-

[32] All of these distractions once were an integral part of most musical performances. For instance, it is only since Richard Wagner's initiative that audiences listen attentively to all the music in an opera and not only to the "highlights" while talking through the rest. In this context, Schafer's admission that his composition for string quartet and soprano "Beauty and the Beast" does not integrate well into the setting of the fair reveals the difficulties of composing for an "unknown" soundscape: "It may be . . . that a work like Beauty and the Beast (1980) is too refined for presentation in a tent where the cascade of noises from without too frequently covers its delicate dynamic tremblings" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 130). Schafer composed Beauty and the Beast at an early stage of The Greatest Show, when he was not yet familiar with the soundscape of a fair. He explains that in that soundscape "the dynamic of the music is a function of the distance between performer and listener, rather than expression of emotion or sentiment. Music is loud when present, and soft when it goes away" (129). Schafer had first to unlearn the western thinking about dynamics in order to learn composing for the soundscape of a fairground.

ters phonemes that do not communicate an encoded message as human speech usually does. What the audience hears instead are fragments of such messages, but only those fragments that are rarely capable of carrying an encoded message on their own. There are exceptions, such as "Brrrrrrrrrrrrrr" ("La Testa" 71) or some giggles (72). Yet these exceptions, while communicating a certain content, remain at the same time non-communicative in that they do not add up to an overall meaning; thus they raise more questions than they answer.

Schafer thus fragments the message--if indeed there is one--of Adriane's utterances. As a result, we end up with a string of loosely connected phonemes. Schafer occasionally connects the sounds that apparently only communicate themselves to facial expressions and gestures of the severed head. At times, these combinations add up to a content, as in Adriane's first utterance: she sings the phonemes "N" and "O" in an accelerating and then slowing staccato with her eyes closing toward the climax and then opening again. One is tempted to read the phonemes here as "no" or "non" and the gestures as supporting such a reading in expressing a certain fear, perhaps of a traumatic event of the past, such as her beheading. Yet the remaining composition does not provide any further clue as to the nature of that traumatic event. Schafer leaves the spectators guessing, and the signified remains ultimately indeterminable.

At this point, we can address some of Schafer's naming strategies. To begin with, the names for his protagonists,

Wolfman and Ariadne, have many connotations in folklore and mythology, respectively. The wolf, of course, is one of the most fabled creatures in Northern folklore, while Ariadne is one of the prominent human characters in Greek mythology. Together, these connotations add an entire set of expectations and preconceptions to the ones the spectators bring to performances of Patria and The Greatest Show and in this way "prepare" the spectators to read allegorically and to look beyond the literal significance of the protagonists. Furthermore, Schafer includes a number of variations of the name Ariadne in various acts of The Greatest Show. Examples are Adriane, Arania (B8) and Aryanee (C18). These variations constitute a dismemberment of Ariadne's name that corresponds to the dismemberment of her body. Ariadne again signifies through presenting parts of herself rather than being re-presented in some way or other.

The subversive nature of farce can be seen in another editing unit, "Mummery." Bold Slasher pursues Lucy van Triste. Lucy claims that he intends to murder her, while Bold Slasher wants to sacrifice her to the rain god so that it will not rain on The Greatest Show. During the pursuit, however, Lucy addresses the audience: "(Aside to the customers.) I GO THROUGH THIS EVERY NIGHT YOU KNOW, JUST SO YOU WON'T GET PEED ON" (B:34). When it comes to the murder/sacrifice something unexpected happens:

> BOLD SLASHER. NOW, HEAD ON THE BLOCK.
> Lucy kneels and extends her neck on a large block of wood. Bold Slasher steps aside to sharpen his knife. When he turns back, he sees that Lucy is

> now standing tiptoe on the block under a large parasol.
> BOLD SLASHER. WHERE ARE YOU?
> LUCY VAN TRISTE. I'M IN HEAVEN.
> BOLD SLASHER. BUT I HAVEN'T KILLED YOU YET.
> LUCY VAN TRISTE. I DECIDED TO SKIP THE DETAILS.
> BOLD SLASHER. YOU CAN'T GO TO HEAVEN BEFORE YOU DIE.
> LUCY VAN TRISTE. AN ABSURDLY HUMAN NOTION THAT HEAVEN CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED AFTER DEATH. I ASSURE YOU I'M HERE AND IT'S QUITE DIVINE. (B:35)

By avoiding in this way the concrete violence, Lucy on the one hand draws attention to the theatrical nature of the act, while on the other, she ironically questions whether the concrete violence against women is necessary in order to achieve signification. The "details" here would make Lucy van Triste's fate more comparable to Ariadne's because Bold Slasher intends to kill her by cutting off her head. By not entering the signifying process through fragmentation, Lucy van Triste points to an alternative, namely, that anOther can also signify by means of solidarity between performers and spectators. Thus at the end, van Triste again addresses the audience:

> AND SINCE IT IS ALL IN THE SPIRIT OF FUN, LET'S PUT BOLD SLASHER HERE ON THE RUN. JOIN MY HAND AND CHASE HIM AWAY, SO WE CAN PLAY. (B:36)

The "SPIRIT OF FUN," then, seems to be the key to achieving this alternative. It equals a carnivalesque upheaval in which the actor breaks the theatrical convention of playing a role in such a way that she is avoiding the character's prescribed fate, while also including the audience in the theatrical world.

While parading Ariadne's coffin through the fairground, the Four Vaudevillians perform intermittently a tragic farce

entitled "Looking." The underlying notion of the absurd in "Looking" leads me to compare it to the theatre of the absurd as Esslin described it. Eugène Ionesco, who coined the term "farce tragique" in the subtitle to his play Les Chaises (1952), and Samuel Beckett brought farce and tragedy together. Their familiar formula was to undercut the farcical by making the characters of their plays tragically self-aware of their hopeless existential situation. A formal means for achieving this is the interruption of action and dialogue by frequent silences that prevent continuous laughter and give rise to an ironic subtext. This subtext directs the play towards an anti-climax that frustrates the audience's relief at the expected farcical apex and leads to a self-conscious laughter. We find similar strategies in "Looking." Conveying a sense of directionlessness, the action and dialogue appear hesitant and repetitive throughout. Frequent pauses also interrupt the action and dialogue. I quote at length from the beginning of "Looking" to convey the qualities of the dialogue:

> FIRST. AH, HERE YOU ARE.
> SECOND. YES, HERE I AM.
> FIRST. SOMEHOW, I KNEW YOU'D BE HERE.
> SECOND. YES, HERE I AM.
> FIRST. YOU'RE NOT IN A RUSH?
> SECOND. NO, NO RUSH.
> FIRST. YOU DON'T LOOK RUSHED.
> SECOND. NO, NO RUSH. HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE?
> FIRST. NOT MUCH TIME.
> SECOND. THEN WE BETTER GET STARTED.
> FIRST. RIGHT.
> Pause
> FIRST. STARTED AT WHAT?
> SECOND. Looking at First knowingly
> YOU KNOW.
> FIRST. OH! THEN WE'D BETTER GET STARTED.

SECOND. RIGHT!
FIRST. RIGHT!
Pause
SECOND. THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED, WASN'T IT?
FIRST. OF COURSE, DON'T YOU?
SECOND. OF COURSE.
FIRST. RIGHT, THEN LET'S GET STARTED. I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME.
SECOND. IT SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG.
FIRST. NO IT SHOULDN'T.
SECOND. ONCE WE GET STARTED.
FIRST. ONCE WE GET STARTED.
SECOND. READY THEN?
FIRST. READY.
Pause (B:13-14)

Beckett's Waiting For Godot (1954) bearing the generic subtitle "a tragicomedy" is perhaps the best known tragic farce of the 20th century. In "Looking," one finds a short spiel that ironically diminishes the existential seriousness of the act of waiting implied in Beckett's play. Schafer achieves this diminishment by capitalizing on the comic confusion deriving from the different meanings of the different prepositional expressions ("wait for" and "wait on"). Furthermore, he emphasizes not the act of waiting itself but the place where one is waiting:

The Fourth Vaudevillian enters.
FOURTH. HULLO.
SECOND. HULLO.
FIRST. HULLO.
THIRD. WE WERE WAITING FOR YOU.
SECOND. I HATE WAITING.
FIRST. ESPECIALLY ON OTHERS.
THIRD. I DON'T MIND WAITING ON MYSELF.
FOURTH. I DON'T MIND WAITING ON ANYBODY.
FIRST. BUT YOU WEREN'T WAITING.
FOURTH. I WAS WAITING OVER THERE.
FIRST. THAT'S THE WRONG PLACE TO WAIT.
FOURTH. THAT'S NOT A WAITING PLACE?
FIRST. THIS IS THE WAITING PLACE.
THIRD. THAT'S WHY WE WERE WAITING HERE.
SECOND. IF YOU HAVE TO WAIT, IT MIGHT AS WELL BE IN

THE RIGHT PLACE.
THIRD. THERE ARE RIGHT PLACES AND WRONG PLACES.
FIRST. THE WORLD IS FULL OF THEM.
FOURTH. I'LL TRY TO BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
The Fourth Vaudevillian looks around for a place and then stands there. (B:17)

While thus pointlessly, it seems, chatting and waiting, the Four Vaudevillians are looking at the ones who are looking at them and present themselves as a mirror image of the spectators. At the meeting of the Vaudevillians' and the spectators' gazes, the sketch proffers another level of perception and becomes allegorical and didactic because the absurdity of the tragic farce mirrors the absurdity of the spectators' efforts to make sense of the experience of the village fair. The sketch thus intensifies the self-consciousness of the spectators and of their efforts to arrange their experiences into a coherent mental image.[33] The glitter and promised excitement of the fairground incite the spectators as well as the Vaudevillians to look for something, although no one is quite sure as to what this "something" is:

THIRD. WHAT ARE WE DOING?
FIRST/SECOND. LOOKING.
THIRD. LOOKING AT WHAT?
SECOND. JUST LOOKING.

[33] The spectators' efforts are based upon a mirror image and are reminiscent of Jacques Lacan's notion that seeing a coherent mirror image of ourselves prompts us to enter into the signifying triangle of representation/domination. I suggest that what is happening to the spectators in "Looking" can be seen as analogous to Lacan's notion. By looking at a coherent representation of themselves, the spectators are able to form a coherent mental image of themselves. Then they can take that image as a starting point from which to branch out in order to understand (or dominate) other "chaotic" events of the show.

> The First and Second Vaudevillians look out. The Third begins to look too, then despairs.
> THIRD. I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.
> The First and Second Vaudevillian continue to look.
> THIRD. I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.
> FIRST. Impatiently
> YOU WON'T SEE ANYTHING IF YOU CHATTER ALL THE TIME.
> THIRD. BUT YOU HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
> SECOND. YOU OUGHT TO KNOW. (B:14-15)

All actions in "Looking" are initially questioned and remain ultimately unmotivated and suspended in inaction. At the fair, everyone realizes sooner or later that there is nothing to be found. As Schafer says:

> Here was a very special ritual--completely without a sense of striving, and promising no rewards. You wandered about amused and amazed, never sure whether you were there to be entertained or entertaining. . . . The fair conformed perfectly to the rules of capitalism and democracy: it tossed everyone into the limelight for two minutes and charged for the thrill. (Introduction:2)

The "thrill" is the satisfying climax of the village fair. This thrill is always in the air, as it were, but it never materializes. As in the fair, the status of the "climax" in "Looking" is utterly ambiguous. Striving to reach that climax, the Four Vaudevillians (as well as the spectators of the fair) may attain at first some inside knowledge through critical reflection and insight, or they may per chance run into someone who reluctantly reveals to them such knowledge, as is the case with the Vaudevillians:

> FOURTH. DOES THE PERSON WE'RE LOOKING FOR HAVE A NAME?
> SECOND. OF COURSE. EVERYBODY HAS A NAME.
> THIRD. THEN WHAT'S THE NAME?

> The Second Vaudevillian turns away, pauses, then blurts out quickly.
> SECOND. WOLFMAN. (B:19)

What the Vaudevillians learn, the audience learns because the former are the mirror image of the latter. But Schafer reserves the climax for the privileged few who happen to be lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time:

> They form themselves into a square, back to back and look out again. . . . The square rotates. . . . They continue looking. The Fourth Vaudevillian evidently sees someone. She begins to smile, waves, blows a kiss. Then the square rotates again and she loses sight. (B:20-21, stage direction)

But even this climax disintegrates because one does not know what happened and if it happened at all. The ensuing conversation throws the spectators back to square one, as it were, because, when rigorously questioned, the Fourth Vaudevillian denies having seen anything. The allegory of this editing unit thus tells the spectators that they are in the same position as the absurd Vaudevillians and that they must begin looking for the vanished Wolfman. Finally, the assemblage of the Vaudevillians dissolves the same way as it came about; they leave one by one, just like the audience will disperse once the fair is over.

"Looking" also demonstrates how the audience reaches an outsider's perspective on their own position, namely by presenting a mirror image to the audience. Through allegory and didacticism, the audience gradually comes to understand their own liminality.

In other acts related to the absent Wolfman, Schafer provides parts of Wolfman's story as it has hitherto emerged in the Patria cycle. For instance, in "The Characteristics Man," a character named Rodney Livermash Bashford observes "ANOTHER WORLD--THE ONE THAT MOVES JUST AN INSTANT OUT OF PHASE WITH THIS ONE" (D:12) where he observes a production of The Characteristics Man and provides a scene-by-scene plot summary to everyone who happens to be near him. Under another pretext, that of the "Missing Persons Bureau," an official who amiably chats with those entering his booth gives (but occasionally also asks for) a description of Wolfman (D:16-18). Significantly, it is Wolfman's possessions or representations of him that trigger these descriptions and "stories," while Ariadne must proffer her body parts to relate something.

Not only does the opening act of The Greatest Show set the stage for the spectacle to follow, but it also initializes an allegorical discourse on gender relations. As this discourse progresses through The Greatest Show, we see how time and again Schafer assaults Ariadne and forces her--and with her the feminine--into signifying through a fragmented presence that nonetheless confirms her silence, while he permits Wolfman--and with him the masculine--to signify through absence that is still capable of speaking (of) his fate. With regard to Ariadne's fragmented body, one should take into account the allegorical tradition that tried to dispose of the suspicious sensuality of the body by integrating it as corpse into the emblem.

In his treatise on baroque allegory, Walter Benjamin points to this emblematical trait:

> And because the fear of demons made the suspicious corporeality appear especially confining, one approached as early as in the medieval ages its emblematical normalization. . . . Only when in death the spirit becomes spiritually free, does the body achieve its highest right. Because it is self-evident: the allegorization of the physique can only succeed energetically with the corpse.[34]

Ariadne's body too attains its right only in death. As Benjamin reminds us, from the perspective of death, producing the corpse is life itself, for dead matter leaves the body piece by piece in the natural processes of decay, defecation and cleansing (194). However, Ariadne's corpse (and what remains of it scattered through The Greatest Show) is not the result of natural processes but of acts of violence. Both that violence--which recurs in various guises and is always a violence against women--and the integration of some of Ariadne's corporeal fragments in emblematic structures demonstrate certain aspects of the signifying process to which Ariadne must adhere in order to signify at all. For once she is able to signify as woman, but she has to pay a high price to do so: she must suffer mutila-

[34] "Und weil durch die Dämonenangst die verdächtige Leiblichkeit ganz besonders beklemmend erscheinen muß, so ist man schon im Mittelalter radikal an ihre emblematische Bewältigung gegangen. . . . Wenn dann im Tode der Geist auf Geisterweise frei wird, so kommt auch nun der Körper erst zu seinem höchsten Recht. Denn von selbst versteht sich: die Allegorisierung der Physis kann nur an der Leiche sich energisch durchsetzen" (193, 197).

tion at the hands of male characters. Her remains speak of the violence she had to undergo to signify in the first place.

At this point, let me broaden my discussion of the issues of gender and power in order to prepare for an evaluation of Schafer's allegorical method as it emerges in The Greatest Show.

The concrete violence directed against Ariadne does not permit an allegorical doubleness because the literal here is essentially mimetic: countless women in contemporary society obtain restraining orders from the law courts to hold abusive (ex-)boyfriends and (ex-)husbands in check. Yet to society, these women become only significant when they make headlines as victims: murdered or mutilated or raped. Once they signify in that manner, the only issue seems to be the violence, not the circumstances that led to it in the first place. The discourse about such cases in this way often re-subordinates the victims of violence to the masculine gaze, which objectifies abused women into yet another spectacle to be scrutinized for perverse pleasure. Analogous to that pleasure--derived as much from the spectacle as from the power it has over women--is the re-subordination of the acts dealing with Ariadne's body parts under male barkers who present them to the audience. Thus Schafer again restricts her power of signification as woman by reintegrating it into a structure of discourse in which man speaks for woman. Any other message she might have had is lost due to this authorized restriction that compels her to tell only one thing, namely that she was violated but not by whom or why.

Wolfman's absence, on the other hand, indicates a signifying process that is based on an entirely different economy. Wolfman is able to direct allegorically the recipient's efforts to construct a narrative that represents his previous existence as it emerged in Patria. Moreover, Schafer integrates Wolfman in a different manner into emblematic structures. These differences signal a pattern of gender difference in which Schafer forms the key concepts according to rigid dichotomies, such as absence - presence, wholeness - fragmentation, life - death, power - vulnerability, outside - inside, etc.

The most important of these dichotomies (because it has an influence on most of the others) is the power - vulnerability dichotomy. The fact that Schafer allocates power to Wolfman and vulnerability to Ariadne implicates Schafer directly in the issues of gender and power. It is the author who allocates power and vulnerability to Wolfman and Ariadne respectively, and it is the author who determines how gender is construed in his work. "Little Araby" is a striking example of how Schafer subordinates the female dancer to the male barker in the name of a historical tradition that has exploited female dancers as Others on two levels: on the one hand as women and on the other because they had to impersonate another "exotic" culture.

Schafer offers no critique of such a one-dimensional gender construction; quite on the contrary, he seems to endorse it whole-heartedly. The alchemical allegory underlying Patria 1 to 4 in my view confirms this endorsement because it embraces

some of the same dichotomies and construes gender in a similarly traditional way with the male going on a quest for the female, or, if one approaches Schafer's drama on a psychological footing, the male going on a quest for his female "counterpart soul." The issues of gender and power are at the heart of the cycle so that Schafer's male chauvinism is discernible throughout Patria. Schafer's reconstructive postmodernism, at least with regard to gender and power, seems to bracket the post in the post-modern and emphasizes modern ways of construing gender. As I argued in chapter 3, reconstructive postmodernism is ideally based on correspondences and not on differences which are the trademark of the modern. Schafer's stance on gender construction brings his project into disrepute at a level that is fundamental to a true "participatory aesthetics" because it prevents Ariadne (or the female) from participating on a par with Wolfman (or the male). Her status does not correspond to his, but it is construed in terms of difference, which is why Patria remains caught in modern ways of thinking.

Chapter 6

Left in a Maze

In this chapter, I want to show how both authors employ riddles and riddle-like works to represent and to present a microcosm of their large-scale theatrical allegories. The distinction between representation and presentation is crucial for understanding how the authors use non-performative works to prepare their audiences for their theatres. The deferral of meaning in allegory is also an important issue because it delineates the authors' attempts to circumvent the limitations of the postmodern condition by creating a practice that the audience can include in their lives. Watson's riddles and Schafer's riddle-like works approach performative status in which the work does not merely represent some fictional experience to the recipient but presents an experience where the recipient actively participates in or performs the work.

Labyrinths of Allegories: Schafer's Labyrintheatre

In his "graphic novels,"* Dicamus et Labyrinthos: A Philologist's Notebook and Ariadne,** Murray Schafer casts himself in the role of a guide who will lead his readers safely through a number of graphical and intellectual labyrinths. I want to argue that Schafer's graphic novels

* The term is Schafer's, see the blurb on Ariadne in the catalogue of his "Arcana Editions" (n.p.).

** Schafer had this text privately printed under the title Smoke in 1976. Except for the title, Ariadne and Smoke are identical. All references are to Ariadne.

Allegories of Riddling: Wilfred Watson's Riddles

Wilfred Watson's Poems: Collected / Unpublished / New begins and ends in riddles. I contend that Watson deliberately frames his collection in this way in order to emphasize a general tendency in his work, namely his ambition to take the reader from passive observation to a ritualistic, active participation. Two features of Watson's riddles help him to accomplish his ambition. First, he maximizes personification, a feature that is responsible for the allegorical thrust in his riddles. Secondly, he uses the performative nature of riddling and extends it by means of his Number Grid Notation. Allegorical thrust and performative nature of the riddles turn them into tropes for reading Watson's other work, especially some of his allegorical plays.

Poems begins with a section entitled "Three Riddles for Gillian Espinasse: saga hwaet ic hatte." The three riddles announce

provide a microcosm of his allegorical work because they introduce his readers to both structures and themes of the Patria cycle.

Schafer's term "graphic novel" is perhaps the most adequate generic description that can be found for these two works. The Latin "graphicus" means "of painting and drawing" and, indeed, Schafer drew both books meticulously in ink and published them as facsimiles. Furthermore, Schafer employs calligraphy rather than typography. The curiosity of encountering (reproduced) handwriting in Schafer's

their solution in their title. Watson in this way undermines one effect of the riddle by stressing another in that the riddlees do not engage in guessing the solution so much as in recapitulating, perhaps even admiring, Watson's skill in hiding the solution. This recapitulation is in sync with the role of the riddler as a guide through "unknown" territory. Yet one should keep in mind that this guide has also created the unknown territory including its ruses. Here is the first riddle:

> The Candle
> Night kindles me and calls to light my flower
> yet this my glory must my life devour.
> My blossom gluts* upon a stalk of flax,
> consumes my fatness; there dwindles in me
> substance not mine, another's prosperity.
> This is my one boast. My bones of wax
> a summer's sun will break; and yet a sun
> I call myself, though my high noon
> is night. A puff of wind my brilliance
> will gut, or turn it to a madman's dance.
> By me, let all mankind behold their frame;
> I measure darkness with a little flame. (Poems 5)

Watson extends the metaphor of the flower in line 3 to include blossom and stalk, or flame and wick respectively. However, he leaves this extended metaphor behind in favor of another one depicting the candle in

* "guts" in Poems seems to be a typesetting error. The first publication in Contemporary Verse has "gluts."

books creates the illusion that Schafer addresses his readers personally. I think that this effect is owing to the minute irregularities of handwriting, no matter how calligraphically perfect it is. The reproduced calligraphy can be seen to retain the aura of the singular work of art for a trifle longer than a typographical reproduction of writing which does away with the human irregularities. As a result, the relationship between narrator and readers is based on an atmosphere created by the carefully handwritten and "personal" intimations of the narr-

terms of an animal characteristic, namely "my bones" (line 6). Watson moves towards the riddle's conclusion in a number of images related to light (7-12).

The disunification of "The Candle" is a consequence of Watson's efforts to include as many details in his description as possible. It is also a characteristic of the literary riddle* and may be attributed to the scope of description that impedes unity of imagery. The inclusiveness of "all mankind" (line 11) that harkens back to the "one boast" (6) together with the appearance of humility in the last line ("a little flame") hints at the power residing in a candle. Watson thus leaves the riddlees contemplating the object from a perspective they have not seen before.

A few of the Number Grid Verse (NGV) riddles reveal their solution in the title. In this way, the riddlees can fully focus not only on the manner in which the riddler hides the solution but also on the peculiar form of NGV:

* See Anderson, Two Literary Riddles in the Exeter Book 5.

rator.*

However, it is not primarily the graphical nature of these works I want to scrutinize but their "riddlic" and allegorical nature. For instance, Scene 12 in Ariadne describes the narrator's efforts to arrive at Ariadne's name. But his direct queries, "Do you have a name?" (39) and "Je t'ai demandé ton nom" (42), only lead to riddles and cryptic messages one of which is a fragmented delineation of "Ariadne"

* This strategy of diminishing distance between narrator and reader by means of merging artwork and writing has since been used with great commercial success in the Griffin and Sabine-trilogy by Nick Bantock. Bantock also published a conundrum, The Egyptian Jukebox, that makes use of photographically reproduced collages.

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riddle/lamp
                        I  1  grow
                       in  2  bright
                 darkness  3  and
                       at  4  darken
                    noon.  5  I
                      men  6  lead
                       to  7  bed
                   gallop  8  and
9 under
                      the  1  moon.
                  dismiss  2  I
                      the  3  stars
                       be  4  to
5 dismissed
                       by  1  the
                        A  2  sun.
                 mouthful  3  of
                    kills  4  breath
                       me  5  yet
                    dance  6  I
                       in  7  the
                        I  8  wind.
9 call
                     dead  1  generations
                       of  2  men
                       to  3  instruct
                   living  4  ones;
5 saga hwaet ic hatte (Poems 368)
```

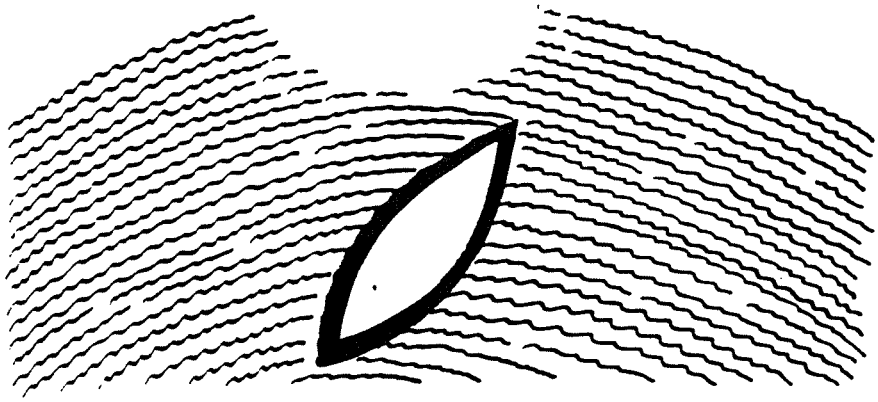
At the bottom of the page, the reader finds an icon depicting the riddle object. The riddle thus consists of title, four number grids, and an icon. The number grids come in three shapes, two of which have 9 and 5 lines and employ the boustrophedon, an ancient Egyptian form of writing in which the lines are read from left to right and then from right to left.* The third shape is

* In Ariadne, Schafer also uses this form of writing (see fig. 2).

SCENE 5 (BOUSTROPHEDON)

WALKING ON A LITTLE, I WAS TORN BY AN URGE TO TURN BACK, SO I TURNED AGAIN AND CONTINUED ON MY WAY. BUT THEN I FELT LIKE AN OX, FIRST PLOUGHING A FIELD ONE WAY THEN IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION I COULD HEAR SLOW WAVES BEATING MERCILESSLY AGAINST A SHORE.

FOLLOWING THEM WITH MY EAR, I EVENTUALLY STOPPED TO DELIBERATE. I REASONED: I WANT TO GO BACK TO HER IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AND WILL HAVE TO PROCEED BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF MY STORY. NO, I MUST PROCEED FORWARD, FOR SURELY SHE HAS CREPT UNDER THE PAGE & NOW I SAW THE HARELIP MAN APPROACHING IN A LITTLE BOAT.



19

Fig. 2: Schafer's "Boustrophedon" (Ariadne 19).

(fig. 3). Encryption plays a large role in Schafer's novels and is based on a similar structure as riddling: the author shows off his superior knowledge of an arcane field. Thus the structure of authority in Schafer's novels exemplifies the one found in reconstructive postmodern allegories. As well, encryption as a method resembles allegory in that it encodes language and thus assigns anOther to the signifiers that display in a double gesture their own demise as well as their resurrection as signifying entities. Both Ariadne and Dicamus can be read on the five line grid which is read from left to right and contains in its last slot not one word but the Old English riddle prompt "saga hwaet ic hatte" (say what I am called).*

For the purposes of my analysis, I want to rewrite "riddle/lamp" as a string of five statements and a prompt:

[1] I grow bright in darkness and darken at noon.
[2] I lead men to bed and gallop under the moon.
[3] I dismiss the stars to be dismissed by the sun.
[4] A mouthful of breath kills me yet I dance in the wind.
[5] I call dead generations of men to instruct living ones;
[prompt] saga hwaet ic hatte (368)

Once we bracket the number grid notation, we see that all statements are based on stark contrasts:

[1] grow bright <==> darken
[2] lead men to bed (sleeping) <==> gallop(ing)
[3] dismiss <==> to be dismissed
[4] kills me (dying) <==> danc(ing)
[5] dead generations <==> living ones

With these contrasts, Watson baffles the riddlees and extends the riddling process as long as possible. The riddle also shows the characteristic disunification of the liter-

* This riddle prompt occurs in 30 of the 35 NGV riddles, is sometimes translated (375,413,414), and is written once with hyphens ("saga-hwaet-ic-hatte" (363). It does not always take up an entire slot (387,395) and once it shares a slot with its translation (376).

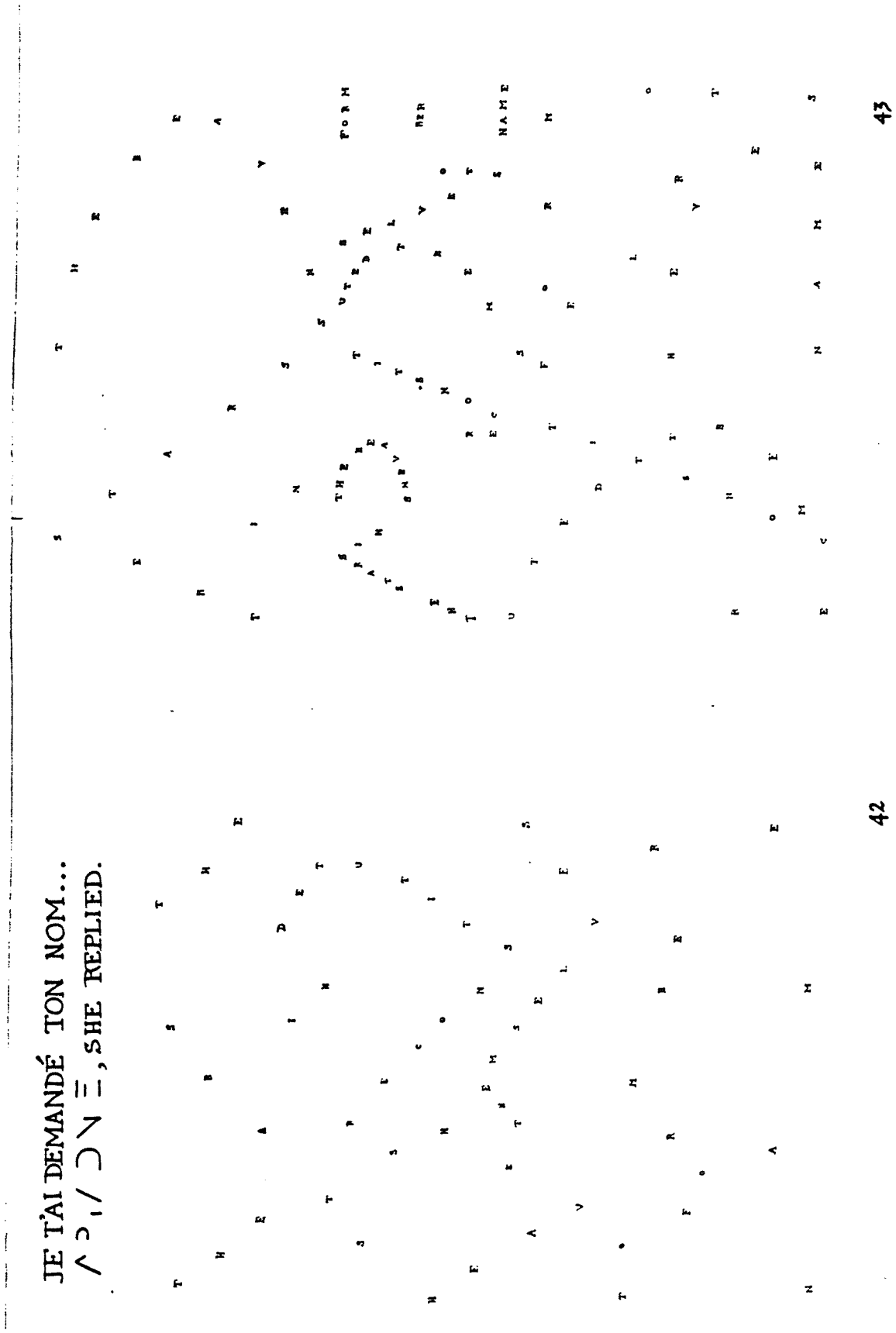


Fig. 3: A fragmented delineation of Ariadne's name (Ariadne 42-43). Slightly reduced size.

two levels: on the one hand, they function as a re-presentation of a quest for an elusive meaning; on the other, they function as a presentation by involving the readers in the quest.

Dicamus recounts the trials and tribulations of a decipherment of an ancient and complex cipher, while Ariadne relates the narrator's journey-quest for Ariadne or, more specifically, for her name (which only appears in encrypted form in the text) and her "symbols [and] true significance"

ary riddle. Thus statements [1] and [3] describe light, while [2] and [4] describe metaphorical actions. The last statement contains a similar grandiose claim as the last lines of "The Candle," here, however, with the death-defying gesture of making dead men instruct living men. Again, Watson leaves the riddlees contemplating the object from a perspective they have not seen before.

Watson only writes riddles that use the lyric "I." This category of riddle maximizes the occurrence of personification. In his article on "Allegorical Language," Samuel Levin describes personification as "the staple of allegory" (24). In "riddle/lamp," every statement contains a personification. Take a part of statement [4] as an example, "I dance in the wind." The lyric "I" replaces the solution which is the subject of the personification. With the solution the sentence will be, "[A lamp] dance[s] in the wind." Levin points out that such a statement entails a metaphorical comment about a non-human entity. He goes on to describe how human languages have a deficiency in

(9).* In fact, we cannot help approaching Ariadne as a quest for an elusive meaning because the labyrinthine and riddlic nature of the work makes us unceasingly aware of the fact that we are dealing with a calligraphic text which hides and reveals messages, names and meanings. This idiosyncratic attention to the materiality of the text hinders any readers' responses that are commonly associated with "getting lost in" or

* See also Schafer's comment that "every sound casts a spell. A word is a bracelet of voice-charms. Individually considered, its letters (phonemes) tell the attentive listener a complicated lifestory" (The Thinking Ear 180). His recommendation to do a study of names used in Patria (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 49) should also be considered in this context.

their lexicon when it comes to depicting non-human realities:

> We say of a horse that it is frightened, [Levin says] But what does a horse feel when it is frightened? Whatever it feels, 'frightened' is not the predicate that specifically describes that feeling. (27)

At the same time, that very deficiency facilitates a wide range of predicates that depict such realities in human terms and in this way lead to personification as a metaphoric device. In a meticulous scrutiny of personification, Levin argues that there are four ways in which personification allegory can be read, but only one facilitates non-conceptual insights into the "life and nature" (so to speak) of non-human entities. This "pure" allegory, however, depends on the imaginative powers of the recipient.

The first reading focuses on the noun and makes it conform with its predicate. In my example "a lamp dances in the wind," one would replace "a lamp" with an entity that is actually capable of dancing in the wind, such as a person or indeed the lyric "I." This reading I want to call literalization because it turns figurative statements into literal ones. For the riddler, literalization is another way of confounding the rea-

identifying with a fictional world. However, once we approach Ariadne as a quest for an elusive meaning rather than for a fictional character called Ariadne, the boundary between re-presentation and presentation disintegrates and gives way to a participation of readers in the narrator's quest: readers become seekers.

Dicamus shows much the same disintegration. In this work, readers do not participate in the actual deciphering of the ancient script, but they must undertake comparable decipherments, such as reading through labyrinths of various

der because by proffering literal statements that in itself make good sense, it is harder to transform the statements into metaphorical expressions. This transformation occurs either by supplying the given solution or else by guessing the solution, each of which requires a conscious effort on the part of the riddlees.

The second reading would similarly make noun and predicate conform, but here the focus is on the predicate. The result is true personification (Levin's term). The problem here, as Levin points out, is that the literal element (the predicate) must be made to work on the same semantic level as the metaphorical one (the noun). If we assume that there were a term "to thwiddle" defined as "dancing in the wind, spec. of lamps" then the statement "a lamp thwiddles" would succeed in unmixing the mixed mode. Yet this reading, for obvious reasons, has no semantic redeemability.

The third reading would resolve the semantic incompatibility by bringing the predicate into conformity with the meaning of the noun "lamp." The result then is "a

shapes (see fig. 4 & 5), deciphering palimpsests of handwriting in which Schafer overlays texts with other texts at a 90 degree angle (see fig. 6), and determining the value of crossed out, but still legible, passages (see fig. 7 & 8). These processes serve to involve readers in the decipherment or in sharing the scholar's excitement when engaging in decipherment: once more readers become seekers.

In investigating the disintegrating boundary between re-presentation and presentation, I would like to draw attention to a passage from Dicamus that seems

lamp is moving in the wind." Levin calls this reading dispersonification because the statement now conveys merely the quality of a lamp without implementing a metaphorical level.

The fourth reading, finally, is the only one to engage in a pure, allegorical reading in that the recipient tries to conceive what it would be like for a lamp to be dancing in the wind. This process, of course, cannot be semantically expressed in language because the dances of lamps are beyond the conceptual horizon of human language. Yet, this radical dispersonification, according to Levin, provides us with an opportunity for going beyond our conceptual horizons, if not in language then by augmenting our powers of non-conceptual thought.

In my view, a case can be made for radical dispersonification occurring at the instant of guessing the solution. During that instant, the riddlees recapitulate one or several riddle statements in radical dispersonification without yet engaging in literalization or dispersonification. (Levin's "personification" seems an unlikely candi-

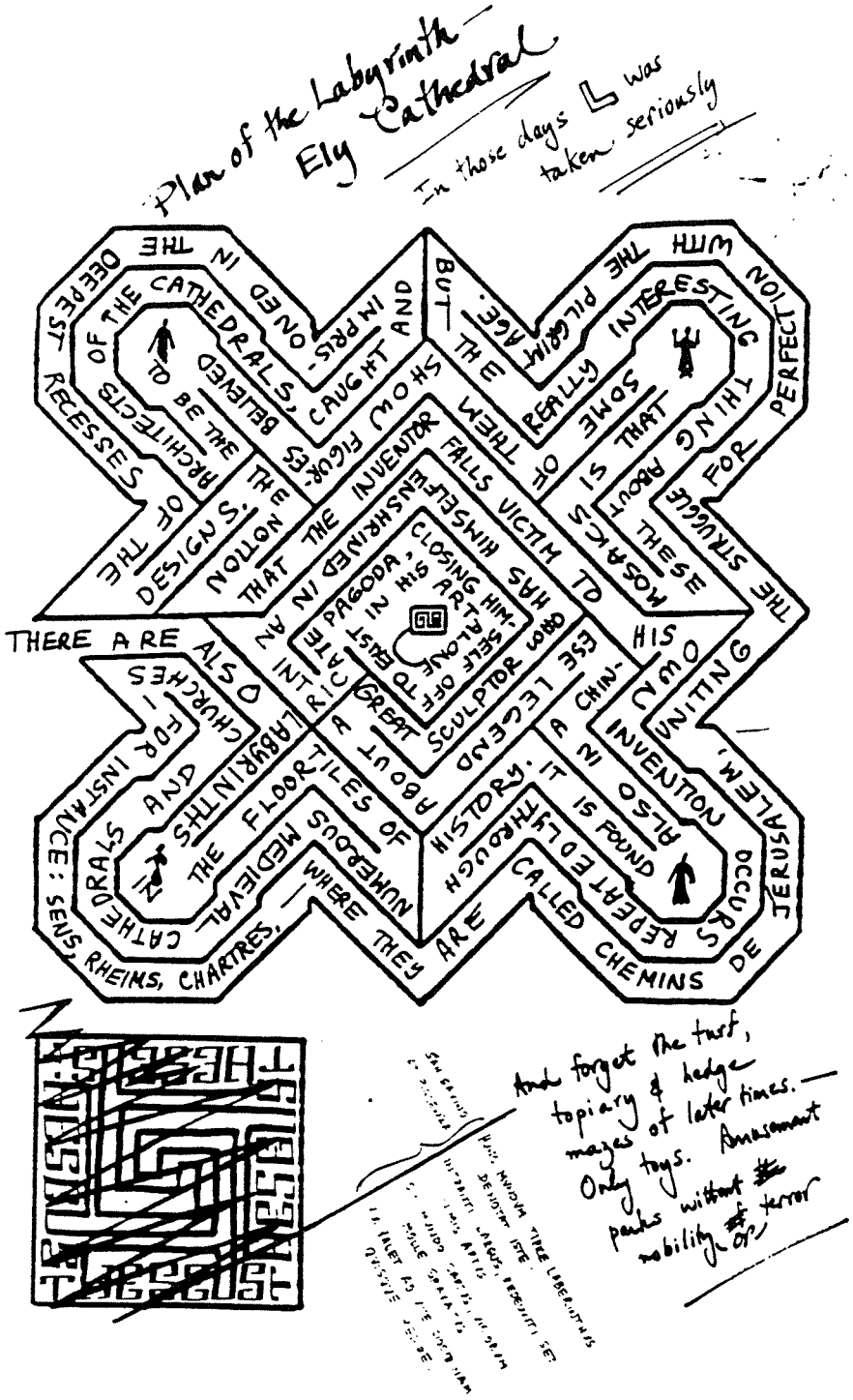


Fig. 4: A labyrinth from Dicamus (n.p.).

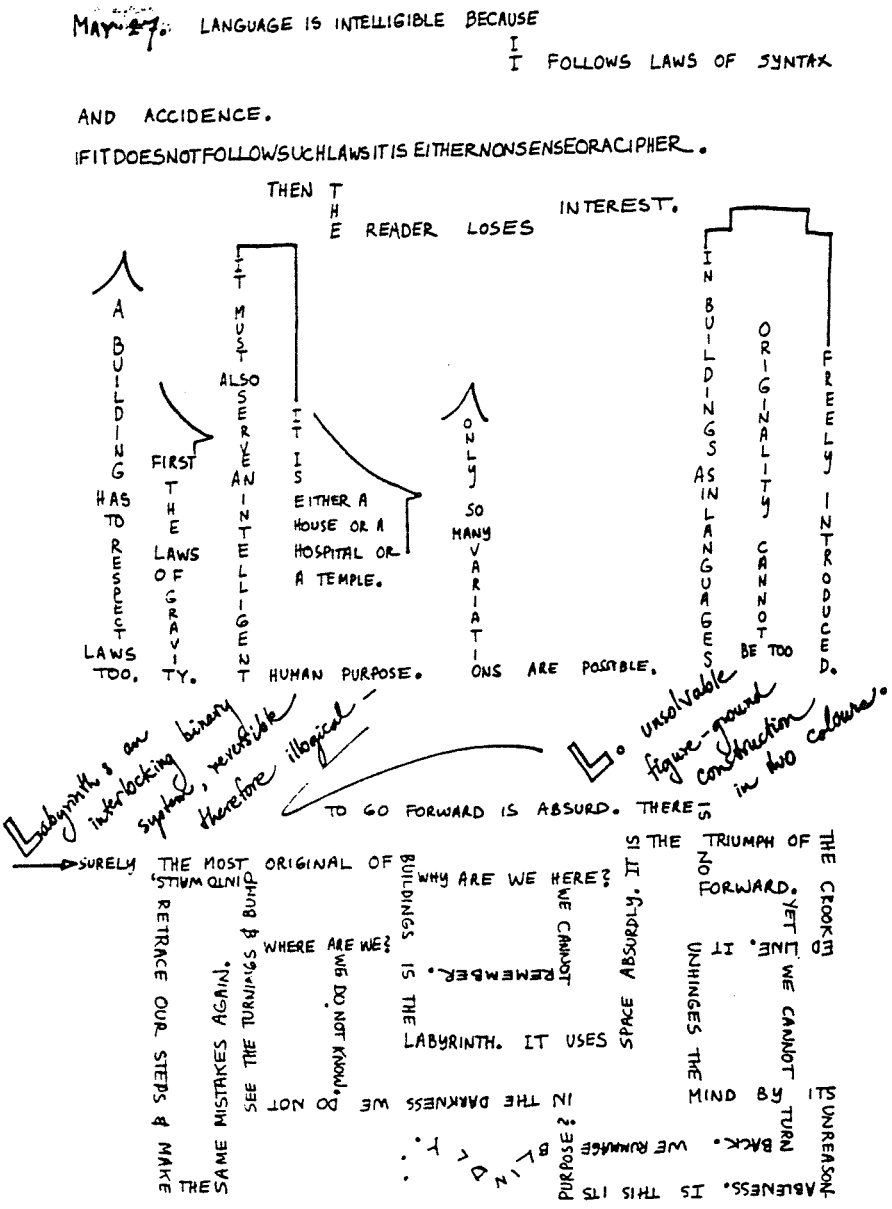


Fig. 5: A labyrinth from Dicamus (n.p.).

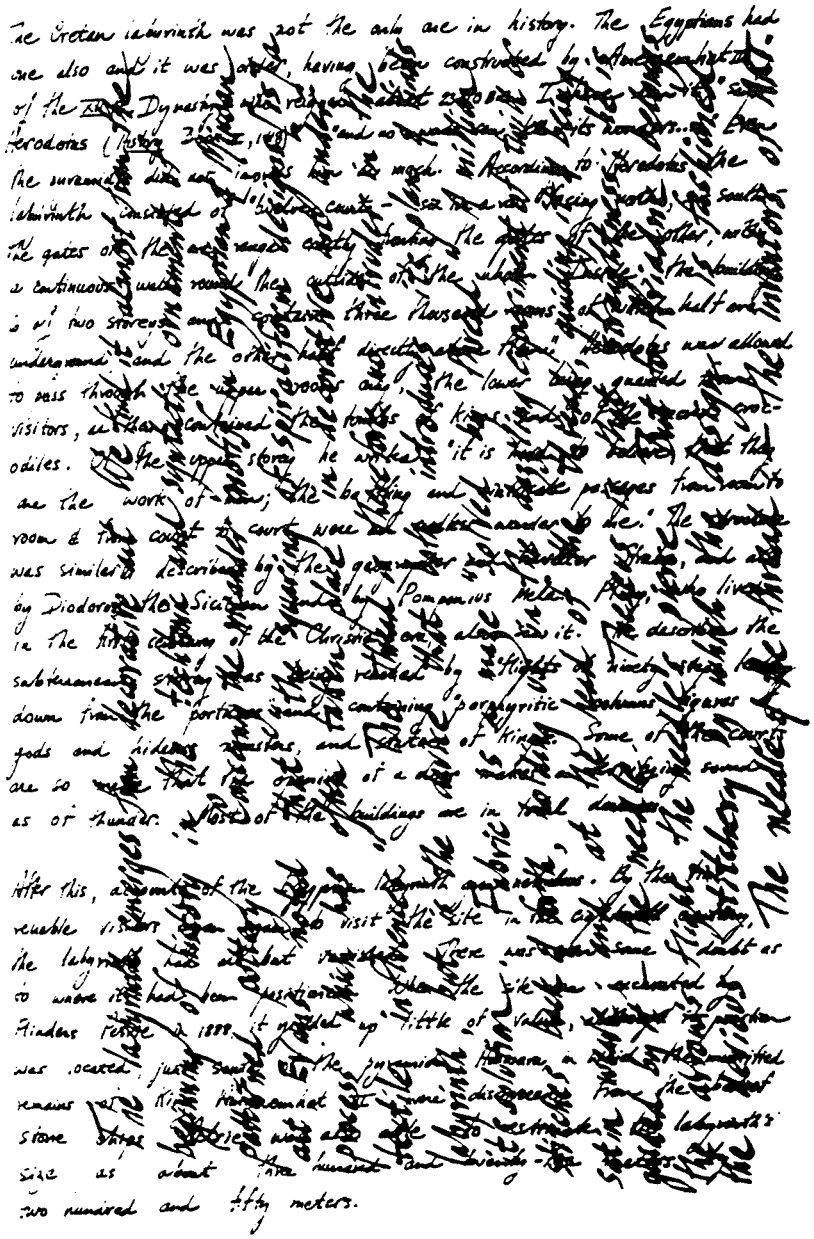


Fig. 6: Overlaying of texts in Dicamus (n.p.).

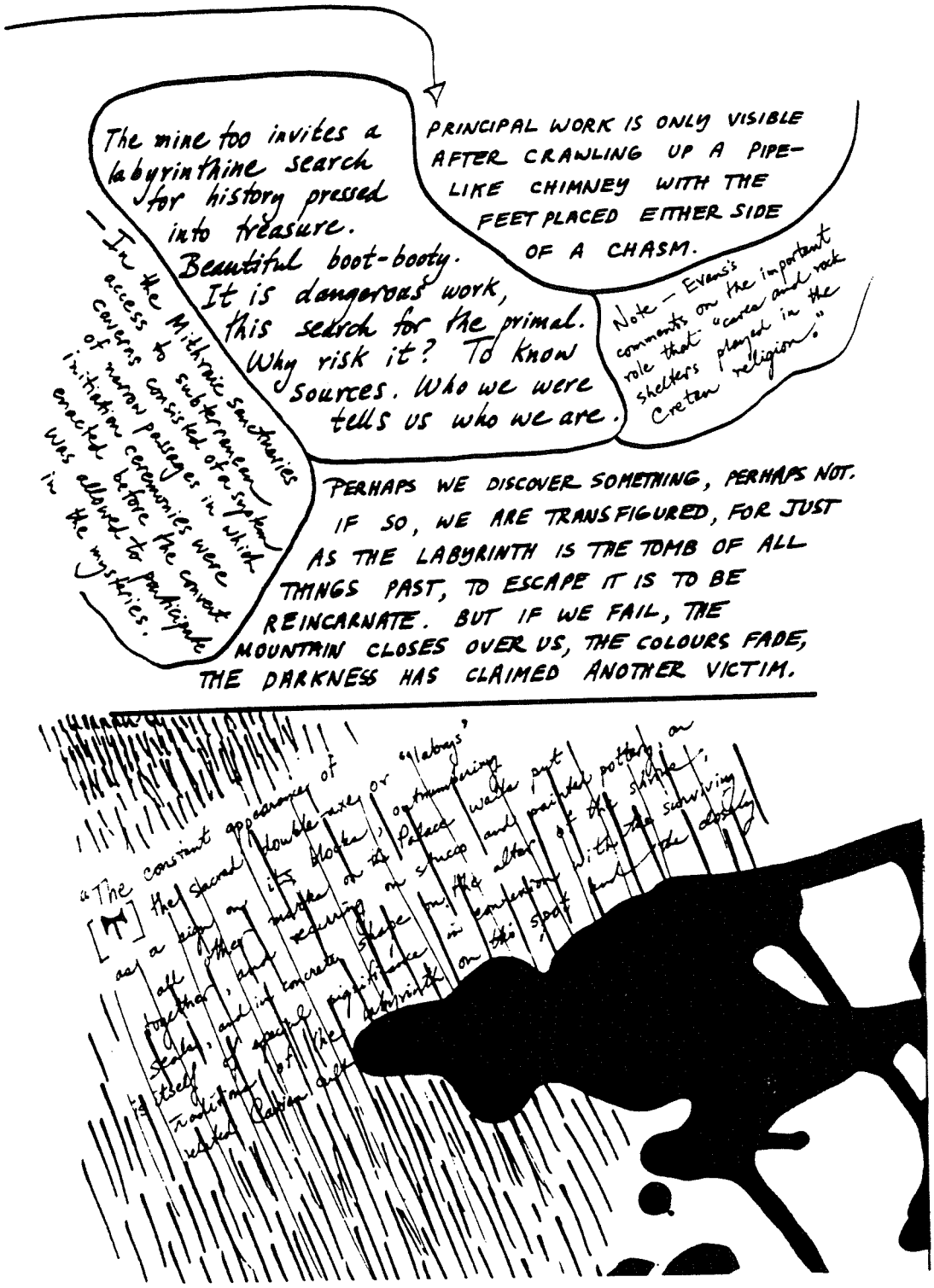
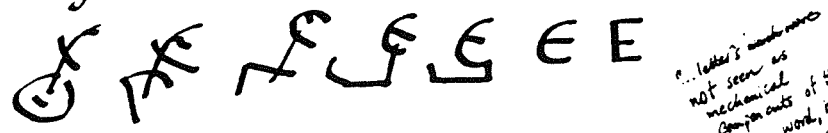


Fig. 7: Crossed-out passages in Dicamus (n.p.).

in the perfectibility of forms through successive generations of writers as the intellect and the hand are progressively trained in the writing habit.



But is it not possible that signs (like numbers) were found ready-made? Could they not be autonomous entities which man merely picked up and used?

A textbook on mathematics tells us that if a group of objects is deprived of every single one of its properties or characteristics there still remains its number, which seems to indicate that number is something irreducible. Why should the same not be true of signs? What they mean at individual times or in special contexts would then be only relative to an archetypal significance or "so-ness" that could not be explained as an intellectual concept. Forms that appear the same may acquire different meanings; but this would be posterior to an archetypal condition in which they all share the same meaning.

[illegible]

Fig. 8: Crossed-out passages in Dicamus (n.p.).

to comment on that disintegration. In the palimpsest of fig. 6 (see 248), the text made legible when the readers rotate the page by 90 degrees describes how the thread is one of the origins of the labyrinth because the thread is the material from which textiles are woven:

> The thread is . . . no intruder in the labyrinth, but is the device that both introduces its plan & finds its solution. Fabric is a maze "solved by thread." (n.p.)

Schafer's labyrinths do not consist of thread but of graphics and writing, and just as the thread provides plan and solution to the fabric, so graphics and writing can be seen to provide plans and solutions to Schafer's labyrinths.

date because we do not tend to make up neologisms on the spot.) The riddlees, however, cannot sustain the ephemeral moment ofnon-conceptual thought because they transform the guessed solution at once into a concept or word. At this point, the riddlees either confirm the suggested solution or they guess the solution. Then they turn the page where there is another riddle and the process begins anew.

The analysis of a representative riddle statement from one of Watson's riddles has shown that his riddles use one of the basic allegorical strategies, personification, in a particularly "pure" form. Yet two factors infringe on my calling the riddles outright allegories. First, the moment in which the allegorical reading occurs cannot be sustained because it is restricted by the process of riddling to the ephemeral moment of recognition. This moment (and with it the allegory) comes to an end as soon as the reader reverts to or replaces the non-conceptual thought with a concept or word. Secondly, the brevity of the riddles and the consequent lack of an extended narrative do

In this way, the presentation of the material on the page is more important than whatever it re-presents because the plan and solution of its labyrinth are in the presentation not in the re-presentation.

Dicamus and Ariadne can both be seen as (re)presenting quests for elusive meanings. At first, and indeed through most of the quests, Schafer portrays these elusive meanings as arcane knowledge, as something which we can know and speak by undergoing certain

not warrant calling the riddles full-fledged allegories. As a result, I would rather speak of the "allegorical thrust" in Watson's riddles. While not turning the riddles into conventional narrative allegories, this thrust still insures access to anOther.

Allegories speak in a distinctive double-entendre of anOther. Considering the allegorical thrust in Watson's riddles, this Other could be the solution. The riddle then would say one thing, that is, give a small-scale narrative about a person, but mean anOther, namely, what the solution suggests. Yet I think that the allegorical Other should not lightly be equated with the solution; rather, contemplating life and nature in a non-conceptual way as it occurs during the ephemeral moment is also a possible candidate for this Other. Watson attempts putting us in touch with a very pristine Other indeed, namely that of a non-human horizon of experience that is unspeakable.

To come back to the riddle of the lamp, I maintain that the reader contemplates an

rituals.* In the graphic novels, these rituals can be seen in persisting in the quests and arriving at the elusive meanings through trials and errors by means of a number of labyrinths, exercises, puzzles and cryptographic riddles. These rituals are direct parallels to the initiations, pilgrimages and rites of passages (re)presented to the audience in Patria.

* Schafer runs a publishing house exclusively devoted to publishing his work, "Arcana Editions." "Arcana" is the plural of the Latin "arcanum" which has two meanings: "(1) A hidden thing; a mystery, a profound secret. (2) One of the supposed great secrets of nature which the alchemists aimed at discovering; hence, a marvellous remedy, an elixir" (OED 2nd ed. 1989). Schafer's work aims both at initiating the public into the "profound secrets" of his work and at providing a "marvellous remedy," especially for our spiritual malaise.

allegory of lampness that provides an insight into the "life of lamps," so to speak. Each of the statements contributes to this insight by dint of containing a personification. Thus we could say that Watson's riddles introduce a single metaphor in a continuous series which is exactly how Quintilian defined allegory. To Quintilian such an excess of metaphor was a defect because it might easily convert the text in question to an enigma.* For obvious reasons, this is not a concern when it comes to composing riddles; quite on the contrary, it is this excess of metaphor that is constitutive of riddles.

As I noted before, Watson's riddles consist of strings of statements, most of which contain personifications. These statements are rarely formally connected so that syntactically speaking, we are dealing with parataxis. Furthermore, the riddles employ the rhetorical device of anaphora which is a repetition of the same word at the beginning

* Joel Fineman describes Quintilian's definition and underlying disposition towards allegory, see "The Structure of Allegorical Desire" 49-50.

Rituals in Schafer's work in general serve a certain elitism, namely that of a community which shares a certain arcane knowledge.

The arcane nature of this elitism is most obvious in the attempts at cryptography, both in writing and decoding ciphers. The roles are just as obvious: Schafer is the one who knows, and the participants are the ones to find out. A similar relationship emerges with regard to Patria and the allegorical gesture. It is only the allegorist who knows what died in the object which he filled with a new meaning. A certain elitism thus is an in-

of two or more consecutive statements. The anaphoral rhythm weakens the expression of facts, and the riddle takes on incantatory qualities that reinforce its catechetical quality.* This is surely an effect most welcome to Watson, who often employs forms and rituals reminiscent of catholic ones.** The "calculated monotony" of anaphora produces a hypnotic effect so that the text takes on qualities of a mosaic without perspective.*** In this way, Watson renders the regular exposition of the statements more symbolic.

In Watson's riddles, anaphora occurs most often with the lyric "I" or the related "my," as in the following "Riddle for Gillian Espinasse":

[1] I am shaped like a hole
[2] I am raised in joy
[3] my kiss is paradise
[4] my embrace boggles the mind.

* In his book on Two Literary Riddles in the Exeter Book (1986), Anderson writes that "as questions which demand answers, riddles make natural vehicles . . . for religious catechism" (9).

** See, for instance, Watson's Mass on Cowback, whose sections parallel the parts of the catholic mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei.

*** Fletcher's remarks on the relation of parataxis and anaphora are in Allegory: Theory of a Symbolic Mode 168-69.

tegral part of the allegorical gesture.

The puzzles, labyrinths and cryptography at first seem to hide the elusive meanings from the uninitiated eye. At the end of both Dicamus and Ariadne, however, it becomes clear that the puzzles, labyrinths and cryptographic riddles do not hide elusive meanings nor any arcane knowledge but often merely trivial messages that do not satisfy the quester's desire. The elusive meanings emerge as unspeakable.

In Dicamus, Schafer thematizes the unspeakable in terms of the confrontation between

[5] I feed the liar with words.
[6] I stab my best friend to death:
[prompt] saga-hwaet-ic-hatte? (Poems 363)

The anaphoral rhythm is clearly and monotonously marking its own importance, rather than that of the statements' content. If we consider for a moment the process by which the riddlees attempt to solve the riddle, we notice that--unless the solution occurs to the riddlees immediately after the initial reading--the riddlees change the order of the statements while they reread and reconsider this, then that, riddle statement. The effect of that process is an extended and emphasized anaphoral rhythm since now we may have four or even five statements starting with the same word. Simultaneously, a paratactic 'shuffling' of statements takes place. As a result, riddling as it is used by Watson embraces parataxis in making all riddle statements equally symbolic.

Let me disturb your attempts at solving the "Riddle for Gillian Espinasse" by providing the riddle's answer. It is a "mug of beer." I must stop your paratactic shuffling because I want to draw attention to a characteristic of parataxis that both con-

Theseus and the Minotaur. Noting that in all accounts of the myth the precise description of this confrontation is conspicuously absent, the decipherer becomes convinced that the ancient cipher will reveal that knowledge:

> I have come to the conclusion that [the tablets are] a cipher, contrived to obscure some secret message. Then it must deal with something which could not or must not be communicated to everyone. This could only be the story of what happened in the labyrinth when Theseus & Minotaur confronted one another, precisely the portion of the myth that is missing in all other accounts, missing because only hero[e]s may know it. (n.p.)

However, against the convictions of the decipherer, the arcane knowledge is not revealed in the cipher stitutes and subverts parataxis. David Hayman has described this characteristic as follows:

> By eliminating subordination . . . parataxis may serve to equalize or give the appearance of equality to disparate elements, moving the text toward the condition of a list. This is a thoroughly ambiguous function, since the list from time immemorial has been the structure of order and control, the means by which we shape our experience. (183)

This subversion is also at work in the riddle. The condition of the list is emphasized by the lyric point of view because it imposes an idiosyncratic order on that list: statements 1 & 2 depict the static subject using the passive voice. Statement 3 depicts a static property, while statement 4 introduces an active property. The last two statements depict an active subject with an increased intensity in "I stab my best friend to death." Because the paratactic shuffling and the ordered listing of the riddle's statements occur at the same time but are in competition with one another, parataxis emerges as an ambiguous and tense procedure in Watson's riddles.

In his renowned article "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," Roman Jakobson describes the twofold

which turns out to be merely another account of the events leading up to the confrontation between Theseus and the Minotaur. After the decipherment is complete, it dawns on the decipherer that this confrontation can only be experienced by coming face to face with the Minotaur--a fact of which the decipherer is painfully aware:

> I've never believed that language can reveal truth, which comes--if it comes at all--as the speechless moment. (n.p., emphasis added)

At this point, then, we can understand the decipherer's remark that "only heroes may know" the unspeakable. As a matter of course, Schafer sets the stage

character of language. This duality provides an opportunity to gain further insights into the parataxis of Watson's riddles. According to Jakobson, language functions in keeping with the principles of "combination" and "selection." The former stipulates that any linguistic sign occurs only in combination with other signs so that any sign serves as a context, while the latter concerns the selection of a sign from the pool of possible signs. Selection in this way implies the possibility of substituting one sign for another. The two aphasic disorders he describes circumscribe two poles of a continuum that correspond to the principles of combination and selection.

For my purposes, the contiguity disorder is especially significant. Patients suffering from this disorder lack the capacity to determine and use contexts of linguistic units* so that their capacity for maintaining the hierarchy of linguistic units is severely reduced. The result is a paratactic patterning of speech which Jakobson

* A linguistic unit could be a word but also a short sentence or a group of words, see "Two Aspects" 72.

for the subsequent transformation of decipherment into heroic quest. Schafer transforms the decipherer into a hero who will meet the Minotaur or "something which for convenience we have agreed to call Minotaur." Their confrontation, of course, escapes (re)presentation and Dicamus breaks off when two masked figures lead the decipherer in his dreams to meet the Minotaur.*

* But we also know from the editor's introduction that the decipherer mysteriously disappears after the decipherment which is why Max Dorb publishes the journal as a facsimile in such an "unscientific" and unfinished form.

The editor's name, "Max Dorb," is easily recognizable as an anagram of Max Brod, who was the literary executor of Franz Kafka's work (see Dicamus 100). We should keep in mind that in Patria 1, 2 and 3 Schafer occasionally identifies Wolfman with a portrait of Franz Kafka. In this way, Dicamus emerges as yet an-

depicts as "tending towards infantile one-sentence utterances and one-word sentences" (72).

The absence of logical connectors, such as prepositions and conjunctions, in Watson's riddles indicates their syntactical movement towards the paradigmatic pole of selection. This movement explains the paratactic patterning. The lyric point of view, however, sustains a semantic movement that countervails this syntactical movement. Using Jakobson's terminology, one could say that Watson's riddles project the paradigmatic axis onto the syntagmatic axis. The result is a structuralization of content which is typical of allegory, for in allegory structures always point to themes.*

I have not yet mentioned a visual feature of the riddles that is important to Watson's riddling, the icons at the bottom of each riddle. This feature bears upon the ephemeral moment of recognition and aids in transforming the lyric "I" into a perceptual

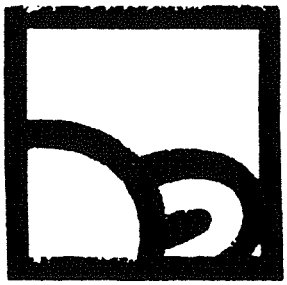
* In Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, Angus Fletcher outlines two symbolical patterns of allegory, namely progress and battle. These patterns are primarily structures but simultaneously announce rigid themes.

In Ariadne, the true significance of the quest eludes us in a similar manner. Schafer confronts us with a number of puzzles, labyrinths and cryptographic riddles that seem to promise access to an elitist knowledge which is essential to the work. But in all instances, they do not reveal such essences. An example is the diagram on p.32, which is introduced with the following words:

> I understood a great deal, for the room was filled with the cryptography of private thoughts, circulating freely with the smoke . . . (31)

other installment of the quest related in Patria because the decipherer can be indirectly identified with Kafka and thus emerges as another human incarnation of Wolf.

device, an "eye." Once the riddlee thinks of the solution, he literally views the world through the "eye" of a knife. The icons that appear at the bottom of each NG riddle support this non-conceptual instant. These icons (size: 2.3 x 2.3 cm) provide stylized graphical representations of the solution. Yet in most cases, it is next to impossible to guess the solution from a curious glance at them because they simultaneously hide and reveal the answers. Watson employs various disfiguring strategies to achieve that effect. Although the objects are common enough, for instance a lamp (368), a mug (363), a knife (373), the perspective from which the objects are shown in the icons is uncommon (see fig. 8). Most of the icons are close-ups so that they are cut off at the edges and represent only a part of the whole. On account of this partial representation, the icons can be seen as metonymies. However, Watson eliminates all contextual information from the icons themselves. They function only within the context of the extended metaphors of the riddle statements. As a result, Wat-



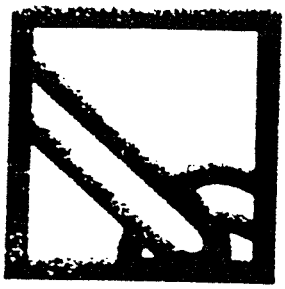


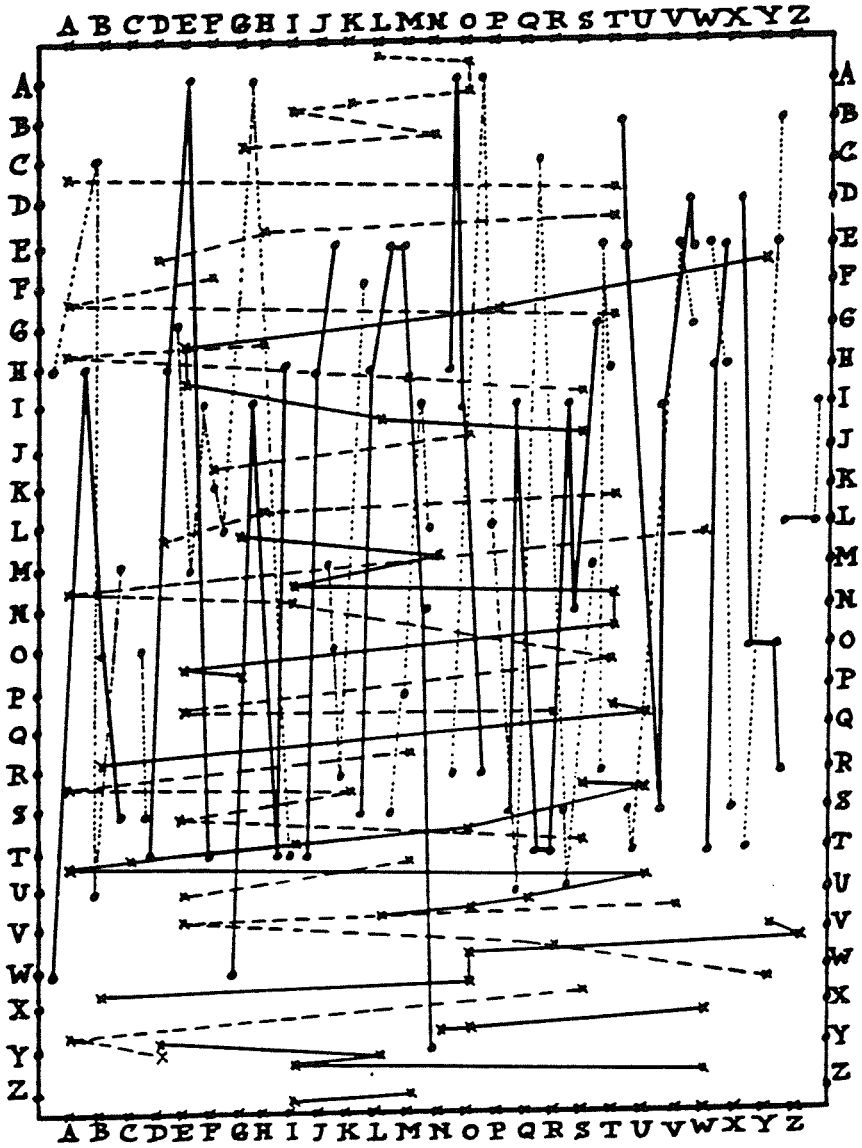
Fig. 9: Icons accompanying Watson's NGV-riddles (Poems 364, 363, 380, 368). Slightly enlarged.

Eager to decipher these cryptographic private thoughts (fig. 10), we struggle to find the system that unlocks their meanings. Once we succeed at this decipherment, however, the private thoughts turn out to be mere background for a "club or discotheque" (28). Decrypted, they are:

> --Who's that with the sheeny hair sitting beside the door?
> --Looking at th[e] fat hams of th[e] waiter makes me very sad.
> --I'm wild now; boozy, loquacious but getting sleepy.
> --I'll bet she gets her muscular lips from talking so much. (32)

These "private thoughts," although meticulously encrypted, hardly warrant the quester's interest. As in the other puzzles, son moves riddling further along the syntagmatic axis and the riddle's parataxis is further undermined. On the other hand, the icons take their place among the other riddle statements because if viewed in isolation, they are just as confusing as the statements. For this reason, the icon also partakes in the paratactic shuffling of riddling. The riddlees jump from riddle statements and various combinations of statements to the icon and back again until the recognition takes place.

NGV combines numerals and words in such a way that the numerals (which are not pronounced) give shape to the experience of reading the poem. In this way, there are two states of consciousness at issue, namely that of counting and that of making sense. Watson juxtaposes paratactically NGV to the semantic content of the prose statements. As a result, we find two fundamentally different rhythms at work: one relying on numerals, the other relying on words. As a matter of course, this constellation gives rise to other similarly juxtaposed dichotomies: form-content; verse--prose;



32

Fig. 10: Cryptographic thoughts from Ariadne (32).

labyrinths and cryptographic riddles, the overwhelming feeling after the decipherment is one of regret and disappointment, perhaps not so much in the triviality of the message itself as in the result of decipherment that puts an end to the possibilities of "true" arcane knowledge because a solved mystery is no longer a mystery.

In Dicamus, the decipherer accounts for this ambivalence towards the result of decipherment when he describes his feelings about a cipher that seems to be the encrypted dedication in Ariadne. This dedication apparently metric experiment--free verse; seeing--hearing. To illustrate these different rhythms, I would like to take a look at a riddle, first in prose notation:

> I wash in the sea but never become clean. I save many from drowning. I teach the birds to write down their names. I show the authorities where men have left their bones. Harms enter by me though I harm no one: saga hwaet ic hatte. (366)

One clearly feels the rhythm of prose and reads through the riddle as consisting of 5 consecutive statements and a prompt. Now the same riddle in NG notation:

```
                        I 1 wash
                      the 2 in
                      sea 3 but
                    never 4 become
                        I 5 clean
                     save 6 many
            drowning. 7 from
                        I 8 teach
      9 the
                    birds 1 to
                     down 2 write
                    their 3 names.
                     show 4 I
                      the 5 authorities
                      men 6 where
                     have 7 left
                          bones. 8 their
      9 Harms
                    enter 1 by
                   though 2 me
                        I 3 harm
                     one: 4 no
      5 saga hwaet ic hatte (368)
```

Most striking perhaps is the searching movement of the eye through the space of the page because of the boustrophedon. Further-

starts in an unknown language:

> Tou fo meryom, tou fo teh lulsk, tou fo teh lehmet nad te chonc lehls, tou fo syad nad hisgnt, I heva noshiedaf sith tumcose fo sdwor rof oyu, nwustiting titell fo ti ta a mite. (7)

Yet soon the readers discover that this text is merely the result of an unsystematic scrambling of letters. What follows is a development from the chaos of the undecipherable to the order of the readable in eight steps in which the text is gradually unscrambled to reveal the following text which self-consciously describes its own making:

> [Pushed up] out of memory, out of the skull, out of the helmet and the conch shell, out of days and nights, I have fashioned this costume of words for you, untwisting little of it at a time. (9)

more, one does not pay so much attention to the thematic intricacies as to the formal ones; that is, one feels a self-reflexiveness of language and form that is unusual in prose. As a result, reading NGV relegates the thematic intricacies (such as the oppositions within the riddle-statements) and the prose-rhythm to the background of the riddlees' attention. As soon as the eye is used to the NGV-rhythm, however, the prose-rhythm gains in importance so that an approximate balance arises: Watson has accomplished the paratactic juxtaposition of NGV- and prose-rhythms.

In "Postmodern Parataxis: Embodied Texts, Weightless Information," Katherine Hayles asserts that parataxis does not mean that there are no relations between the juxtaposed entities. Rather these relations are unstable and polysemous, and they may be appropriated, interpreted or re-inscribed into different modalities because of the absence of a sequential structure (398). She claims that the relations between paratactic elements are a "seismograph" of societal ruptures in postmodern society.

The decipherer writes about the process involved in getting from cipher to text:

> And I recall my state of mind as I worked through it. Bits of information followed by puzzles triggered my mind into anticipating a thousand possible sequels. Later when the real meaning was known, it was something of a disappointment. No, not a disappointment, for I knew it was correct and true, but somehow a betrayal of the possible, the vague, the hinted at. The loose, freely associative mind of the poet had been made to surrender before the deductive method of the scientist. I knew it had to happen but I was sorry to see it go. (Dicamus n.p.)

The "betrayal of the possible," to the decipherer, means the possibility of capturing the unspeakable yet without revealing it.*

* One could easily construct Schafer's music as achieving that possibility because music expresses something that is hard to capture in language. To reiterate my summary of his view of the creative process, Schafer maintains that there always remains a level that cannot be verbalized in any way.

In the case of Watson's riddles, it is not a societal rupture that is in the foreground, but the rupture between the premodern metric experiment and modern free verse. According to Watson, free verse put an end to the metric experiment before it had come to full fruition ("NGV as Notation"). The synthesizing potential of parataxis breaks through to a hitherto unknown constellation of free verse and metric experiment. This breakthrough combines in a postmodern gesture the new with the old. It is in this constellation that Watson inscribes his allegorical essence.*

Having been inspired by McLuhan's media theory long before he met McLuhan himself, Watson finally had the opportunity to coauthor a book with McLuhan. In their study From Cliché to Archetype, Watson hints at a theory of multi-consciousness that would account for postmodernism. For reasons that I explored above, McLuhan held another view and was not prepared to accept Watson's as equal to his own. This contributed to the

* I am referring to Walter Benjamin's use of that term in Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels.

In the last sentence of the dedication to Ariadne, Schafer expresses this possibility poignantly:

> Neither of us knew how the pulsing reality of my love would one day become a container of remembrance, a vase for your faded bloom, a cracked jar of rouge, a tomb. (9)

The labyrinth is the tomb of all things past because it contains memories that reflect the beginnings of humanity, as we are told in Dicamus:

> As the womb hides the friction of our begetting in darkness, the cave hides the tribal fathers. Verification of these presences can only be demonstrated by a journey into darkness, into the labyrinth. The journey is always into the past into history. (n.p.)

In a peculiar move, Schafer attributes a tensions between the two men that also delayed publication of the book. Yet Watson went on to explore his theory in separate articles, such as "Marshall McLuhan and Multi-Consciousness: The Place Marie Dialogues." From these articles rather than from their co-production, we can glean what Watson meant by multi-consciousness and how he explained its impact on postmodernism.

According to Watson's reading of McLuhan's media theory, the book was the medium that dominated modernity. Yet in the twentieth-century, the book-cliché lost most of its impact which was sufficient to produce effects of fragmentation, alienation, disorientation, and disorganization. It dominated the Western intellectual tradition to such an extent as to ensure that this tradition considered consciousness to be homogeneous. The absoluteness of that presupposition left men badly equipped to deal with the new multi-consciousness and its phenomena (208-09). These phenomena, to Watson, are primarily indicative of a hitherto unknown freedom:

> Twentieth-century man has many modes of consciousness and with these goes a freedom not enjoyed by any previous civilization. ("Poem and Preface" 36)

patriarchal origin to the labyrinth by comparing it to a matriarchal image. In the following passage, he hints at the traditional association of the labyrinth with the thread, Ariadne and the feminine but not without pointing to the equal importance of the needle, Theseus and the masculine:

> The thread is therefore no intruder in the labyrinth, but is the device that both introduces its plan & finds its solution. Fabric is a maze "solved by thread." A million stitches back & forth, holding us in the dazzling experiment of twill or satin weave; and at the head of the thread, guiding it and being guided by it--the needle. Theseus is that straightness; he is the arrow's flight, the needle's pierce. But to Ariadne belongs the devious stitchery by which the design is fashioned. (n.p.)

This passage indicates the relationship of interdependency between

In his poetry and plays, Watson sets out to celebrate this freedom, which he calls "really a very wonderful development." This celebration, in my reading, emanates as the allegorical essence of Watson's riddles and, in extension, of his plays.

In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye emphasizes the visual impact of the riddle: "The riddle seems intimately involved with the whole process of reducing language to visible form" (280). While Watson certainly does not neglect this visual impact, it seems that active participation in the process of riddling is essential to him. Riddling in this sense approaches an inner performance which juxtaposes various states of consciousness. This paratactical organization is highly unstable and at every moment susceptible to breakdown. This instability appears to be another trait of Watson's postmodernism, but we should keep in mind that in his view "breakdown" is the condition for a McLuhanesque "breakthrough" to new constellations. "Breakthrough," states Watson, "is a feature which comes from a breakdown of competence [implying]

Theseus (or Wolfman) and Ariadne: the one cannot succeed without the other and vice versa.

To recapitulate, a journey into the labyrinth is a journey into the past or into history at the end of which we may be reincarnate or lost:

> Perhaps we discover something, perhaps not. If so, we are transfigured, for just as the labyrinth is the tomb of all things past, to escape it is to be reincarnate. But if we fail, the mountain closes over us, the colours fade, the darkness has claimed another victim. (n.p.)

Here finally, Schafer points to the danger lurking in the depths of every labyrinth: either the Minotaur or else the prospect of getting lost. In both graphic novels, Schafer leaves his readers in the dark-

not so much a new goal, and new competence, as an increase of total awareness. It leads not to success, but to a new horizon of problems" ("Education in the Tribal/Global Village" 210).

In the case of the riddles, the "new horizon of problems" may be the author's role in the riddling process as well as the access to an unspeakable. The position of power the author as riddler takes is that of a shaman who leads the riddlee to a state of multi-consciousness that purports to provide access to an unspeakable experience.

The performative mode contributes to the status of the riddles as allegories of riddling which in my view can be seen as tropes for reading Watson's allegorical plays. That the pure allegorical mode of reading I described as radical dispersonification only occurs in the elusive moment of recognition does not diminish the allegorical thrust in the riddles. I admit that the riddles do not constitute allegories in the sense of providing an extended allegorical narrative. Nevertheless, the brevity of the riddles serves to isolate certain allegorical char-

ness of the labyrinths: in Dicamus, this darkness is figurative because we do not reach the elusive meaning and are left wondering what will happen between Minotaur and Theseus; in Ariadne, the darkness is both figurative and literal because in the last scene (76-81) the city gradually blots out the sky but also blackens the pages until we are left with a solid black page (79) as a reminder that the unspeakable either escaped us or else trapped us.

acteristics so that the reader may contemplate them without the "ballast," as it were, of an extended narrative. It is important to note that these isolated characteristics are more constitutive of allegory than the absent quality of an extended narrative. The riddles thus illustrate the allegorical implications of such devices as personification, parataxis and NGV.

Watson's riddles and Schafer's labyrinths fulfill a similar function within the authors' oeuvres because they constitute microcosms of the authors' larger allegorical works with regard to their structure and their power relations between author and reader.

Structurally, riddles and labyrinths are concerned with the fact that the unspeakable eludes any kind of representation and that it must be presented in a ritual that requires audience participation. For these reasons, riddles and labyrinths try to go beyond the merely thematic representation of some arcane knowledge by emphasizing the involvement in an intellectual exercise that turns the reader into an active seeker for knowledge. This emphasis comes about through the (ritual) repetition of this involvement: almost every page contains a new riddle or a new labyrinth that the reader must solve. Moreover, as soon as the reader has solved and maneuvered the riddles and labyrinths, respectively, they lose their mystery--a trait that is poignantly expressed by the decipherer in Schafer's Dicamus who says:

> When the cryptogram is deciphered it breaks before the clear light of meaning. When the Labyrinth is deciphered it disappears. (n.p.)

Once the riddles and labyrinths have lost their mystery, Schafer compels his readers to continue their quest on the next page where they will find another challenge. These rituals ap-

proach in this way the condition of a rehearsal for a performance that never quite takes place and seems endlessly deferred. This condition of an endless deferral of meaning can be compared to the postmodern condition as it presents itself through the deferral of meaning in allegory.

In a similar way, Watson and Schafer defer closure in their works for the theatre. Watson, on the one hand, leads his readers on to expecting a last judgement or a final redemption that he always forestalls by exposing the mere possibility of such closures as illusory and ridiculous. Schafer, on the other, adjourns the redemption of his protagonists time and again until he orchestrates a mythical redemption that comes entirely undeserved to his protagonists.

By subjecting their readers to puzzling constructs, both authors take on the role of the sage who has the answer or the solution that the readers must first strive to find out by undergoing a ritual. This ritual, then, has the status of an initiation to the world of the sage. Hence riddles and labyrinths construct a hierarchy of power between authors and readers that is similar to that found in their allegories where we find an elitism that manifests itself in a certain aloofness of Watson's allegories and in outright initiation rites in Schafer's. The elitism of their allegories is largely responsible for their reconstructive postmodernism and can be used to indicate their position in the postmodern continuum and its deconstructive and reconstructive impulses.

Chapter 7

Coda: Reverberations

One way of characterizing the postmodern condition is that the discourses of science cannot provide satisfactory explanations and/or solutions to contemporary crises facing humanity and the environment. These crises threaten both our individual and ontological beings on an unprecedented scale.[1] There is a widespread need to fill the gap left by the sciences by turning to spirituality. A particular type of postmodernism attempts to fill that need. According to Suzi Gablik and other critics, reconstructive postmodernists re-enchant the arts with a commitment to recover genuine hope and spirituality by reconstructing lost or desacralized entities. The artists are the driving force behind this commitment. They supply themselves with authority in order to teach their commitment to their audiences.

Reconstructive postmodernists choose allegory as a mode of encoding language in order to introduce new belief systems.

[1] In The Fate of the Earth, Jonathan Schell argues a similar point with regard to the nuclear threat. He says that global, nuclear extinction is a threat to the entire race surpassing any threats of wars or natural catastrophes humans had to face in previous eras when belief systems (such as the Christian one) provided assurances that an apocalyptic end is merely another beginning of a better and eternal life. However, now that the sciences have dismantled these belief systems, humans have to face the possibility of absolute extinction. In my view, Schell's argument also holds for the environmental crisis and the crisis of meaning.

This encoding corresponds to encryption, a process that by definition implies certain elitist connotations because the encoder hides a "message" from the uninitiated. Therefore, the primary mode of reconstructive postmodernism is elitist through and through. Both Watson and Schafer use allegory as a mode of encoding language and as an elitist device.

To Schafer, only the select few who prove themselves worthy of initiation into his world will learn how to decipher his allegories and thereby unlock the arcana hidden therein. Schafer exercises the most extreme form of this elitism in the epilogue to Patria, And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon, which indeed redefines the very notion of theatre in that it is restricted to invited group members only. At first, Schafer planned this week-long event to receive its first initiates after two to three years of annual, preparatory meetings in a remote part of Algonquin Park in central Ontario. Yet the technical difficulties of transportation and risks of injury in the wilderness have finally forced Schafer and his group to give up the idea of bringing in initiates. At this time, the epilogue to Patria can only be experienced by the performers themselves. To become a member of the group, one must be sponsored by two current members who are responsible for the newcomer. This responsibility involves being a mentor to the initiate and making sure that she or he is reliable in terms of annual participation.

Watson's allegories insist to a lesser degree than Schafer's on selection and initiation. As a result, his allegories

seem more democratic because they are open to everyone, but they also proudly retain an aura of enigma so that Watson leaves his audience with the feeling that a complete decoding of the allegorical "message" is endlessly deferred. A pertinent example is Number Grid Verse, a method of notation whose allegorical concerns can be intellectually understood without, however, grasping the experiential impact of NGV.

It is the author who holds the key to unlock the hidden meanings of the works. Watson's and Schafer's elitism supports a centripetal structure of authority: it instates the author as an intermediary between text and reader. If audiences want to decode the hidden meanings, they have to accept the authority of the allegorist. The centripetal structure of authority is a characteristic of reconstructive postmodernism. The degree of elitism, therefore, determines the degree to which the works are reconstructive.

Even in Schafer's Patria 3, which freely deconstructs the more formal theatrical conventions of Patria 1 and 2, the audience strongly feels Schafer's guiding hand and how he constructs and re-constructs an underlying significance for the spectacle. In Watson's Let's Murder, however, it is an accomplishment to avoid utter confusion at the most simple questions the play raises. Watson does not intervene sufficiently to provide coherent answers (or he is too enigmatic for us to divine his meaning). Gablik suggests that it would be better to look at the two postmodernisms, not as antagonistic movements,

but as complementary components of a larger project that remaps the modern paradigm. Patria 3 and Let's Murder illustrate particularly well the range of postmodern possibilities Schafer and Watson cover. Both works employ deconstructive steps in order to re-construct lost meanings, but Schafer's works are more reconstructive, or more purely so, than Watson's, whose works at times veer towards a centrifugal structure of authority.

The underlying elitist connotations of the reconstructive allegorical method are in no small way related to emotive states of melancholy. It is overwhelming experiences of loss that cause these melancholic states. Confronted with a world that has died under the scrutiny of their gazes, melancholics begin to protest in an attitude of mourning the loss of meaning by inscribing the dead world with new and deliberate meanings. Only the melancholics are in possession of these meanings and feel the loss that led them to conceive these meanings in the first place. The privilege of their knowledge puts them in positions of authority vis-à-vis the recipient who must accept their authority in a leap of faith in order to uncover the secret knowledge of their allegories.

Reconstructive postmodernists, however, cannot represent all of the secret knowledge because those parts of it that relate to the loss are unspeakable and must be experienced. The loss, then, cannot be re-presented, but it can be presented to an audience by means of theatres that call in their key moments

for ritualized audience participation. The search for new performative paradigms for their theatres leads both authors to experiment with diverse rituals that include the audience to varying degrees. Schafer's splendid term "co-opera" epitomizes this search. While adding a new spirit of cooperation to the opera (houses) that Schafer criticizes and utterly rejects in the 1960s, his neologism also suggests that anyone who participates in one of his works, be it as actor, singer, musician, spectator, designer, et al, participates fully in the co-operative effort. Everyone must contribute to that effort for it to be successful. Defined in contradistinction to the autonomy of modernist art, where the work of art does not draw the spectator into its realm, Gablik's notion of "art as compassionate action" (The Reenchantment 185) describes what Schafer demands ideally from performances of his works, namely that they be experienced in a spirit of wholeness and non-exclusion--everyone has an equally important part in the performance. It must, however, also be said that Schafer takes himself and his message far too seriously to relegate all his authority to the performing group at large. Even in the epilogue to Patria, perhaps his most co-operative effort to date, it is he who determines the overall shape and direction of the ritual.

Watson, too, shows his discontent with the theatre of the 1960s. He wants to recover authentic performances by utilizing theatre in ways that resurrect the ritualistic roots of theatre. To Watson, ritualistic repetitions, incantations, and

reversals of significant rituals seem to achieve such an authenticity. Watson defines himself in the riddles as the master who can build a riddle so elaborate that hardly anyone can solve it. There is, then, an element of condescension in Watson's work: he feels himself superior to his audience and is quite willing to illustrate his superiority. The same condescension can be felt in the participatory rituals of his plays, where he relates his allegorical message. Peculiarly, however, Watson's condescension merges with his tendency to take himself not all that seriously, a tendency that shows in the irony of his plays.

In her theorization of the postmodern, Linda Hutcheon does not admit any access to a primary sphere of existence. Viewing the postmodern as based solely on representation, she declares postmodernism as incapable of going beyond a "complicitous critique" in order to initiate political action.

Suzi Gablik, on the other hand, holds that artists in particular are in touch with a primary sphere of existence that is not mediated through representation but through spiritual experience. Her theory of the postmodern allows for political action but presumes that the spheres of aesthetics and politics are merged into a new politicized aesthetics which constitutes a shift of paradigm.

That Watson's and Schafer's unspeakables cannot be represented also accounts for the performative aspect in some of Watson's and Schafer's non-dramatic works because they involve

the readers in the text by enlisting them to solve riddles and maneuver labyrinths. Solving a riddle and maneuvering a labyrinth are akin to engaging in ritualized exercises or rehearsals insofar as these works serve to introduce the recipient to the notion of an unspeakable that must be experienced. But the ritualized exercises can neither sustain nor extend that experience from a temporary transportation to a permanent transformation of the audience.

The ritualized audience participation leads to group experiences that may give way to a group dynamics that negates any individual's enlightened self. Seen in conjunction with the inordinate amount of graphic violence against women and helpless victims in their works,[2] such a group dynamics must give pause. Is it conceivable that the group turns on a participant, labels her or him a scapegoat, and acts accordingly?

At this point, we recognize how important (or risky) the audience's leap of faith truly is and how it is contingent on a fundamental trust in the benignity of the allegorist's authority. Both Watson and Schafer have made reassuring comments with regard to the graphic violence in their works.

[2] Both Watson and Schafer indulge in presenting scenes on stage in which an all-powerful party tortures women and helpless victims who are tied or restrained by their torturers. To wit, see the "tonsillectomy" performed on the female singer in Schafer's The Greatest Show, the blinding of Cyril in Watson's Cockcrow, or the tortures the women inflict on the fascist in Gramsci x 3.

In his article "Towards a Canadian Theatre," Watson claims mimicry of violence as a therapeutic technique of survival:

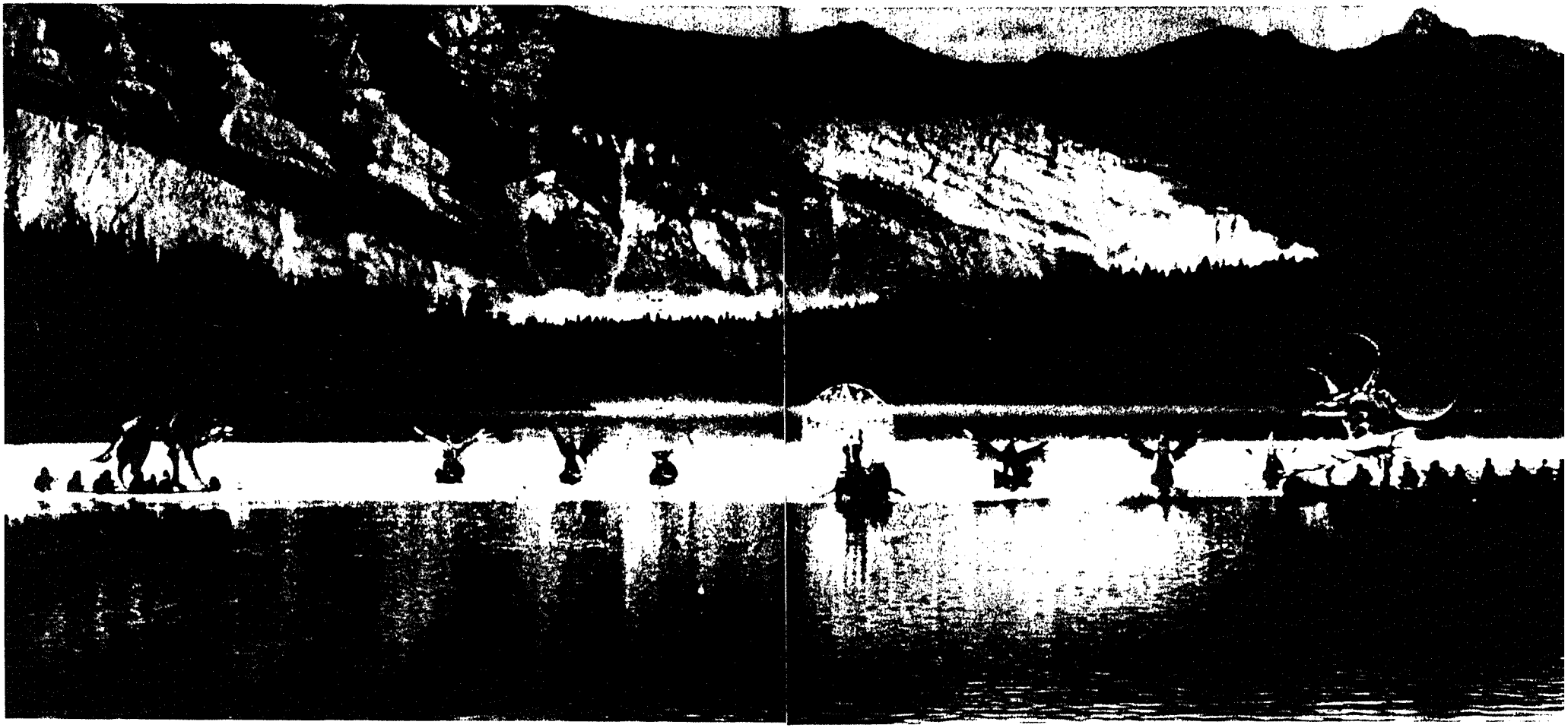
> When man invented the printed book, he initiated the terrible conversion of the world into a theatre where, instead of performance of violence in mimicry, actual mutilation and killing takes place on an unprecedented scale. Hence to end war, it may be that we will have to re-activate theatre on a scale approximating to that on which we wage war, in order to slake by means of the art of mimicry our uncontrolled appetite for violence. (56)

Schafer, likewise, claims a therapeutic dimension for his theatre projects in that they rouse our ecological "consciousness" and aid in halting the destruction of the environment. Hence both authors declare their intention to initiate therapeutic theatres, some of whose rituals help the audience control inappropriate violence by seeing it acted out on stage. The participatory tendencies in their theatres, however, take these rituals a step further than mere Aristotelian catharsis. Moreover, we have to take into account the structural violence that not only <u>occurs</u> at the foundation but <u>is</u> the foundation of postmodern allegory.

The allegorical gesture which is at the root of postmodern allegory is itself saturated with violence: the melancholic authors are confronted with an object that has lost its meaning due to what they see as a violent act or a catastrophe. This meaningless or dead object, then, is defenseless against the allegorists' inscription of a new meaning on the object. The new meaning is their own and establishes their domination of the object. Making the dead object signify anOther is another

act of deliberate violence against the object that forthwith implicates the allegorists themselves in a vicious circle: in authorizing the allegorical gesture, they aggravate the violence they wanted to end. This particular moment of the allegorical gesture appears psychologically rooted in necrophilia because the allegorists adore the dead object as a store of (their) authority. This adoration emerges as a thoroughly ambiguous passion, however, because once the allegorists adore the dead object, they must also adore what killed it, namely the violent act or catastrophe. The emblematic or iconic quality of postmodern allegory commemorates or celebrates the store of authority into which the allegorists' adoration has transfigured the dead object. Its emblematic or iconic quality, then, is a sign that postmodernism is contaminated at its very roots with the essence of most forms of human violence--domination.

A good example of this iconic quality of Schafer's ritual theatre is The Princess of the Stars (fig. 11). This spectacle serves to theatricalize daybreak on a wilderness lake by turning the lake into a stage on which large structures in canoes representing Wolf, the Three-Horned-Enemy, a chorus of dawn birds, and the Sundisk interact. The unhurried, majestic speed at which these interactions occur and the picturesque setting constitute the iconic quality of Schafer's spectacle. Through this quality, the spectator beholds the allegorist's momentous vision that has transformed the wilderness lake into a stage.



The Sun Disc flanked by Wolf, the Three-Horned Enemy and the Dawn Birds in the prologue to the *Patria* cycle, *The Princess of the Stars*. Designer: Jerrard Smith. Banff Festival Production, 1985.

Figure 11: The Princess of the Stars
on Two Jack Lake, near Banff, Alb.
(Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 108-09)

This transformation requires an authority which the allegorist draws from the wilderness lake, or rather from the lake minus the wilderness because a stage, however wild and uncultivated it may be, is no wilderness. In this way, the authority emerges as that of the colonizer, and the canoes, however theatrically innovative they may be, are the sign of human authority and domination of the lake. This domination can be seen as an act of violence.

In Watson's and Schafer's theatre, this emblematic or iconic quality is most obvious when the authors publicly display violated characters. Such exhibitions, which the authors often ritualize, are a trait of their drama.

In Watson's Another Bloody Page from Plutarch, for instance, Popilius orders the women to apply make-up to Cicero's dismembered head to be used in a political intrigue. The iconization is part and parcel of this intrigue and seems to parallel the process of reinscription I described as the allegorical gesture:

> . . . take the head of Cicero
> And wipe the bloody humanity from its face.
> And shave off the beard; and wash it clean.
> Remove the entrails, including the brain.
> Paint the eyes in, like the living eyes of Cicero.
> And let them blaze with hatred of Antony.
> Take lip rouge, and redden the lips into the red of life again.
> In short, embalm it, so that it seems
> About to utter the Oration against Antony all over again. (242)

Popilius wants the dismembered head to give the illusion of reiterating the very oration that enraged Antony to the point

of assassinating Cicero. In this way, Popilius recovers a loss, namely Cicero's political activism against Antony:

> When Herrenius and I take Cicero's prepared head
> To Antony, the hatred which I shall have
> Painted on its embalmed face will induce
> In Antony an opposite infatuation.
> He will cause it to be erected in a public place,
> And more Romans will come to look at it
> Than ever heard Cicero speak--even those
> Who have never read the Second Phillipic Oration
> Will consider that oration obligatory reading;
> And seeing Cicero's head there, believe it.
> And hate Antony.
> And Antony will reward Herrenius for procuring
> Him the head which in the end will eloquently destroy him.
> This is the utmost political murder can do. (243)

Cicero's embalmed head, refurbished with a "new" meaning becomes a store of authority to his murderers who adore the head as much as the deed that produced it, and transfigure it into an icon commemorating or celebrating authority. More than that, Cicero's head makes clear that Watson is aware of the inevitable ideological circularity in allegory: the prepared head is seamlessly integrated into the very discourse of political power and intrigue to which Cicero contributed his Second Phillipic Oration. This continuity between Cicero's writings and Cicero's head points to the fact that, ultimately, allegory cannot escape reinforcing ideological representation. Watson, however, hides his insight behind a façade of farcical, if not hysterical, laughter that manifests itself primarily in the senseless endlessness of his rituals. Frustrating, stupefying, and exhilarating at the same time, the character of these rituals attests to Watson's ambiguity and, perhaps, uneasiness

towards his insight. It is this ambiguity and uneasiness that his readers finally share with him through the participatory rituals in his plays and poetry.

Schafer, on the other hand, reacts to the ideological impasse of allegory in a different way. In Schafer's theatre, we also find exhibitions of violated characters. As I showed in chapter five, Schafer stages these exhibitions according to a strategic difference that exploits conventional dichotomies, such as absence and presence, male and female, etc. In The Greatest Show, Wolfman, like Cicero, attains a similar iconic and even emblematic character through undergoing the abstract violence of allegorical representation. By exploiting the allegorical gesture, Schafer repeatedly transfigures Wolfman into an icon or emblem of authority. As a result, Wolfman is able to relate his "story" to the spectator. Ariadne, however, does not attain a similar iconic status because her dismemberment does not lead to allegorization. Instead, Ariadne's dismembered body signifies literally the violence and its consequences but never what led to it or why it took place.

It seems to me that the violence directed against Ariadne is different from the structural violence of the allegorical gesture. The latter violence attempts to impose a new and deliberate order on the chaos of a dead world. Because Schafer does not allow Ariadne's dismembered body to signify allegorically, her body does not impose order. As a matter of course, then, her dismemberment functions as a challenge to the allego-

rist's newly established order. Schafer, unlike Watson, does not acknowledge that challenge; rather, he tries to quell it before it has a significant impact on his allegorical construct.

To recapitulate, the apparent difference between Ariadne's dismemberment and Wolfman's absence is that he continues signifying while she is ostensibly silenced by the male barkers exhibiting her dismembered body. Yet Ariadne is not completely silenced because she speaks non-verbally of the violence she had to suffer. If she could speak otherwise and expose the reasons for the violence done to her, perhaps she would not be a victim and certainly not as helpless a victim as Schafer portrays her. But by speaking <u>other</u>wise, she would signify allegorically; more precisely, she would signify directly the structural violence of the allegorical gesture and force the allegorist to admit that his new order is ideological too.

I can hear the reverberations of the "devil's laugh" (as Benjamin puts it) when under such conditions the allegorical world would begin crumbling from within, not under the violence of the Three-Horned-Enemy, who destroys the fairground at the end of <u>The Greatest Show</u>, but under the probing gaze of the melancholic who would finally be forced to apply the same rigorous standards to his new deliberate meanings as to the ones he has replaced.

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Appendix:
Descriptions of R. Murray Schafer's
Patria Cycle

My primary sources are the scores of Patria. They are oversized ring-bound books of the format 38 x 28 (or 40 x 30) cm. The score of the prologue is the only one to have a vertical layout. Patria 3 is an exception in its small half-letter (DIN A 5) format because most of the music is published separately. Schafer partitions the scores into "editing units," a term for rehearsal units. He explains that "each editing unit has its own mood or situation, though some flow into one another and others are distinctly separate--like the scenes of a conventional drama" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence iii). In this appendix, I provide descriptions of those parts of Patria that are vital to my discussion.

The Princess of the Stars is the prologue to Patria. The Princess takes place on a wilderness lake. Schafer places musicians and singers around the lake. Sound poets and dancers who are enacting roles are in canoes on the lake.[1] The audience assembles at the lake shore before dawn.

[1] The Four Horsemen and especially the late bp nichol participated in the première of The Princess as well as in other Schaferian spectacles, such as his two part Apocalypsis.

While the presenter's canoe approaches the audience, a singer intones the aria of Ariadne, which imitates various calls of the loon. The presenter then relates a legend to the audience:

Each night, the princess of the stars, daughter of the sungod and herself a goddess, looks down on earth. One night, she heard the mournful cry of Wolf, who was howling at the moon, his double. In her curiosity and concern, she leaned over too much and fell on the earth enveloping Wolf in a flash of light. The flash frightened Wolf and out of his fear he wounded the princess. She flees to a lake where the Three-Horned-Enemy takes her prisoner and holds her captive in the lake. The mist on the water is the sign of her struggling.

From the presenter's words, the spectators realize that the lake they have come to is the one in which the princess is imprisoned. Once the presenter has finished his legend, Wolf enters from a hidden side of the lake. The presenter elaborately greets Wolf. When the Three-Horned-Enemy enters, a fierce battle ensues that consists of tricky canoeing maneuvers. With the rise of the sun, the entrance of the sundisk interrupts their fight.

The presenter greets the sun and asks her to speak her commands which he will interpret for all to understand. The Sundisk then puts the Three-Horned-Enemy in his place: "Return the crown to the sky; it is too big for your head" (70). The princess must remain on earth until her redemption, which only

Wolf can bring about. But first he must find her: "Cover the world with your searching. The trials will be difficult. You will need many lives, and you will have few friends" (72). Once he has found the princess, whose earth-name is Ariadne, she will lead him to his final trial. The reward for completing that trial successfully is eternal life as the moon. Finally, the aria of the princess accompanies the slow exit of the canoes.

Patria 1: The Characteristics Man or Wolfman[2] takes the cycle back to a conventional theatre. Here we see Wolf in his first human incarnation. He is an immigrant to a country whose language and social customs he does not understand. His name, DP (for "displaced person"[3]) suggests his desolation. Schafer stipulates that DP is the only character speaking the language of the country in which the drama is performed. In this way, the audience can appreciate very directly DP's alienation.

Unlike other immigrants, DP is unable to integrate into a society whose key-interests seem to be earning money and in-

[2] Schafer decided to change the title after he composed a separate prologue for Patria, The Princess of the Stars. I discuss this change and the underlying reasons in chapter five.

[3] Schafer does not spell out what precisely the initials DP stand for. "DP" seen as abbreviation also opens the possibility of pointing at an intertext which Patria may draw on, namely C.G. Jung's Über die Psychologie der Dementia Praecox: Ein Versuch. Jung's is a study of schizophrenia. Similarly, "Wolfman" points to Freud's study Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose, the so-called Wolfman case.

dulging in consumer products and pornography. At a party, he sees Ariadne from afar, but she leaves before he can meet her. Out of an overwhelming sense of frustration, he takes a little girl hostage and holds her at knife-point until he stabs himself. Schafer uses the photographs of The Vancouver Sun's coverage of a hostage taking as illustrations for this scene.

Patria 2: Requiems for a Party Girl is a chamber work and calls for an open hall where the audience sits in front and back of the stage facing each other. Schafer places the choir and orchestra on the sides of the stage. Throughout the drama, various images and colors are projected on screens of different shapes. Like DP in The Characteristics Man, the party girl is the only character who speaks the language of the country in which the drama is performed. The setting is an insane asylum. Schafer thus draws on the expressionist manner of representing the alienation-theme.[4] All doctors speak a German psycho-jargon and the inmates speak only gibberish. The party-girl works through various memories, one of which is a hostage taking when she was a girl. Frequently, she hears the calling of a beast who threatens her. Schafer culls the texts of her 12 arias from the diaries of Albert Camus and Franz Kafka. In her last arias, she contemplates and perhaps commits suicide.

[4] See for instance the expressionist film classic The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1923).

Patria 3: The Greatest Show takes place outdoors on a fairground that offers five tent theatres and numerous mobile acts. The entire audience only sees the opening and closing acts of the show. In the opening act, two volunteers who turn out to be Wolfman and Ariadne vanish and are dismembered respectively. Throughout the show, the police pursue Wolfman for an unknown crime so that many acts feature posters of him or try to elicit descriptions of him from the audience. Body parts of Ariadne put in appearances in artistic acts. In the final act, the magicians make a desperate attempt at bringing back Wolfman and making Ariadne whole, but they fail and in a terrible mistake summon the Three-Horned-Enemy, who destroys the fairground.

Patria 4: The Black Theatre of Hermes Trismegistos is a staging of "the Chymical Marriage as described in the writings of the medieval alchemists" in a deserted mine or similar outlandish setting (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 135). Schafer splits the audience in four groups. The performers initiate each of these groups into secret rites and acquaint them with the principal alchemical symbols before the audience witnesses the alchemical procedures of smelting and distillation. Wolf represents antimony, and Ariadne represents the catalyst. At the end, Schafer hints at the perfection to come in the form of the Chymical Marriage.

Patria 5: The Crown of Ariadne is a re-enactment of the myth of Theseus (Wolf), Ariadne and the Minotaur (the Three-Horned-Enemy). It ends with the escape of two hooded figures from the labyrinth, which they set on fire. Similar to The Greatest Show, The Crown ends in destruction and ambiguity.

Patria 6: Ra is a hierophany depicting the story of the Egyptian sungod Ra and his journey through the underworld. The audience consists of 82 initiates who learn to distinguish different perfumes and sing little themes standing for the 82 names of Ra. The ritual lasts through the night for a duration of 10-11 hours.

Patria 7: Asterion is a co-opera that Schafer fashions like a maze through which the audience has to work its way towards the final encounter with the Minotaur. Schafer writes: "My plan is to provide a schematic, into which many artists could fit pieces already created, or specially realized, arranged as a sequence of sensory events, calculated to affect the isolated individual, by altering the existential state, in preparation for the final encounter" (Patria and the Theatre of Confluence 212).

Patria 8: The Enchanted Forest is a fairy tale to be enacted in the open air on a warm summer evening.

Patria 9: The Spirit Garden draws on various planting rituals and may take as simple a form as the cultivation of a garden.

Patria 10: The Kingdom of the Cinnabar Phoenix is the final journey of Wolf in which he goes to seek enlightenment from the East. Schafer closes this part with a spectacle of Chinese lanterns on a lake at night. Furthermore, Schafer writes: "Let the light that knows no glare radiate through him [Wolf] as though he were a butterfly; then let him return enlightened to his point of origin, the forested lake from which he originally departed" (213).

Epilogue: And Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon takes us back in a week-long camp to the forested lake where the cycle began. Schafer splits the participants into clans each of which has a different totem animal. At first unaware of the existence of the other clans, the participants prepare under the guidance of leaders, teachers, artists and story tellers a portion of a ritual designed to unite Wolf and the Princess of the Stars. On the last day, this ritual takes place near the lake. It culminates in the departure of Wolf for the moon and the Princess for the heavens. The cycle is complete.