

Pandora Könyvek 20.



Éva Antal

BEYOND RHETORIC
Rhetorical Figures of Reading

Éva Antal

BEYOND RHETORIC
RHETORICAL FIGURES OF READING

Pandora Könyvek

20. kötet

Éva Antal

**BEYOND RHETORIC
RHETORICAL FIGURES OF READING**

Sorozatszerkesztő:

Prof. Dr. Mózes Mihály

A 2009-ben megjelent kötetek:

Gábos Judit: Dinu Lipatti
(14. kötet)

Várady Krisztina: Poulenc: Un soir de neige
(15. kötet)

Csüllög Judit: A népdal szerepe a kezdők zongoraoktatásában
Magyarországon
(16. kötet)

Órsi Tibor: Lexikológiai és szaknyelvi tanulmányok
(17. kötet)

Mózes Mihály: Agrárfejlődés Erdélyben (1867–1918)
(18. kötet)

Német István (Szerk.): A XX. század titkai. Európa (1900–1945)
(19. kötet)

Éva Antal

**BEYOND RHETORIC
RHETORICAL FIGURES OF READING**



Liceum Kiadó
Eger, 2009

A szerző a kötet összeállításakor
Magyar Állami Eötvös Ösztöndíjban (MÖB/123-1/2008) részesült.

A borítón
John William Waterhouse: *Pandora* (1896)
című festményének részlete látható

ISSN: 1787-9671

ISBN 978-963-9894-38-9

A kiadásért felelős
az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola rektora
Megjelent az EKF Líceum Kiadó gondozásában
Igazgató: Kis-Tóth Lajos
Felelős szerkesztő: Zimányi Árpád
Műszaki szerkesztő: Nagy Sándorné
Borítóterv: Kormos Ágnes

Megjelent: 2009. október Példányszám: 100

Készítette: az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola nyomdája
Felelős vezető: Kérészy László

Στο Βασίλειο

Table of Contents

PREFACE	9
RHETORICAL THEORY OF READING	
THE RHETORIC AND ETHICS OF READING.....	15
THE RHETOR(ETH)ICAL READINGS OF THE MATERIAL AND THE ROMANTIC SUBLIME	32
THE IRONICAL ALLEGORY OF REMEMBRANCE AND OBLIVION (IN MEMORY OF PAUL DE MAN AND JACQUES DERRIDA)	40
PYGMALIONS' READING OF READING PYGMALIONS	58
RHETORICAL PRACTICE OF READING	
THE 'THING' BETWIXT AND BETWEEN – IRONY AND ALLEGORY IN WORDSWORTH'S "A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL"	91
"LABOUR OF LOVE" – OVIDIAN FLOWER-FIGURES IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S <i>SONGS</i>	100
"(T)HE (DEVIL) WHO DWELLS IN FLAMING FIRE" – BLAKE'S APOCALYPTIC VISION AND ANIRONIC SATIRE IN <i>THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL</i> ...	117
THE BESTIAL FIGURES OF THE SOCRATIC IRONY.....	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY	149
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	157

PREFACE

My field of research is rhetoric and rhetorical reading. According to the classical theoreticians, Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero, rhetoric is the practice and art of – mainly oral – persuasion. Today in deconstructive literary theory it also means studying the effects of such rhetorical tropes and figures as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, chiasmus, allegory, irony, and paradox. In the case of rhetorical figures, that is, in figurative language – as Paul de Man remarks – “the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference.”¹ While studying the classical rhetorical tropes, I became interested in irony, a peculiar figure of speech, which as we know is also a figure ‘saying one thing and meaning another’. But if we try to define irony offering it theory, we should accept the difficulty of the task. With its permanent interruptions and disruptions “irony is precisely what makes it impossible ever to achieve a theory of narrative that would be consistent.”² I cannot help quoting Richard Rorty here in his *Contingency, Solidarity and Irony* (1989), where he emphasises the importance of multivocality and the lack of a final, single *vocabulary*. A person’s (final) vocabulary contains the words in which he tells the story of his life, while an ironist is aware of the contingency of her and others’ final vocabulary.³

This book contains the texts I have written since my thesis on irony. In my dissertation titled *On the Concept of Irony — With (Continual) Reference to Kierkegaard* I studied several ‘ironological’ (irony-theoretical) texts of primary importance. The analyses of the conceptual understandings of irony have resulted in a specific reading practice that can be called ‘ironical reading’ and can mostly be associated with deconstructive interpretative practice — sometimes it turns out to be its *ad absurdum* ironical version. The ironical reading implies the questioning of every detail of the text and looking behind its rhetorical figures, or rather going beyond its rhetoric. This book gives a selection

¹ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993), 209.

² Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 179. But it does not mean that we should give up working on its theory, “because that’s all we can do” – as de Man himself remarks here.

³ I deliberately use ‘she’ here to follow Rorty’s path as he emphatically refers to the ironist as ‘she’. According to Rorty, the ironist “(1)[she] has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself”. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 73.

of my writings in two main parts. In the first part the texts are concerned with the theoretical approaches of reading. The introductory chapter “The Rhetoric and Ethics of Reading” is ‘closely’ related to modern and postmodern reading practices; more exactly, it deals with the *close reading* of the American New Criticism and the rhetorical-ethical readings in the works of Yale-deconstructors, Paul de Man and J. H. Miller. On the one hand, I concentrate on the possible ‘goodness’ of the rhetorical deconstructive reading practice, relying on Miller’s ‘theory’ of the *ethics of reading* and its different interpretations expressed in his works (*Theory Now and Then* and *The Ethics of Reading*). On the other hand, comparing the main principles of these practices, I pay special attention to the recurrent (circular) metaphors used to display their similarities – and their differences as well. I can say that my work is ‘turning around,’ centred on the metaphor(s) of reading, and its circularity shows the curved path/course of my argument. The second chapter, “The Rhetor(eth)ical Reading of the Material and Romantic Sublime”, is mainly concerned with some deconstructive interpretations of the Kantian sublime. Contrasting and comparing the readings I concentrate on two elements of these discourses: the importance of imagination/fantasy expressed in the rhetorical figures of figurative language, and the ‘possible’ relation between the sublime and ethics.

The next chapter is dedicated to two significant theoreticians of deconstruction: Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man and focuses on the ironical allegory of narrative. My starting point is Paul de Man’s conclusion in his *Allegories of Reading*, where he refers to irony as the trope of tropes, the essence of rhetoric. In his *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida tries to tell the ‘story’ of remembrance and forgetting. In this particular story, embedded in the context of allegory and irony, such flowers of rhetoric flourish as Mnemosyne, Lethe, Psyche or Narcissus. I attempt to interpret these rhetorical figures, while the recurrent ‘narcissus’ becomes the rhetorical flower of (my) reading. Closely related to the Narcissistic text, in the final chapter of part one I pay attention to the self-reflexive, life-giving and all-demanding irony of postmodern reading-theories. “Pygmalions’ Reading of Reading Pygmalions” is concerned with the question of self/life-writing and life work in literary criticism. Here I display the rhetorical devices and figures used by the theoreticians in their understanding and reading of their own works. This chapter also has a central classical figure: Pygmalion, whose creative ‘life-giving’ story is often alluded to in deconstructive critical writings, mainly in de Man’s *Allegories of Reading* and J. H. Miller’s *Versions of Pygmalion*.

Moving away from the theories, but not leaving them behind, the second part of the book analyses literary and philosophical texts. In the first paper the chosen ‘romantic’ work, Wordsworth’s lyric poem, is unique as both the modern and postmodern critics used the poem to present their ideas on reading practice. In my rhetorical reading I analyse the relation between irony and allegory in the

temporal structure of the work. The next two chapters discuss the work of my favourite romantic poet, William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and the prophecy *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* relating them to classical works. In the poems – “The Sick Rose,” “My Pretty Rose Tree,” “The Lilly,” and “Ah! Sunflower!” – I show ironic Ovidian reminiscences, studying the mythical transformation of the amorous metaphorical flower-figures (Clytie, Proserpine and Narcissus) borrowed from *Metamorphoses*. In the prophecy, I investigate the rhetorical devices and the tones of the Blakean irony while elaborating on the satirical form and apocalyptic context of the work. Finally, in the last – rather surprising – chapter I present the rhetoric of irony focusing on the weird figures used to characterise the Socratic irony in Kierkegaard's treatise entitled *The Concept of Irony – With Continual Reference to Socrates*.

Returning to ‘rhetorical figures of reading’, I had wanted to give my book the subtitle *Bridge and Abyss* to echo Derrida's “*The circle and the abyss*”, which he planned to use as a title naming his favourite figures.⁴ In my work the ‘good’ reader will find such recurrent tropes as the vault, the bridge, the circle, and the spiral, embedded in the ironical contexts. These metaphors are closely related in my readings and my readings move along the spiral of understanding in concentric circles – or rather in *eccentric* circles. Yet *beyond irony*, all the figures are used to *bridge over* the chiasmic abyss, the chasm (ch(i)asm) of sign-and-meaning, of language. To quote from “The Task of the Translator” Walter Benjamin's poetically dispiriting statement, “meaning plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language.”⁵

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Parergon*, in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, 15-147), 24. Originally I wanted to title the book *Rhetorical Figures of Reading* but chose the title *Beyond Rhetoric* to recall the title of my Hungarian collection of essays, *Beyond Irony (Túl az irónián)*, Budapest: Kijárat Kiadó, 2007).

⁵ Quoted by Joseph Hillis Miller in *The Ethics of Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, 127).

RHETORICAL THEORY OF READING

THE RHETORIC AND ETHICS OF READING

*A book is a dangerous object, and perhaps
all books should have warning labels.
(Joseph Hillis Miller)*

In my analysis of the irony-perceptions of (modern) American criticism and (postmodern) American deconstruction, my attention focused on deconstruction and the so-called rhetoric of reading. In studying texts on irony, the conclusion of my thesis was concerned with the (possible) ethics of reading – the term – borrowed from Yale professor and critic, Joseph Hillis Miller, and his book, *The Ethics of Reading*. The study of this paradoxical term and its meanings – which we may look at suspiciously – leads to different reading techniques of modernism and postmodernism. I have used the word ‘techniques,’ but I had better say ‘practices’ of reading, because both in the American modernist New Criticism and postmodern deconstruction, the practicality of theories is emphasised.

We can think about not only the future possibilities, but also the present state of criticism and reading – whatever they mean nowadays. In contemporary literary criticism the question of responsibility together with such practical issues as the changes in the literary canon and curricula, is frequently discussed. Joseph Hillis Miller in his *Theory Now and Then* provocatively claims that “all good readers are and always have been deconstructionist”. This expresses the basic notion of deconstruction; namely that language is fundamentally figurative and, consequently, good reading means the interpreting of the rhetorical figures, the tropes of a text.¹ In his statement, not only the term ‘deconstructionists’, but also the term ‘good readers’, is puzzling. Who can be a good reader? What can it mean that a reader is good, deconstructionist, or a good deconstructionist? In an interview in 2000, Miller defined the critic’s work as “that of mediation, leading the reader back to the text.”² He also asserts that the rhetorical deconstructive reading practice results in good and responsible readings. Focusing on his ethics of reading, we should not forget that Miller’s reading practice is related to – and according to Critchley, highly determined by – the context of teaching and, consequently, it is basically pedagogical.³

When we speak about deconstruction in the States, we feel compelled to point out the influence of the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida’s;

¹ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Theory Now and Then* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 231.

² Adorján István, “An Interview with J. Hillis Miller,” *The AnaChronisT* (2002: 297-302), 299.

³ Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1993), 47.

immediately adding that Derrida does not call himself a deconstructionist and that deconstruction was ‘born and brought up’ at the University of Yale in the work of the four main deconstructors – Paul de Man’s, J. H. Miller’s, Geoffrey H. Hartman’s and Harold Bloom’s, with Derrida’s ‘(dis)seminating’ step-fatherhood. In his *Allegories of Reading* de Man defines what the rhetorical means to him:

The deconstruction is not something we have added to the text but it constituted the text in the first place. A literary text simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode, and by reading the text as we did we were only trying to come closer to being as rigorous a reader as the author had to be in order to write the sentence in the first place.⁴

As the antecedents of deconstruction, de Man refers not to Derrida’s impact, but names two modernist critics of the school New Criticism: Monroe Bredsley and William Wimsatt, who also recognised the importance of the rhetorical in textual understanding. He also shows us that if we want to understand the rhetoric and later the ethics of reading, we have to map the preliminaries. That is, to understand the postmodern reading practice and its ethical implications, first we need to know about the modernist view of reading, which gives the immediate context of American deconstruction.

Partly due to its pedagogical root, Miller’s and de Man’s deconstructive reading is closely related to the earlier American reading practice, that of New Criticism. In the 1940s-50s, having realised that students could not understand pieces of literature (especially, poems), university teachers – John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, René Wellek, Allan Tate, William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks – developed and used a new method to analyse literary and philosophical texts. Besides practical textbooks written for students – for example, the famous ‘understanding-series’ (*Understanding Poetry*, *Understanding Fiction*) – their articles and studies were also concerned with the theory of literature, literary language and literary criticism. It can be said that their mission – and they really took their work in such a way – made them immensely influential and productive. They deliberately acted against the branches of contemporary criticism, such as sociological, biographical or philological criticism, and demanded a more systematic and more rigorous approach in reading. They claimed that literary language differed from any other kind of language; consequently, critics, teachers, students, that is, readers had to concentrate on the texts themselves. In their work, *Literary Criticism*, Wimsatt and Brooks define “the principle task of criticism – perhaps *the* task of criticism

⁴ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 17.

– is to make explicit to the reader the implicit manifold of meanings.”⁵ Like Miller, they also undertook the task of improving the readers, not the authors, by showing them the complexity and inexhaustible richness of the literary works.

In the theoretically based approach of New Criticism the key terms are: “close reading,” structure and irony. According to the New Critics, the text and its language are to be considered without any interest in the author’s age or life; in a given work we should pay attention only to the use of language and the structure created. The meaning of a literary text is given by and in its semantic structure, which is not only dynamic showing the reconciliation of opposites; but also organic – nothing is irrelevant and every detail contributes to the whole. As Cleanth Brooks describes in his article, “The Heresy of Paraphrase”: “the structure meant is a structure of meanings, evaluations and interpretations; and the principle of unity which informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes and meanings.”⁶ This poetic structure and its desired unity is not rational or logical, but – to use Brooksian similes – it resembles that of architecture or painting, a ballet or musical composition based on the “pattern of resolved stresses.”⁷

In poems, tension, conflicts and stresses are given by such ‘problematic’ elements as metaphors, symbols, paradoxes and other figures of speech because they easily get their connotative meanings from the context. In *The Verbal Icon* Wimsatt says that in a good metaphor “two clearly and substantially named objects [...] are brought into such a context that they face each other with fullest relevance and illumination.”⁸ In spite of the conflicting or opposing meanings by the end of the close reading, an equilibrium of forces, a unity is supposed to be given, and “this unity is not a unity of the sort to be achieved by the reduction and simplification appropriate to an algebraic formula. It is a positive unity, not a negative; it represents not a residue but an achieved harmony.”⁹

Using the above mentioned dramatic metaphors, it is possible to imagine conflicting forces, more exactly the possible semantic (connotative) meanings of the words, were fighting, and their tension resulted in a climax giving the theme, a leading idea or conclusion of a text. The whole process of close textual understanding is summarised in one word: irony. Nevertheless, in the modern New Criticism irony is overused. On the one hand, “it is the most general term that we have for the kind of qualification which the various elements in a context receive from the context”;¹⁰ that is, irony necessarily operates in every context

⁵ Wimsatt, William K. & Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism – A Short History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 652.

⁶ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), 195.

⁷ Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, 203.

⁸ Wimsatt, William K., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 111.

⁹ Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, 114-115.

¹⁰ Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn*, 209.

and in every reading process. On the other hand, by the end of our close reading of a text we have to reveal the work's (possible) "invulnerability to irony." Brooks introduces this paradoxical idea in the wonderful arch simile:

Irony, then, in this further sense, is not only an acknowledgement of the pressures of a context. Invulnerability to irony is the stability of a context in which the internal pressures balance and mutually support each other. The stability is like that of the arch: the very forces which are calculated to drag the stones to the ground actually provide the principle of support – a principle in which thrust and counterthrust become the means of stability.¹¹

Let us pay attention to two things here: first, the figurative language used by the New Critics in their close reading/writing; second, their obsession with a wanted, or rather wished equilibrium and totality in textual understanding. While the first phenomenon leads us to the deconstructive attack on New Criticism, the second one foreshadows the moral implications of close reading.

Actually, the New Critics do not explicitly speak about ethical questions, since for them poetry means "a way of knowing something: (if the poem is a real creation,) it is a kind of knowledge that we did not possess before" – as Allen Tate claims in *The Essays of Four Decades* adding: "it is not knowledge 'about' something else; [...] it is the fullness of that knowledge."¹² When Brooks says that, optimally, the ironical reading process results in "a unification of attitudes into a hierarchy subordinated to a total and governing attitude,"¹³ he displays his totalising and somewhat holistic, though dialectic, worldview. I suppose, it can be guessed that due to the critics' concern with true knowledge and wisdom, in close reading "such qualities as wit, ambiguity, irony, paradox, complexity, and tension are valued for more than aesthetic reasons; they are indexes to the view of reality – and of man and truth – in the work. They are, therefore, not really aesthetic or rhetorical but, since they are modes of apprehending reality, ontological or, in the broad sense, religious."¹⁴ What's more, in "Cleanth Brooks and the Responsibilities of Criticism" Monroe K. Spears sees the mission of New Critics as grounded in the tradition of Christian humanism, giving ontological meaning to their reading practice while their irony is taken religiously, or at least ethically.

¹¹ Cleanth Brooks, "Irony as a Principle of Structure," in *Critical Theory since Plato*, ed. by H. Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971, 1041-1048), 1044.

¹² Allen, Tate, *Essays of Four Decades* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 104-105.

¹³ Wimsatt-Brooks, *Literary Criticism – A Short History*, 380.

¹⁴ Monroe K. Spears, "Cleanth Brooks and the Responsibilities of Criticism," in *The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work*, ed. by Lewis Simpson (Louisiana State University Press, 1976, 230-252), 240.

The reader is supposed to find true knowledge, “knowledge of a value-structured world” in the literary works. As Wellek quotes Brooks’s claim, poetry gives “a special kind of knowledge [...] through poetry, man comes to know himself in relation to reality, and thus attains wisdom.”¹⁵ In the concluding paragraphs of his “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” Brooks confesses that in textual close reading “penetrating insights” can be gained and one of the uses of poetry is to make the readers “better citizens.” But poetry, that is, a given figurative text, manages it relying on the expressed relevant particulars, not with the usage of abstraction. More accurately, it carries us “beyond the abstract creed into the very matrix from which our creeds are abstracted.”¹⁶ Thus, specific moral problems can be the subject matter of literature, but the purpose of literature is not to point a moral. The New Critics rejected the ideas of the intentionalists in “The Intentional Fallacy” by Wimsatt and Beardsley. Indeed in *The Ethics of Criticism* Siebers points out: “It was through the denial of intention, in fact, that the New Critics most forcefully maintained the rhetoric of the poem’s autonomy, and the effect of that rhetoric remains a dominant force in theory to this day.”¹⁷

In the modernist close reading of New Criticism the belief in the possibility of order and the quest for order are emphasised. Moreover, the New Critics also believed in a strong sense of community expressed by the romantic idea of ‘organic unity’. Although I characterised their reading technique as ‘ironic’ paying attention to the rhetorical forces of a given text, it is better described as “irenic” striving for the equilibrium of those forces. Although we can find the New Critical approach quite positive and fruitful, we must admit its basic idealistic naivety resulting from the modernist efforts aimed at solving the surrounding chaos of the world. Their desired vaulted arch symbolising understanding can refer to perfection, but we cannot forget that it is suspended in the air between two solid, but imagined buildings.

As I am obsessed with rhetoric, the arch metaphor with its ideality reminds me of György Lukács’s notion of closed cultures expressed in his *Heidelberg Aesthetics*. In connection with the lost golden age of Greece he says that “the circle with its closeness meant the essential transcendental core of their life, but for us (let me add, in modern times) the circle has been exploded: we cannot breathe in a closed world any longer.”¹⁸ It can be said that after the loss of communal understanding of life (cf. in the Greek *polis*) with the appearance of

¹⁵ René Wellek, “Cleanth Brooks, Critic of Critics,” in *The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work*, ed. by Lewis Simpson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976, 196-229), 228-229.

¹⁶ Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *Critical Theory since Plato*, 1048.

¹⁷ Tobin Siebers, *The Ethics of Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 47.

¹⁸ Lukács György, *A heidelbergi művészetfilozófia és esztétika. A regény elmélete* (Budapest: Magvető, 1975), 496-7. The translation is mine.

possible individual understanding, the circle is opened. In modernity the (arch)metaphor of reading becomes an imagined half-circle or a vault, then later – in postmodernism – we should be content with its fragmentary pieces: after closed (or non) reading, there is close-reading, then the open one.

In his early critical writings Paul de Man, one of the four Yale-deconstructors, deals with this shift from ‘close(d)’ reading to the open – later with his term named as allegorical – reading. In his early critical writing “Form and Intent in the American New Criticism” (in *Blindness and Insight*) de Man claims that though the New Critics noticed the importance of, and paid attention to, such distinctive features of literary language as ambiguity or irony, these structural elements themselves contradicted the very premise on which New Criticism with its central “totalizing principle” was founded. In the key paragraph he describes this process:

As it refines its interpretations more and more, American criticism does not discover a single meaning, but a plurality of significations that can be radically opposed to each other. Almost in spite of itself, it pushes the interpretative process so far that the analogy between the organic world and the language of poetry finally explodes. This unitarian criticism finally becomes a criticism of ambiguity, an ironic reflection on the absence of the unity it had postulated.¹⁹

It seems as if de Man had thought over the New Critical approach of reading – reading its theory ‘closely’ – and on the basis of its faults or ‘blind spots’ and ‘insights’ he developed his later ideas. According to de Man, the greatest ‘blindness’ (and insight) of New Criticism was, while they tried to pay “such patient and delicate attention to the reading of forms,”²⁰ the presupposed idea of totality forced them to find closed forms and to strive for order. It can be said that they simply used Heidegger’s theory of hermeneutical circularity, but they forgot about the fact that the (hermeneutical) act of understanding is a temporal one. De Man remarks: “yet, the temporal factor, so persistently forgotten, should remind us that the form is never anything but a process on the way to its completion.”²¹ And the metaphor that can show the true nature of textual understanding is not the circle or the arch, but the spiral line that consists of seemingly closed / closing circles displaying the temporal and never-ending process of understanding, that is, the rhetoric of temporality.

In *Blindness and Insight*, in the essay “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” de Man regards allegory together with irony as the key rhetorical tropes in our (textual)

¹⁹ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993), 28.

²⁰ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 29.

²¹ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 28.

understanding. Here he is concerned with the differences of the two rhetorical figures, which he defines in their relation to time. Though both show the discontinuous relationship between sign and meaning, the experience of time in the case of irony means “a synchronic structure, while allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration”²² – that is, it is diachronic. Focusing on their temporality, the New Critical irony and de Man’s reading of allegory and irony can be derived from the (paradoxical) hermeneutical circle. It is quite obvious why de Man feels obliged to distinguish the two tropes: he wants to resist, to get detached or differentiated from the new critical reading, asserting that “the dialectical play between the two modes, as well as their common interplay with mystified forms of language [...], which it is not in their power to eradicate, make up what is called literary history.”²³ We can guess that after the New Critical emphasis on irony as a basic principle, in the de Manian reading, allegory is given primacy. Having published his theoretical works, de Man starts to interpret/read philosophical and literary texts relying on his ideas of the rhetorical. In the collection of his readings *Allegories of Reading* (subtitled: *Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*) de Man defines his temporal, allegorical, rhetorical mode of reading:

The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration. As distinguished from primary deconstructive narratives centered on figures and ultimately always on a metaphor, we can call such narratives to the second (or the third) degree *allegories*.²⁴

He also claims that the allegorical narratives being “allegories of metaphors [...] tell the story of the failure to read.”²⁵ But I can immediately add that efforts are made again and again as we try to understand, try to read a text and its allegories. It means that in the background, not only in the texts but in language itself, there should be something that makes the different allegorical readings possible and also helps us readers to accept the impossibility of a final reading. We ‘need’ this something that is essentially rhetorical; we need irony. Although the quoted passage emphasises the allegoricity of reading, the superposed layers of reading-efforts are guaranteed by the ironic nature of language. While allegory is read as the trope of reading, irony becomes the trope of tropes –

²² de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 226.

²³ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 226.

²⁴ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 205. Italics in the original.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

quoting the concluding sentences of de Man's *Allegories of Reading*: "Irony is no longer a trope but the undoing of the deconstructive allegory of all tropological cognitions, the systematic undoing, in other words, of understanding. As such, far from closing off the tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration."²⁶ In our understanding, irony (and also in our understanding of irony), the trope of the rhetorical vortex displays the dizziness of figurativity, as "it dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral."²⁷ We can think that opposed to the obsession of New Criticism with order and the autonomy of the work, in deconstructive readings something is lost. Nevertheless, de Man – like the other deconstructors – often claims that the autonomy of a text is given by its own rhetoricity (cf. rhetorical nature) and deconstructive potentialities.

The other important element of the New Critical 'vaulted' (arch)metaphor is its possible moral implications. Now comes the most important question: what happened to the covert moral implication of the New Criticism in de Man's reading? I should claim that in the rhetorical deconstructive reading it has become overt; what's more, it has become evident. In his rhetorical deconstructive (close) readings de Man speaks about the "practical ethical dimension of allegory". He says that "allegories are always ethical," though the ethical here is not related to the subject's will or the relations between subjects. The famous quotation reads as follows:

Allegories are always ethical, the term ethical designating the structural interference of two distinct value systems. In this sense, ethics has nothing to do with the will (thwarted or free) of a subject, nor *a fortiori*, with a relationship between subjects. The ethical category is imperative (i.e. a category rather than a value) to the extent that it is linguistic and not subjective. Morality is a version of the same language aporia that gave rise to such concepts as 'man' or 'love' or 'self,' and not the cause or the consequence of such concepts. The passage to an ethical tonality does not result from a transcendental imperative but it is referential (and therefore unreliable) version of a linguistic confusion. Ethics (or, one should say, ethicity) is a discursive mode among others.²⁸

First, in this luminous paragraph, before going into details, we can find three different words related to our chosen topic: morality, ethics and ethicity. I think,

²⁶ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 301.

²⁷ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 222.

²⁸ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 206. Italics in the original.

de Man does not simply want to play on words, since the more ancient – or modern – word, morality, and its science, ethics, are differentiated from the postmodern term, ethicity.²⁹ Although in their original meaning the words seem to refer to the same realm of the question of good versus wrong behaviour, from the common foundation the postmodern theory of ethics, named ethicity, gives rise to multiplicity. That is to say, in the word ‘ethicity’ we can see the deconstruction of ethics with preserving and questioning its aporetic roots.

However, despite the usual attack on deconstruction claiming that deconstruction turns from ethical problems in complete indifference, it rather turns to and regards such questions in their differences. The ethicity of deconstruction can be named ‘ethics-in-difference’ because it is sensitive to variety; it pays more attention to differences and consciously accepts them. In de Man’s theory, the new term of ethicity is strongly connected with the practice of reading, more exactly, the allegorical reading practice. In *Allegories of Readings* his analyses are about the universality and the impossibility of Reading (written with capital ‘r’) as he says “any narrative (that is, story-telling) is primarily the allegory of his own reading [...] the allegory of reading narrates the impossibility of reading.”³⁰ However good we are as readers, we inevitably fail to read allegories due to the fact that a rhetorical trope says one thing and always means another, and its final reading thus becomes impossible. For de Man, “Reading” (written in quotation marks and capitalised) – also as an allegory – “includes not just [...] the act of reading works of literature, but sensation, perception, and therefore every human act whatsoever.”³¹ It gives “the ground and foundation of human life”³² and consequently, in a given text, event or experience, we cannot reach a totality of understanding; that is, we cannot have a single, definitive interpretation.

De Man’s ‘rhetor-ethics’ can certainly be applied to his reading of his own text or my understanding of his reading. The other Yale-deconstructor, Joseph Hillis Miller, undertakes the task of defining ‘the ethics of reading’ in several of his works, though he himself refers to the term as an “oxymoron.”³³ In his book *The Ethics of Reading* he tries to understand this oxymoron, or, as Scholes labels it: this “perverse notion of reading.”³⁴ However, Miller’s writings are ‘only’ concerned with the understanding of reading and for him the ethics of reading marks the “necessary ethical moment in that act of reading as such, a moment neither cognitive, nor political, nor social, not interpersonal, but properly and

²⁹ Moreover, in its meaning, the word ‘ethicity’ can be taken as being closer to morality than ethics, as it is also concerned with practice, not rules or system of rules formulated in ethics.

³⁰ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 76-7.

³¹ Joseph Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 58.

³² Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 48.

³³ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Victorian Subjects* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 237.

³⁴ Robert Scholes, *Protocols of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1989), 151.

independently ethical.”³⁵ In *The Ethics of Reading* Miller as a good deconstructive reader tries to understand and read de Man’s ideas on ethicity in one of his chapters “Reading Unreadability: de Man.” Analysing the famous quotation, Miller calls attention to the way de Man rejects the traditional, basically Kantian theory of ethics. Though de Man still uses the words, ‘category’ and ‘imperative’ alluding to the Kantian ‘categorical imperative,’ the ethical category is neither subjective, nor transcendental for him – but linguistic. Being taken as a linguistic phenomenon, the ethical refers to a necessary element in language and life, namely that “we cannot help making judgments of right or wrong or commanding others to act according to those judgments (or) condemning them for not doing so” – says Miller.³⁶

In his chapter on de Man’s ethicity, Miller also emphasises the existential importance of reading and the ‘fictional’ (cf. imagined sequence of allegories) nature of the (never-ending) process of understanding that “mix[es] tropological, allegorical, referential, ethical, political, and historical dimensions.”³⁷ De Man claims that the ethical, just like the allegorical, is only one of the possible ‘discursive modes’; not a primary, but a secondary or a tertiary category, that is, they do not and cannot come first in textual understanding. Then what comes first? Referring again to the quotation, it clearly says that the reading process starts from “a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction,” then due to its deconstruction it is followed (endlessly) by a sequence of “supplementary figural superposition” which tells “the unreadability of the prior narration.” These narratives – actually generated by the primary one are called allegorical narratives, or allegories telling “the story of the failure to read.”³⁸ Thus, *right* at the beginning of understanding we have rhetorical figures; more exactly, language with its determining laws. And – following de Man’s ideas – I can say this is the very first and the very last moment when the word ‘right’ can be *truly* used, as starting our reading of a text with its rhetorical figures, we must (truly) enter its *false* world. Although we are in the realm of falsehood, being good readers we try to read it *right*; and, what’s more, the ethical appears in this contextualised falsehood. For de Man “the term ethical designates the structural interference of two distinct value systems” referring to the epistemological true-false and the ethical right-wrong value-pairs. In an allegorical reading a statement cannot be both true and right at once, as “it is impossible to respond simultaneously to those two demands.”³⁹

Therefore instead of using the expression ‘ethical value,’ de Man speaks about ‘the ethical category’ regarding it as an imperative: as an obligation it is

³⁵ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 1.

³⁶ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 46.

³⁷ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 44.

³⁸ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 205.

³⁹ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 49.

taken absolute and unconditional. Both Miller and de Man (and I myself) struggle with the real meaning of de Man's ethicity – as can be expected in a text claiming the unreadability of reading. Miller quotes another interesting passage, where de Man clearly names his 'true' categorical imperative: "in the case of reading of a text, what takes place is a necessary understanding [...] an understanding is an epistemological event prior to being an ethical or aesthetic value."⁴⁰ It becomes obvious that de Man knows only one imperative: the imperative of language with its – quite hermeneutical – 'read!' or 'understand!' Returning to the central de Manian principle, Miller concludes that "to live is to read, or rather to commit again and again the failure to read which is the human lot [...] each reading is strictly speaking, ethical, in the sense that it *has* to take place, by an implacable necessity, as a response to a categorical demand."⁴¹ Our world is full of texts and systems of signs which we are bound to understand: we cannot help reading; but we should accept that we cannot go beyond the borders of language. And we also have to accept that the ethical is only one of the possible but necessary referential modes of our reading. While interpreting de Man's theory of the 'rhetorical close-reading' from an ethical point of view, Miller himself cannot escape from falling into the traps of the rhetorical, of language. At the end of his reading on de Man's ethicity, Miller answers his own question using the tricky affirmative of double negation. He says that in de Man's case "[the] ethics of reading [...] imposes on the reader the 'impossible' task of reading unreadability, but that *does not* by *any* means mean that reading, even 'good' reading, *cannot* take place and *does not* have a necessary ethical dimension."⁴²

On the whole, Miller's effort, aimed at showing the ethics of reading in de Man's ethicity, cannot be seen as really convincing. Miller constantly apologises that he is only a reader (and cannot be anybody else), which also means that he must be mistaken if he thinks of his own reading as a definitive one. Despite it being a 'mission impossible,' he still insists on the necessity of the ethical in understanding, and works out his ethics of reading, relying on de Man's ethical-linguistic imperative expressed in the allegorical reading. After interpreting de Man's ethicity, he explores passages from three novelists' – George Eliot, Anthony Trollope and Henry James – with greater success. Although in his introductory "Reading Doing Reading" Miller confesses that his selection of texts and their ordering is not 'innocent,' he claims that he chose his examples at random. Let us believe him in the case of the literary works, but I strongly doubt that the second chapter, written on the famous de Manian passage, resulted from an arbitrary choice. Since the very first chapter is concerned with Kant's categorical imperative, the same is true of the other topic dealt with in the

⁴⁰ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 51-52.

⁴¹ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 59. Italics in the original.

⁴² *Ibid.* Italics are mine. É.A.

previous chapter. Maybe, the undoing of a metaphor, that is, the allegorical reading, could have been more fruitful in the chapter on de Man's ethicity; and in fact it is fruitful in the chapter on Kant's categorical imperative.

Beforehand, among other passages, Miller quotes a footnote from *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in which Kant tries to give what he means by the expression, 'to act from respect (*Achtung*) for law,' claiming that "respect can be regarded as the effect of the law on the subject and not as the cause of the law [...] All respect for a person is only respect for the law of which the person provides *an example*."⁴³ This footnote reveals the Kantian reading of ethics, as he finds that the author reads himself or re-reads his own text. As Miller says "at such moments an author turns back on himself, so to speak, turns back on a text he or she has written, re-reads it, and, it may be, performs an act which can be called an example of the ethics of reading."⁴⁴ This sentence reveals that this moment is not a necessity in every text. But for Miller, or me, the deconstructive reader, who pays attention exactly to those moments, it means a necessity, a must, and the self-reading blindness of the chosen texts becomes the insight of the ethics of reading in his/my understanding. Throughout he suggests keeping in mind that his "interest is not in ethics as such but in the ethics of reading and in the relation of the ethical moment in reading to relation in the sense of giving account, telling a story, narrating."⁴⁵ On the other hand, he expresses that in our life we are related to the ethical through finding analogies and reading stories. We can judge a person or an act as ethical, because we find him or it analogous to the incomprehensible law: as if human beings and their life events or narrated stories were used as rhetorical figures of speech (signs or tropes) referring to the moral imperative. In his *Versions of Pygmalion* Miller also emphasises the reader's and/or the critic's responsibility demanding "respect for the text" and asserts that ethics has a peculiar relation to narrative as "narrative examples are especially appropriate for an investigation of the ethics of reading."⁴⁶

In a chapter titled "Reading Telling: Kant," Miller tries to understand and deconstruct the Kantian categorical imperative to show an example of his (mysterious) ethics of reading. Deconstructing the Kantian categorical imperative, Miller calls our attention to the usage of 'as if' (*als so*) together with the mode of past subjunctive (cf. *Konjunktiv 2* in German).⁴⁷ The English

⁴³ Quoted in Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 18. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁴⁴ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 15.

⁴⁵ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 15.

⁴⁶ Joseph Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 15-16.

⁴⁷ "[...] ich soll niemals anders verfahren, *als so*, dass ich auch wollen könne, meine Maxime solle ein allgemeines Gesetz werden." I rely on the English translation of the Kantian formula quoted in Miller's work, but also consulted with the original German text. Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Werkausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 28.

translation of the well-known apodictic formula reads “I always should act *as if* my private maxim were to be universal legislation for all mankind” or in other words “I should never act *in such a way* that I could not also will that my maxim should be a universal law.”⁴⁸ That is, with this *als so* we must enter the world of fiction, and having created a fictitious context, a little novel, we shall be able to tell whether or not the action is moral. Miller again emphasises that narrative or story-making gives the basic activity of the human mind together with the ability of telling stories to each other and understanding them; that is, (again) we cannot help reading. He finds that “narrative serves for Kant as the absolutely necessary *bridge* without which there would be no connecting between law as such and any particular ethical rule of behaviour.”⁴⁹

Reading this *bridging* conclusion of the Kantian ethics, we could take it as a regressive arch metaphor, but Miller, as a ‘good’ deconstructor, gives it a twist, or rather a *turn* (cf. trope). In the last pages he discusses the performative act of promising offered by the Kantian categorical imperative. Unfortunately, the example Kant gives is one of false promise, which “does not exemplify that of which it is meant to be an example.”⁵⁰ Miller displays Kant’s blindness or slip of the tongue, with great pleasure, concluding that in the end the good reader is to be confronted not by the moral law, not even a good example of it, but by the unreadability of the text. The false promise is such a bridge (or non-bridge), where the two halves start off from the two ends but they do not meet in the middle. The promise – here of the example, the bridge, the system, the author or of my own text – is made in language, and it cannot promise anything but itself with its own unfathomed abyss. To quote Miller’s judgment:

The example, he [Kant] assures us, will serve as the safe bridge between the one [cf. the universal law] and the other [cf. the particular case]. Instead of that, the example divides itself within itself between two possible but incompatible readings and so becomes unreadable. The bridge which was to vault over the abyss between universal and particular law opens another chasm within itself.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 26. See also Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1978), 21.

⁴⁹ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 28. Miller also says that Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, his work on art, can be regarded as a bridge between his work on epistemology, *Critique of Pure Reason* and his work on ethics, *Critique of Practical Reason*. This is followed up in the next chapter, “The Rhetor(eth)ical Reading of the Material and Romantic Sublime”.

⁵⁰ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 36.

⁵¹ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 35.

The picture of the opening chasms – just like de Man’s vertiginous allegories – makes us feel dizzy and uncomfortable. This insight is exactly what the rhetorical close reading can provide. Thinking of the bridge-metaphor, we can remember the vault of New Criticism and it can be concluded that both of them, the modernist and postmodernist metaphors of reading, remain in the realm of figurative ‘falsehood’.

Thus, in texts the ethical can be said to basically mean the introduction of a universal ‘must’. As Miller summarises:

In what I call ‘the ethical moment’ there is a claim made on the author writing the work, on the narrator telling the story within the fiction of the novel, on the characters within the story at their decisive moments of their lives, and on the reader, teacher, or critic responding to the work. This ethical ‘I must’ cannot [...] be accounted for by the social and historical forces that impinge upon it. In fact the ethical moment contests these forces or is subversive of them.⁵²

Now, we can ask the question: why is it so important for the deconstructors to insist on the existence of such discursive modes, namely, the ethical, the social, the political or the historical, which sound quite odd in their rhetorical analyses? In his introduction, Miller says that his provocative choosing of the title and topic, ‘ethics of reading’ can be explained by the attacks on deconstruction, as it is often labelled as ‘nihilistic,’ ‘ahistorical,’ ‘relativist,’ ‘immoral’ or ‘negative’.⁵³ In spite of these mistaken, or at least awkward, polemics being aimed at calling against the rhetorical-deconstructive reading practice, they obviously appear as a necessity in the course of the history of literary criticism and theory.

On the whole, as Jonathan Loesberg remarks “the most virulent charge against deconstruction [is] its aestheticism [which] stands as a vague synonym for imagining a realm of art entirely separate from social or historical effects and then advocating an escape into that ‘unreal,’ aesthetic universe.”⁵⁴ On the one hand, the Yale-critics would answer that there is no escape beyond language and textual understanding. They would also say that they really do work hard as reading needs continuous efforts, and they should follow a must: a linguistic necessity, which can be called a hermeneutical or ethical imperative. On the other hand, deconstruction as a new mode of criticism (cf. new New Criticism) appeared in the last few decades of the 20th century, and the end of the previous

⁵² Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 8.

⁵³ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 9.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Loesberg, *Aestheticism and Deconstruction: Pater, Derrida, and de Man* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3.

centuries were similarly marked by the atmosphere of decadence: with the signs of nihilism, hedonism, pessimism and escapist fantasies. As Miller says in his response to Jonathan Loesberg, who criticised his rhetorical ‘ethics of reading’: “Rhetoric is a region of language where [...] tropes assert that a thing is one thing and the same time another thing. It is the realm of irony and of undecidability.”⁵⁵ Then he names it the realm of not the cognitive but performative language and, consequently, in his writings he tries to demonstrate that “each act of reading or writing, like ethical acts in general, is a performative new start.”⁵⁶

But there is a crucial difference between deconstruction and other decadent theories of art: it is its strong sense of responsibility. In *The Ethics of Reading* – following de Man’s idea on the necessity of reading – Miller claims that every reading is ethical since it *has* to happen “by an implacable necessity, as a response to a categorical demand, and in the sense that the reader *must* take responsibility for it and for its consequences.”⁵⁷ And here the word ‘reader’ can not only refer to the writer and his invented figures, but also critics, teachers and students, since all of us are involved, must be involved, in the process of Reading. And in his later works Miller emphatically connects the problem of responsibility expressed in the ethics of reading with the obligation of teachers. Being a reader, the teacher is also obliged to submit himself or herself to “the truth of the linguistic imperative” of reading, that is, to “the power of the words of the text over the mind.”⁵⁸ In this sense the teacher is taken as a revealer, not a creator, and the way Miller describes the teacher’s ethical reading is similar to the Socratic method of *maieutika*:

The obligation of the reader, the teacher, and the critic would seem to be exclusively epistemological. The reader must see clearly what the work in question says and repeat that meaning in his commentary or teaching. He functions thereby, modestly as *an intermediary*, as a *midwife or catalyst*. He *transmits* meanings which are objectively there but which might not otherwise have reached readers or students. He *brings the meaning to birth again* as illumination and insight in their minds, making the interaction take place without himself entering into it or altering it. It would seem that the field covered

⁵⁵ Joseph Hillis Miller, “Response to Jonathan Loesberg,” *Victorian Studies* 37 (1993:123-128), 125.

⁵⁶ Miller, “Response to Jonathan Loesberg,” 127.

⁵⁷ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 59.

⁵⁸ Miller, *Victorian Subjects*, 255. See also J. H. Miller, *On Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

by reading involves exclusively the epistemological categories of truth and falsehood, insight and blindness.⁵⁹

Surely the tone of this description can be felt as quite ironic, and we must remember that the Socratic method itself was based on irony. We can wonder if the deconstructors think it is impossible to Read what is happening in the seminars – that is, to give a definitive reading of a text. The answer is obvious: reading is happening as it is bound to take place. It sounds strange after all these theoretical analyses, but as a teacher of English literature,⁶⁰ I agree with the Yale-critics, who work or worked as teachers, that the questioning Socratic way is useful in teaching. Certainly, all of us are aware of the fact that – like in the Socratic dialogues – the questions are directed. Yet in the ethics of reading they are directed not by the teacher, but by the text: its rhetoric and linguistic imperative. This makes it possible for every student to read the text in his or her own way, while the teacher acts as mediator and moderator at the same time. The ethics of reading in class must be based on not the ethical, but ethicity as it would rather equal not the ethics, but morality, which is closer to the universal basis of all the different ethic-s. And I should mention another important factor, that even in morality and deconstructed ethics, ethicity, just like in a good reading, we are to use our imagination (see the Kantian *als so*), as if we were reading little novels or stories.

I think that besides acting like a ‘midwife’ and encouraging the imaginative reading skill of the students, a good teacher needs something else: a sense of irony. Irony is needed to accept the students’ different views on the texts, and so keep the varied lines of thought together. But this deconstructive irony means more than simply referring to a trope: it is an attitude, an openness towards reality, ethicity, reading, and teaching that is based on the ability of shifting points of view. It marks the ability of avoiding to claim this or that interpretation as the final one, while giving the experience of reading to each and every student. And I am sure it cannot be done without accepting that the final reading, Reading, is unattainable, which we should admit cannot be done without irony.

In *Theory Now and Then*, somehow still obsessed with the bridge-metaphor, Miller again speaks about a bridge referring to the ‘edgy’ situation of present day criticism: “the new developments in literary study have important implications not only for the [Kantian] bridge but for those realms the bridge is supposed to join. So we may be not so much at a frontier or at a crossroads as standing on a bridge – a bridge, moreover, that has received in recent years a

⁵⁹ Miller, *Victorian Subjects*, 237. Italics are mine. É. A.

⁶⁰ Though I obtained my PhD-degree in philosophy (more exactly, in aesthetics), I teach history of English literature and literary theory at the Department of English Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary. The combination of my present occupation and my philosophical attitude has resulted in my interest in the rhetoric and ethics of reading.

new testing, shaking, or solicitation.”⁶¹ He then writes about the ‘new’ ethics of reading, which basically means the ethics of teaching and the teaching of *reading*. Returning to the overt pedagogical aim of Yale-deconstruction, he gives the essential features of such ethics as respect for the given/chosen text read in the original language with philological rigour. I hope I have fulfilled my – hopefully, not false – promise of discussing ‘the rhetoric and ethics of reading,’ and you have been ‘its’ (and also my) good readers. Taking the ethics or the ethicity of allegories as ‘a’ figure of speech, I have tried to *read* it – perhaps as a new, ethical start in my rhetorical criticism.

⁶¹ Miller, *Theory Now and Then*, 200.

THE RHETOR(ETH)ICAL READINGS OF THE MATERIAL AND THE ROMANTIC SUBLIME*

What do we know about the nightmares of Immanuel Kant?

(de Man)

In his reading of the Kantian passages on ethics, Miller emphasises the importance of ‘*als so*’ (as if) with the creation of human narratives, which is related to “the act of imagination.”¹ On the whole, Miller’s ‘ethics of reading’ owes a lot, not only to the Kantian ethics, but also, to the romantic notion of the cult of imagination. In English (and also German) pre-romanticism and romanticism imagination, being regarded as the highest human capacity, is thematised. Moreover, it becomes one of the central topics together with the difference between the beautiful and the sublime in the theoretical ‘aesthetic’ pieces written in the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries. We can think of Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Coleridge’s mistranslated *Ein(s)bildungskraft* as ‘shaping into one,’ *esemplastic* power, or his ideas on imagination vs. fancy, and also Wordsworth’s prose works, mainly his famous “Preface” or “The Sublime and Beautiful.”²

The two significant issues of the imagination and the sublime are intertwined in a puzzling seminal work, Kant’s *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), which was well-known by the 19th century English and German poet-thinkers. For Kant “the imagination holds out the promise of bridging reason and sense,

* This chapter is related to my research on the rhetoricity and ethicity of Anglo-Saxon deconstructive readings, which was supported by a Deák Ferenc Scholarship granted by the Hungarian Ministry of Education in 2004/2005. The chapter is concerned with several deconstructive readings of the sublime but due to the ‘sublime’ greatness of the topic it has turned out to be a preliminary study on the Kantian sublime. In order to explain the pun in the title, I should reveal that it links two kinds of Yale-deconstructive readings: Paul de Man’s allegorical-rhetorical and Joseph Hillis Miller’s ethical readings. The name of the latter comes from Miller’s ‘ethics of reading’, and quite obviously in my reading, I rely on de Man’s reading – therefore I put the ‘eth’ referring to the ethicity of my reading in brackets. As in the other chapters, I cannot help being influenced by Derrida and his deconstructive reading of the Kantian sublime in *Parergon*.

¹ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 28.

² See Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, in *The Collected Works*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Routledge & Kegan Paul: Princeton University Press, 1983), 168-9. Wordsworth’s famous “Preface” or “The Sublime and Beautiful” in Wordsworth’s *The Prose Works. Volume II.*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

establishing the link between world and mind, and abolishing the ‘immeasurable gulf’ between the true and the good.”³ At the same time, allegorically reading, in the Kantian *oeuvre*, in ‘the architecture of the *Critiques*’ the third *Critique* with its imaginative power seems to function like a ‘missing link’ and is used “to fill in the gap opened between the transcendental principles of reason and the empirical orientation of the senses.”⁴ Moreover, Miller – just like Derrida – also claims that in his system, Kant regarded his third critique, *Critique of Judgment* (work of art), as serving as a bridge between epistemology (the work of pure reason) and ethics (the work of practical reason) separated by a deep chasm.⁵

This quite naive idea is undone in deconstructive readings as they are likely to present the failure of the Kantian (theory of) imagination and show that the wishful bridging over the abyss becomes the most – desperately – violent in the section concerned with the sublime. In three studies in his *Aesthetic Ideology* – “Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant,” “Kant’s Materialism” and “Kant and Schiller” – Paul de Man focuses on the theory of the Kantian imagination and he claims that “the articulation of a transcendental with a metaphysical discourse” becomes possible in the field of aesthetic.⁶ The marked ‘playground’ of this articulation can be found in the section on the sublime in the third *Critique*, where the agreement (or linkup) between pure and practical reason is ‘articulated’. Now, following the guiding clues of de Man’s rhetorical reading, I try to find out what happens in the abyss of *The Analytic of the Sublime* while paying special attention to the figurality of the text.

In *The Critique of Judgment* the immediate context of the sublime is given by the argument on the beautiful. According to Kant, we like both the beautiful and the sublime for their own sake, but, in the case of the former, our liking is connected with the presentation of quality, while in the case of the latter with the presentation of quantity. The other significant difference is that we find the beautiful charming and pleasant but the sublime simultaneously attracts and repels the mind. Although both of them give pleasure, the sublime goes along with “a negative pleasure” that is produced by “the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces” – or, “blockage”⁷ – followed immediately by their serious and strong outpouring. However, besides these apparent differences,

³ Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination – Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 6.

⁴ Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination*, 8.

⁵ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 28. See more about it in Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime – From Morality to Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); James Engell, *The Creative Imagination (Enlightenment to Romanticism)* (Cambridge-London: Harvard UP, 1981) and Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

⁶ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 73.

⁷ I borrowed the concept of ‘blockage’ from Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line – Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985).

there is a more profound one, to quote Kant: “the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason.”⁸ The concluding statement of the introductory paragraph of “The Analytic of the Sublime” is followed by a powerful insight claiming that for the beautiful in nature we must seek the basis outside, while for the sublime merely within ourselves. Here Kant also introduces the powerful language of the following passages, but in this, the 24th paragraph, the sublime violates or exercises power over imagination. Comparing it to the beautiful, de Man regards the sublime as ‘a monster or ghost’ of the philosophical discourse being “not a property of nature [...] but a purely inward experience of consciousness.”⁹

Then Kant introduces the distinction of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime; through the imagination the mathematical is referred to as the faculty of cognition and the dynamic to the faculty of desire. Besides the arbitrary names of the terms – for example, de Man suggests using the chinetik instead of the dynamic – we should also pay attention to the necessary differentiation of the two kinds. By definition the mathematically sublime is ‘absolutely large’ with the standard in itself, that is, it is a magnitude “beyond all comparison” – it is infinite. When we regard St. Peter’s Basilica or the pyramids as sublime, the source of the sublime can be found in our own ideas. To quote the first definition from the end of the 25th paragraph: “*The sublime is that, the mere capacity of [its] thinking evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense.*”¹⁰ Derrida, in the subchapter titled “The Colossal” of *Parergon*, sees the difference between the beautiful and the sublime in their relation and/vs. non-relation to limits: while limits give (a) form to the beautiful, the sublime is characterised by “the totality of the without-limit to be *thought*.” The word, ‘thought’ is italicised as Derrida also thinks, the sublime seems to present “an indeterminate concept of reason.”¹¹ Estimating the magnitude of the monstrous objects involves two operations: in the apprehension the imagination tries to understand or grasp the greatness (that is, its own greatness), while in the comprehension it tries to unite and totalise the apprehended sight. The perplexity aroused in the spectator is caused by the ‘failure’ of imagination since the spectator’s imagination reaches its maximum and as it cannot expand that maximum, it sinks back into itself. The sublime displays “our imagination in all its boundless, and with it nature, as sinking into insignificance before the ideas of reason, once their adequate presentation is attempted.”¹²

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 92.

⁹ Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 74.

¹⁰ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 98. Italics in the original.

¹¹ Derrida, *Parergon*, in *The Truth in Painting*, 127.

¹² Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 105.

In this section of the text – before ‘the entering’ of the dynamically sublime – the Kantian abyss does open up marking “the point of excess for the imagination (towards which it is driven in the apprehension of the intuition) [...] in which it fears to lose itself.”¹³ In the same passage we can also find the metaphor of ‘violence’ though here imagination is violent to the internal sense. Kant introduces the conflicting (f)actors of the following ‘dynamic’ paragraphs, namely, the faculties of the mind: the imagination and reason, which are supposed to be in harmony in the theory of the beautiful. It seems that in “The Analytic of the Sublime” the trope of the abyss and the trope of power/violence are interlinked – the seducing sublime of the abyss must be bridged over by the word of power (and law). On the one hand, in the next part on the dynamically sublime, we can read about the filling of the gap, which has been caused by the failed articulation of the mathematically sublime. On the other hand, the text comes to life rhetorically: with its ‘romantic’ storms, bold rocks, threatening volcanoes, hurricanes, and high waterfalls nature appears as a fearful and sublime might/power.

But we cannot take the Kantian examples of the sublime as ‘romantic’ ones because we should realise that “nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which *the mind* can make itself sensible of the appropriate sublimity of the sphere of its own being, even above nature.”¹⁴ In rather a provocative way, according to Kant, even war can be sublime, and the paragraph is full of the pictures of fight and battle. In his rhetorical reading de Man also claims the significance of the 28th paragraph though he misses the linking passages. To quote his summary:

The transition from the mathematical to the dynamic sublime, a transition for which the justification is conspicuously lacking in the text (section 28 begins most abruptly with the word ‘Power’ [*Macht*]), marks the saturation of the tropological field as language frees itself of its constraints and discovers within itself a power no longer dependent on the restrictions of cognition. [...] *The Critique of Judgment* therefore has, at its centre, a deep, perhaps fatal, break or discontinuity. It depends on a linguistic structure (language as a performative as well as a cognitive system) that is not itself accessible to the powers of transcendental philosophy.¹⁵

¹³ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 107.

¹⁴ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 111-112. Italics are mine. É.A.

¹⁵ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 79.

In the last paragraph of “The Analytic of the Sublime,” in paragraph 29, Kant connects, i.e. interrelates, the abyss of the imagination and the act of violence. In this key section, it turns out that in the reception of the sublime, the mind has to be susceptible to the ideas; as with its attraction and repulsion the sublime represents nature’s inadequacy to the ideas. The sublime displays “the *dominance [Gewalt]* which reason exercises over *imagination* with a view to extending it to the requirements of its own realm (the practical) and letting it look out beyond itself into the infinite, which for it [viz. the imagination] is an *abyss [Abgrund]*.”¹⁶ According to de Man, the faculty of imagination sacrifices itself when losing its empirical freedom, it chooses reason, but in return it becomes apathetic and truly free. In his reading the Kantian story is about personified faculties and in this “dramatized scene” or “allegorical tale” the imagination (*die Einbildungskraft*) as a tragic heroine – like Iphigenia or Antigone – is sacrificed and ‘violated’ by reason (*die Vernunft*).¹⁷ Derrida reads this passage similarly, calling attention to “the mutilating and sacrificial violence” of imagination turned against itself in the sublime, through which it gains by losing: “The imagination organizes the theft (*Beraubung*) of its own freedom, it lets itself be commanded by a law other than that of the empirical use which determines it with a view to an end. But by this violent renunciation, it gains in extension (*Erweiterung*) and in power (*Macht*).”¹⁸

The last paragraph is followed by a long and illuminating comment, in which, with the implicit limitation of its sensible representation and its sacrifice, the sublime is made suitable for referring to the supersensible/transcendental. In an earlier (the 27th) paragraph we could read that the inadequacy of the imagination is aroused by an idea that is a law for us and at the same time evokes the feeling of respect. The comprehension of the infinite with regard to the imagination is – seemingly – a failure, while to the idea it is a law of reason that is forced upon the imagination so that it should accept its limitation. Thus, to quote the final definition: “[t]he *sublime* is what pleases immediately by reason of its own opposition to the interest of sense”; that is, “an object (of nature) the *representation of which determines the mind to regard [viz. think] the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to a presentation of ideas (als Darstellung von Ideen zu denken)*.”¹⁹ For Kant from this definition only one step

¹⁶ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 115 and Kant, *Kritik der Ästhetischen Urtheilskraft*, in *Werke in sechs Bänden, Band 4*. (Köln: Könnemann, 1995), 135. Italics are mine and the translation slightly altered. É.A.

¹⁷ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 87.

¹⁸ Derrida, *Parergon*, in *The Truth in Painting*, 131. The German words are borrowed from the Kantian text and inserted by Derrida himself.

¹⁹ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 118-119 and Kant, *Kritik der Ästhetischen Urtheilskraft*, 139. Italics in the original.

–a *salto mortale* – is needed to reach the moral law and the realm of the practical reason, which is now linked with the empirical in the aesthetics of the sublime.

In de Man’s rhetorical reading the most horrible – or most sublime – part of Kant’s text shows the anti-poetic images with dead, or rather cadaverous tropes of the self / reason controlled imagination. In the final long comment Kant describes the mere sight of the sky and the ocean, where the materiality of eyesight (*Augenschein*) can be opposed to the earlier presented tropological story. The dynamics of the apathetic sublime, the material sight of the Kantian “as we see [it] (*wie man ihn sieht*)” refers to “the moment when the infinite is frozen into the materiality of stone.”²⁰ This nightmarish style is “entirely a-referential, a-phenomenal, a-pathetic formalism,” which disrupts the aesthetics aimed at articulation and finally “find[s] access to the moral world of practical reason, practical law.”²¹ At this point of his analysis de Man introduces the opposite of the Kantian material sublime, which he names as the Wordsworthian or the romantic. While Kant’s description operates – indeed is forced to operate – without tropes, in the romantic texts the figures show the chiasmic “exchange between faculties or between mind and nature.”²² In his essay “The Sublime and the Beautiful,” Wordsworth gives a ‘beautiful’ example of the romantic sublime. He writes about a Lady “whose imagination, endeavouring to complete whatever had been left imperfect in pictures & books, had feasted in representing to itself the forms of trees.”²³ The Lady *thinks* about the world in terms of the pictures of her *imagination*, and when she goes out to nature, “to behold the reality, & to learn by experience how far its grandeur or beauty surpassed the conceptions which she had formed,”²⁴ she finds the real beauties outside unsatisfactory. That is, in Wordsworth’s reading of the sublime, the (Lady’s) imagination triumphs over (her) reason – in a poetic and romantic sense.

Opposed to the romantic sublime, in his text Kant struggles to come up – and he should come up – with the triumph of reason and he has to see the world as a part of the system. Looking at the conclusion of the drama in a ‘more reasonable’ way, the failure and the success of the sublime do not mean anything else other than the victory of the mind over sight – “the representation of the failure to represent.”²⁵ Or, as de Man cynically summarises: “[p]oets, in Kant, do not embark on the high seas.”²⁶ However, he also claims that “what makes

²⁰ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 127.

²¹ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 128.

²² de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 87.

²³ William Wordsworth, *The Prose Works. Volume II*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 358.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ David Martyn, *Sublime Failures – The Ethics of Kant and Sade* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2003), 154.

²⁶ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 127.

the sublime compatible with reason is its independence from sensory experience; it is beyond the senses, *übersinnlich*. This is what makes the junction of cognition with morality possible.”²⁷ But he fails to notice that in the Kantian definitions the emphasis is placed on the representation of the idea and the conceiving (thinking) of that representation. It is not by chance that after the definition of the sublime in the next sentence Kant claims that “in a literal sense and according to their logical import, ideas cannot be presented.”²⁸ It can be *imagined*, or can be *conceived* that in the Kantian conception the sublime becomes the trope of the moral law ‘in a forced way’. The sublime can be taken as the “symbolic hypotyposis” of the law, as in the 59th paragraph, where Kant names such metaphors that refer to ideas by not direct conception but by “analogy with conception (*Anschauung*).”²⁹ Similarly, recalling Miller’s ‘bridging’ *mise en abyme*, Derrida says that “the abyss calls for analogy – the active recourse of the whole *Critique* – but analogy plunges endlessly into the abyss as soon as a certain art is needed to describe analogically the play of analogy.”³⁰

Thus, in his third *Critique*, Kant links the moral law with the ‘law-ordained’ function of the imagination, “which is the genuine characteristic of human morality, where reason has to impose its dominion upon imagination. [...] in the aesthetic judgment upon the sublime this dominion is represented as exercised through the imagination itself as an instrument of reason.”³¹ On the one hand, the ambiguity of imagination seems incongruous – it fails by being incapable of comprehending the infinite greatness and succeeds by functioning as the agent of reason for the moral law. On the other hand, in a forced way the Kantian imagination functions as the agent of reason here and exercises power over itself for the sake of morality, for the sake of linking the moral law with the human world. I agree with David Martyn, who thinks that it is necessary to supply (that is, to *empower*) the sublime with ethical relevance. As he summarises: “The sublime *is* reason’s failure to totalize infinity – the very failure that figures, in the first *Critique*, as the foundation of ethics. Ethics, one could say, is the *sublimation* of theory: [...] in the sense of the rational sublime, of the sublime failure of reason vis-à-vis itself.”³² In the Kantian architectonics, ethics is given as an eternal task and it declares the sublimity of reason with its ‘sublimating’

²⁷ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 125.

²⁸ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 119.

²⁹ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 223 and Kant, *Kritik der Ästhetischen Urtheilskraft*, 246.

³⁰ Derrida, *Parergon*, in *The Truth in Painting*, 36. Besides the references to Miller’s bridge-metaphor in my previous texts, see also his article “The Search for Grounds in Literary Study,” in *Rhetoric and Form: Deconstruction at Yale*, ed. by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1985, 19-36), 33-34.

³¹ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 120.

³² Martyn, *Sublime Failures*, 162.

meaning. In this sense, de Man is right when he regards the Kantian sublime as un-poetic and not romantic, but mistakenly names it the material sublime: it can rather be named as the ethical one.

On the whole, de Man also presents the task of reading as the sublime failure. He compares the movement of apprehension and comprehension with the process of reading, “in which [...] the eye moves horizontally in succession whereas the mind has to combine vertically the cumulative understanding of what has been apprehended.”³³ It is related to Weiskel’s idea of “the reader’s or hermeneutical sublime,”³⁴ but de Man gives a twist to the meaning of the term – presenting the failure to present. He calls the reader’s attention to the materiality of the Kantian text: the playing on words, syllables, or “the prosaic materiality of the letter”³⁵ – in such German words which are quite alike but have radically different meanings. De Man happily calls attention to a ‘sublime’ spelling mistake in the first edition of *The Critique of Judgment*, when the two cardinal Kantian terms, *Sittlichkeit* (morality) and *Sinnlichkeit* (sensibility) are interchanged: “This pure, elevating, merely negative presentation of morality [*Sittlichkeit*] involves, on the other hand, no fear of *fanaticism*, which is a *delusion* that would *will some vision beyond all the bounds of sensibility* [*Sinnlichkeit*]; i.e. would dream according to principles (rational raving).”³⁶ We do not know what Kant felt writing down this passionate passage about the dreams of reason (or his nightmares?). But in the sentence a stupid spelling and printing mistake ‘simply’ connected the two realms of the universal and the particular, fulfilling the task Kant dedicated his whole life to. In the act of reading “the letter of the text must become my law,” to quote Miller’s statement.³⁷ Starting from the wish of a relaxing – or *bridging* – promise of the Kantian sublime, we should face the desperate task of reading and also the task of reading about/of ethics and the ethical sublime. This way, we cannot help giving the term ‘ethics of reading’ a new turn and opening chasms of meaning with the reading of every single letter.

³³ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 77.

³⁴ Quoted in Hertz, *The End of the Line*, 50.

³⁵ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 90.

³⁶ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 128 and Kant, *Kritik der Ästhetischen Urtheilskraft*, 148 and de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 125. I found the spelling mistake on a rather yellow page of a work published in the years of 1800 ‘commemorating’ even the mistakes of the very first edition: “Diese reine, seelenerhebende, bloss negative Darstellung der *Sittlichkeit*, bringt dagegen keine Gefahr der Schwärmerei, welche ein Wahn ist, über alle Gränze der *Sittlichkeit* hinaus etwas sehen, d. i. nach Grundsätzen träumen (mit Vernunft rasen), zu wollen; eben darum weil die Darstellung bei jener bloss negativ ist” (Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, Text der Ausgabe 1790, (A) mit Beifügung sämtlicher Abweichungen der Ausgaben 1793 (B) und 1799 (C), ed. Karl Kehrbach, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., 18--?, 133).

³⁷ Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, 10.

THE IRONICAL ALLEGORY OF REMEMBRANCE AND OBLIVION*
(IN MEMORY OF PAUL DE MAN AND JACQUES DERRIDA)

Of the two springs called Mnemosyne and Lethe,
which is the right one for Narcissus?
The other.
(Jacques Derrida)

In his *Allegories of Reading* – in its concluding and rather ‘telling’ chapter titled “Excuses” – Paul de Man refers to irony as the key rhetorical and linguistic figure of his allegorical readings. Borrowing Friedrich Schlegel’s formulation – ‘irony is permanent parabasis,’ it is taken as the figure that “interrupt[s] the expectations of rhetorical movement.” The trope of irony becomes “the undoing of the deconstructive allegory of all tropological cognitions” [...] As such, far from closing off the tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration.”¹ While the first part of the quotation badly questions the seemingly ‘closing off’ readings of the previous chapters, in the second the proliferation of other possible readings is promised. It looks as if it/everything was *turned* upon by irony: the figure is shown as the trope of tropes, the essence of rhetoric. The surprising and effective ending can also be read as the beginning of another story which would be about the understanding of the relation between irony and allegory.

Now it is appropriate to quote another statement: “I have never known how to tell a story,” says Derrida in the opening of the very first part of his lecture series, *Mémoires*, dedicated to de Man’s memory.² This story of remembrance introduced by an ironical and self-reflective statement, which can be taken as the mirror-image of the de Manian closing, is speaking about the allegorical reading/unreadability of irony. Derrida also claims that he “love[s] nothing better than remembering and Memory itself”³; thus, his strange confession about his ‘inability felt as a sad infirmity’ can be connected with the possibility (or impossibility) of *my own* story-telling. In this particular story, embedded in the

* The final version of this text was completed in winter 2005 with the assistance of a Deák Ferenc Scholarship supplemented by a grant from the Hungarian Ministry of Education (OM).

¹ Paul de Man, “Excuses,” in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979, 278-301), 300-301.

² Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, trans. by C. Lindsay, J. Culler, E. Cadava (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 3.

³ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 3.

context of allegory and irony, such flowers of rhetoric flourish as Mnemosyne, Lethe, Psyche or Narcissus. In my text I am trying to interpret these rhetorical figures in the above-mentioned two thinkers' works, while the recurrent 'Narcissus' becomes the rhetorical flower of (my) reading.

In "The Rhetoric of Temporality" (in *Blindness and Insight*), de Man regards allegory together with irony as the key rhetorical tropes of our (textual) understanding. Although both show the discontinuous relationship between sign and meaning, and are characterised by temporality, the experience of time in the case of allegory means a diachronic (narrative) structure, while in irony it is a synchronic (momentary) structure: "Essentially the mode of the present, it [irony] knows neither memory nor prefigurative duration, whereas allegory exists entirely within an ideal time that is never here and now but always a past or an endless future. [...] Yet the two modes, for all their profound distinctions in mood and structure, are the two faces of the same fundamental experience of time."⁴ According to de Man, allegory is in charge of the individual narratives while irony, with its sudden interference, interrupts, then restarts the interpretative activity. In the essay, de Man's famous example is William Wordsworth's poem titled "A slumber did my spirit seal,"⁵ in which the persona's previous death and life-forgetting slumber is counterbalanced by his wise insight about the death of the beloved. Instead of 'being counterbalanced,' I prefer to say 'being ironised' but de Man claims that the poem is not ironic at all, and he tries to write the speaker's allegorical story referring to the phases as error-death-recognition-wisdom.

It can be accepted that the poem is basically allegorical, but in the de Manian temporal scheme, the moment of retrospection – in the twinkling of an eye/I – is assured by irony. The illusion of the allegorical timeless recollection in the first stanza is broken by the intrusion of the momentary ironical reminiscence, which makes not only the present of the second stanza, but also the past of the first stanza, 'real,' emphasising temporality. Whereas de Man speaks about "a stance of wisdom" that "is no longer vulnerable to irony";⁶ that is, he does not realise that the co-operation of the two figures and their infinite playing gives the unique temporality of the poem. Nevertheless, he remarks that "[t]he structure of irony, [...] is the reversed mirror-image of this [allegorical] form."⁷ Since the

⁴ Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993, 187-228), 226.

⁵ "A slumber did my spirit seal;/ I had no human fears;/ She seemed a thing that could not feel/
The touch of earthly years. // No motion has she now, no force;/ She neither hears nor sees;/
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees." In William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 79. See more about the poem in the chapter "The 'Thing' Betwixt and Between – Irony and Allegory in Wordsworth's "A slumber did my spirit seal".

⁶ de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *BI*, 224.

⁷ de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *BI*, 225.

mirror-reflection of a ‘thing’ is a reversed image, the reversal of the reversed can be thought of as re-establishing the real ‘thing’ – similarly to how the positive affirmative of double negation does. This scheme can be used in the poem as in the previous reflection of the lover’s allegorical, imagined narration, the dead beloved seemed immortal and now she is really dead; that is, the allegory of remembering is reversed by the ironical insight of temporality. However, the story obviously does not end here because the work of recollection can be started any time, so that it should be reversed by irony – recollecting the previous ironically reversed recollections as well. Consequently, we cannot speak about tautology and one single chiasmic transformation, but the relation between the two figures is unfolded in an ‘infinite’ number of chiasms. Since both of them function as a swinging mirror, playing them off⁸ and turning against each other, the two mirrors will reflect each other *ad infinitum*. At this point we can remember the early romantic German critic and essayist, Friedrich Schlegel, whom de Man heartily and frequently quotes in his works, and his 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment, where he describes the romantic-poetic working process (cf. the new poesy) claiming that “on the wings of poetic reflection [one can] raise to higher and higher powers and multiply it, as it were, in an endless array of mirrors.”⁹ Being the motto of the so-called Jena Romantic School, this fragment shows/displays the progressiveness and infinity of the creative work, where the significance of irony is emphasised and allegory is neglected. The irony of the romantically poetical life-work is expressed in the artist’s reflexivity and in the recognition of his own reflexivity, which, accepting the rhetoricity of language, we can read as the presentation of textual understanding itself.

But let me refer to a more puzzling statement taken from Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* (*Das Passagen-Werk*) on mirroring mirrors, which takes us closer to the story of allegory and irony: “Let two mirrors reflect each other; then Satan plays his favourite trick and opens here in his way (as his partner does in lovers’ gazes) the perspective on infinity.”¹⁰ In my text, several times I will refer to Benjamin’s images: the dull reflecting surface and the mirror of the eye. Right now the interpretation of these would lead us far away, but with the help of the quotation we can turn back to the reflection of allegory and irony. In

⁸ De Man mentions in the same article that in the question of irony vs. allegory, “[o]ne is tempted to play them off against each other and to attach value judgments to each, as if one were intrinsically superior to the other.” See “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 226.

⁹ Quoted in Ernst Behler, “The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism,” in *Romantic Irony*, ed. by Frederick Garber (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, 43-81), 58.

¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), 538. In the original it goes: “Blicken zwei Spiegel einander an, so spielt der Satan seinen liebsten Trick und öffnet auf seine Weise (wie sein Partner in den Blicken der Liebenden tut) die Perspektive ins Unendliche.” In Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt an Main: Suhrkamp, 1982, vol. 5), 1049.

the conclusion of “The Rhetoric of Temporality” showing the possible combination of allegory and irony, de Man also refers to a love-story in Stendhal’s *Chartreuse de Parme* as an example. The novel tells the story of two unfortunate lovers, who cannot be together, thus, their allegory recalls the myth of Eros and Psyche. In the mythical narrative, Psyche cannot see her lover and should not look for his identity, and when the truth comes to light only after rough trials, only in her death – that is, in immortality – does she ‘really’ become her beloved’s true partner.¹¹ In de Man’s reading, Psyche’s story as “the myth of the unovercomable distance”¹² thematises not only the disruption in understanding that separates individuals (or Stendhal’s pseudonymous and nominal selves), but also the breaks in our reading of a text – that is, the ironical reversal/twisting of the allegorical narrative/myth.

In his lecture, “Psyche: Inventions of the Other” (“Psyche: Invention de l’autre”), Derrida also speaks of Amor and Psyche’s story (*fable*) given in Apuleius’s work and hints at de Man’s above mentioned interpretation of the myth. But beforehand, in his lecture, he dedicates the reading of Francis Ponge’s poem titled “Fable” to his (dead) friend. For Derrida, this short text recalls the memory of the three thinkers’ relationship and it also speaks of the interrelation between allegory and irony. So the *fable* reads:

*By the word by commences then this text
Of which the first line states the truth
But this silvering under the one and other
Can it be tolerated?
Dear reader already you judge
There as to our difficulties...*

then the six italicised lines are followed by the last two put in brackets:

(AFTER seven years of misfortune
She broke her mirror.)¹³

The ‘fable’ is telling the story of its own story-telling, that is, it ‘creates’ itself starting the endless mirroring of the written words. In this play, however, the text “presents itself ironically as an allegory ‘of which the first line states the

¹¹ See in Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. by Robert Graves (Penguin Books, 1950).

¹² de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 228.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, “Psyche: Inventions of the Other,” trans. by Catherine Porter, in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. by Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, 25-65), 30. In the original, the *fable* of “Fable” runs: “*Par le mot par commence donc ce texte/ Dont la première ligne dit la vérité, / Mais ce tain sous l’une et l’autre/ Peut-il être toléré?/ Cher lecteur déjà tu juges/ Là de nos difficultés...* (APRÈS sept ans de malheurs/ Elle brisa son miroir.)” 30. Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Psyché. Invention de l’autre,” in *Psyché* (Paris: Galilée, 1987, 11-61), 19. When writing my paper, I used both the original essay and the English translation.

truth': truth of allegory and allegory of truth, truth as allegory."¹⁴ We cannot overstep the relation of the two figures and words, we cannot cross over to the other side of the mirror as we cannot go beyond 'ourselves' and language, and 'our selves' in language. In the last lines of the poem, there is only one possible way of getting outside the fable – its allegory, or rather its irony – which is an extremely narcissistic one. Here the self, who destroys the mirror and together with it the self, is introduced by the feminine personal pronoun, she (*elle*). This 'she' appears as an allegorical figure and can be associated with the French feminine (la) *fable/Fable*, or Truth (*la vérité*), which is tautological regarding the second line of "Fable." At this point Derrida refers to the dead female figure ('she') in de Man's favourite Wordsworth-poem in order to lead us to the figure of Psyche.

The French *psyché* – besides its usage as a proper name (*Psyché*) – as a common name has preserved not only the original meaning of the Greek psyche, but it also means a revolving mirror.¹⁵ The French *psyché* is a very special kind of mirror as it has two reflecting surfaces on both sides, which are connected and separated by the 'psyche' of the mirror, its silvering/tain. The tain is the *inventio* of the mirror as its surface blocks transparency and without the tain the mirror does not reflect anything. If two people are standing at each side of such a 'mirror,' without the tained surface, as if a pane of glass were between them, they could see each other clearly; more exactly, losing their own reflection, they could see only the other. However, here, as in all texts, we have a mirror, in which we cannot see anybody other than ourselves. The exception to this is if we place another mirror at a right angle facing the first (at both sides) as it will generate the mirror-play of reflection. Similarly, now I am flashing de Man-reflections in Derrida's texts and Derrida-references in de Man's works. It is not by chance that Rodolphe Gasché gave the title, *The Tain of the Mirror* to his work on Derrida's reflexivity. He claims: "Derrida's philosophy, rather than being a philosophy of reflection, is engaged in the systematic exploration of that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular and speculative activity would be possible, but which at the same time has no place and no part in reflection's scintillating play."¹⁶

Turning back to the de Manian Psyche-reference, Derrida disappointedly states that here de Man speaks not about the mirror, but about the mythical character. Nevertheless, in his summary he reveals that this passage still "matters much [to us] since it also points up the distance between the two 'selves' (*moi-mêmes*), the subject's two selves, the impossibility of seeing and touching

¹⁴ Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," 31.

¹⁵ See also "Psyche: A mirror that swings in a frame; a cheval glass. In full psyche glass." In *A Dictionary of American English*, ed. by Sir William A. Craigie and James R. Hulbert (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942, vol. III), 1849.

¹⁶ Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP, 1986), 6.

oneself at the same time, the ‘permanent parabasis’ and the ‘allegory of irony’.”¹⁷ In this blink of an eye, the mirror-play between the two thinkers’ texts can be traced and the con-text is brought to life by recollection. Although in Derrida’s “Psyche” several de Manian texts and ideas are referred to, it is not the allegory and irony of remembrance that are put in the centre there. Actually, Derrida only uses the Apuleian Psyche’s fable and Ponge’s “Fable” as pre-text(s) in his introduction on rhetoricity and deconstruction of classical rhetoric. In the title of the work, “Psyche: Inventions of the Other” (*Psyche: Invention de l’autre*), the classical *inventio* as the first operation of the rhetorical machinery, *tekhne rhetorikē*, alludes not to the invention, but the (re-)discovery of arguments.¹⁸ He claims that we cannot create new things in our invention and he speaks about the finding or discovering of machines. According to Derrida, today we work with ready made (allegorical) narrating machines, but the deconstructive invention aims at reaching some *other* outside the machinery because deconstruction wants “to allow the coming of the entirely other” (*laisser venir le tout autre*).¹⁹ However, ‘the other in his/her/its own otherness’ cannot be placed into our context, cannot be understood and read. Thus, we can do nothing *else* than undertake this ‘mission impossible’ and “get ready for this coming of the other” (*se préparer à cette venue de l’autre*).²⁰

This rather utopian (and quite messianic) idea and the undertaken mission influences those three lectures that Derrida wrote to commemorate de Man’s death and published together under the provocative title: *Mémoires for Paul de Man*. The first word of the title with the already-quoted opening sentence – “I have never known how to tell a story” – can be taken as an inventive beginning of an autobiographical writing. But from the introductory “A peine” it becomes obvious that in these texts the mourning Derrida remembers de Man – unfortunately, speaking about him and not to him. At the same time, the promise formulated in the title recalls the promise of “Psyche”: to let the other come out in mourning and remembrance. Thus, it is not a surprise that in the conclusion of the first lecture, “Mnemosyne,” we can again meet the allegorical figure of (the) *psyche*. Remembering the beloved friend and referring to the favourite Wordsworth poem, Derrida dis-plays the irony of the other’s inaccessibility:

The death of the other, if we can say this, is also situated on our side at the very moment when it comes to us from an altogether other side. [...] In another context, I have called this Psyche:

¹⁷ Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” 39. Cf. “Psyché. Invention de l’autre,” 30.

¹⁸ Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” 51. Cf. “Psyché. Invention de l’autre,” 47.

¹⁹ Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” 55. Cf. “Psyché. Invention de l’autre,” 53.

²⁰ Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other,” 56 and in “Psyché,” 53. Derrida also calls our attention to the same root of the words ‘event’, ‘advent’ and ‘invention’ – linked to the Latin coming (*venire*).

Psyche, the proper name of an allegory; Psyche, the common name for the soul; and Psyche, in French, the name of a *revolving mirror*. Today it is no longer Psyche, but apparently Mnemosyne. In truth, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, the ‘naked name’ will be Paul de Man. This is what we shall call to, and toward which we shall again *turn* our thoughts.²¹

In his *Mémoires*, Derrida deals with the nature of true ‘mourning’ and ‘true’ remembrance while paying attention to the most important ideas and tropes of the de Manian oeuvre. In the Mnemosyne lecture named after the goddess of memory, there are several hints about de Man’s and Derrida’s theory of remembrance. Here, just like in the other two lectures – “The Art of *Mémoires*” and “Acts” – two kinds of memory are distinguished, which are based on and *recall* a late essay of de Man titled “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*.” The German *Erinnerung* signifies the interiorising memory, while *Gedächtnis* the mechanical memorisation, but – as Derrida says – “the relation between memory and interiorizing recollection is not ‘dialectical,’ as Hegelian interpretation and Hegel’s interpretation would have it, but one of rupture, heterogeneity, disjunction.”²² In order to be able to mechanically and automatically remember something using our memory, we should forget about recollection, that is to say, we should avoid being lost in reverie and meditating upon the past. Derrida cites de Man’s statement twice, namely: “memory effaces remembrance,”²³ but he fails to quote the whole sentence (he may have misreclected it or his memory failed him). To quote the whole statement from de Man’s text: “Memory effaces remembrance (or recollection) just as it effaces itself.”²⁴ In this text, which is concerned with the Hegelian theory of signification, the activities of the symbolical recollection and allegorical remembrance are replaced with memorisation and writing linked to the sign. In the Greek tradition, Mnemosyne serves as a storehouse of all the stories and no kind of knowledge can be achieved without her help. Her important role is related with the strong verbality (‘oral fixation’) of Greek culture, where writing and the use of written records were thought to weaken memory and make man absentminded/forgetful. I do not want to dwell on the forgetfulness and memento of writing (which is introduced and dealt as a pharmakon in Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy”), I would rather draw attention to the element of forgetting. According to Derrida, “for de Man, great thinker and theorist of memory, there

²¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 39. Italics are mine. É.A.

²² Derrida, *Mémoires*, 56.

²³ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 62 and 72.

²⁴ Paul de Man, “Sign and Symbol in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*,” in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 91-104), 102.

is only memory but, strictly speaking, the past does not exist”²⁵; thus, in his allegorical readings, de Man always writes (about) the rhetoric of remembrance and of temporality.

If the source of all the allegories is memory and de Man is labelled as “the thinker and theorist of memory,” then Derrida is the one who writes about the art of remembering *and* forgetting. The above quoted de Manian statement about memorisation is elaborated in Derrida’s ‘memoirs’ – Derrida’s *Mémoires* written for de Man – where Lethe, the mythical figure of forgetting/oblivion, appears on the scene besides Mnemosyne. Although the two characters are not closely related in Greek mythology, Pausanias records that the two fountains of the rivers, which are named after the two goddesses, can be found in human world and they are close to each other.²⁶ Derrida also refers to this *locus classicus* and, while he takes Lethe as the allegory of oblivion, sleep and death, he regards her opposite, Mnemosyne, as the allegory of truth, that is *a-lethe-ia*. What is more, he connects the two allegorical figures, doing it in defence of his long de Manian quotations in his *Mémoires* (without giving the exact *source*):

Fidelity requires that one quote, in the desire to let the other speak; and fidelity requires that one not just quote, not restrict oneself to quoting. It is with the law of this double law that we are here engaged, and this is also the double law of Mnemosyne – unless it is the common law of the double source, Mnemosyne/Lethe: source of memory, source of forgetting.²⁷

I wonder how the (inner) remembrance, (outer) memory and (inner/outer) forgetting are related. In the Hegel text we have already read that the basis of memorising is given by the forgetting of remembrance, which the forgetting of memory goes with. That is, we can achieve memory and the allegorical remembering narratives through forgetting, the ironical act of forgetting recollection itself. Referring back to, and re-interpreting his opening sentence (“I have never known how to tell a story”), Derrida, in the conclusion of the second lecture, “The Art of *Mémoires*,” considers whether he suffers from amnesia or hyper-mnesia. It seems that the recalling of allegorical and mythical figures

²⁵ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 58.

²⁶ In Greek theogony (unlike the bright goddess of Mnemosyne), Lethe is the daughter of Eris and the offspring of Night. Moreover the river in Hades that makes the souls of the dead forget their previous existence on earth, is named after her. If anybody is ever allowed to come back to life again they have to drink from the river so that they don’t remember the afterlife. The well of Mnemosyne makes the dead who drink from it remember their lives, as opposed to the well of Lethe which makes them forget. See H. J. Rose, “The Children of Kronos II,” in *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: E. Dutton & Co., 1959), 78-101.

²⁷ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 50-51.

springs from the lack or incapability of story-telling – whether from the *spring* of oblivion or from the *spring* of remembrance.

Derrida's text disseminates its ideas pointing towards different directions for discussion, but I am still trying to follow the thread of my chosen narrative about the interrelation between allegory and irony. That is, interpreting the de Manian reminiscences, I am going to pay attention to the (en)twin(ing) of the two allegorical figures. Derrida also tries to follow the thread of his de Manian recollection, which calls and takes us into an endless chiasm from Mnemosyne to Lethe, then from Lethe to Mnemosyne. We should not forget that allegory as a recollective and narrative figure in its "specular self-reflection"²⁸ is of disjunctive structure: it says something, but always means something else (as well). The statements of remembrance cannot do without the moments of oblivion (either). On the basis of the chiasmic relation between recollection and oblivion, Derrida ingeniously connects the two figures, as he thinks that the functioning of the two gives the rhetoric of memory, "which recalls, recounts, forgets, recounts, and recalls forgetting, referring to the past only to efface what is essential to it: anteriority."²⁹ In accordance with the earlier quoted de Manian definitions of allegory and irony, in our story the quasi-storyteller is diachronic allegory, while the other figure feigning amnesia is synchronic irony. That is to say that irony, just like allegory, is also a 'meaning one thing, saying another' type figure of self-duplicating and disjunctive structure, which, in the twinkling of an eye, is able to interrupt a narrative. It can interrupt a narrative, then it can (pretend to) cause this interruption to be forgotten in order to recall the allegorical functioning, to generate another break by recollecting the previous one(s), then pretend to efface the memory of it/them – *ad infinitum*. It is only one further step for Derrida to 'discover' or display Mnemosyne as the allegory of allegory, Lethe as the allegorical-ironical figure, and their co-operation as "a kind of hybrid of two memories, or of a memory and an amnesia which divide the same act."³⁰ Similarly, the moments' questioning remembrance are necessarily inscribed in the Derridian flow(ers) of recollection in *Mémoires*.

Actually, it seems that throughout his work, Derrida is struggling not to come up with his de Man image, but 'let the other come in his otherness'. Although the title itself ironically alludes to the autobiographical voice of memoirs, here Derrida shares with us the memories about de Man, as if these were collected *for* his dead friend as well. At the same time, the work – allegorically, or with a double metonymy – is also about "deconstruction in America," which would have been radically different without de Man. As he says: "But just as, under the name or in the name of Paul de Man, we cannot say everything about deconstruction (even in America), so I cannot, in such a short time and under the

²⁸ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 76.

²⁹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 82.

³⁰ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 84.

single title of memory, master or exhaust the immense work of Paul de Man. Let us call it allegory or double metonymy, this modest journey that I will undertake for a few hours with you.”³¹ In Derrida’s text, de Man’s favourite and recurrent metaphors or phrases are recalled or brought to light; all that Derrida attributes to his coming domain (cf. ‘de Man’)³². Therefore, the title is a direct hit as the word, *mémoires*, refers to the recollecting and autobiographical nature of writing. At the same time, the subtitle with de Man’s name transfers the previous statement into the world of the de Manian texts and readings, where every piece of writing becomes an autobiography, or an epitaph. In “Autobiography As De-Facement” de Man analyses Wordsworth’s *Essays Upon Epitaphs* displaying that the poet like a ghost or a living dead addresses us as if his voice came from beyond the grave. Thus, the essay becomes a “monumental inscription” or epitaph, where the text of the (speaking) gravestone is (firstly) read by the (seeing) sun:

We can identify the figure that completes the central metaphor of the sun and thus completes the tropological spectrum that the sun engenders: it is the figure of prosopopeia, 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 poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*).³³

Relying on the chain of the main ideas in de Man’s Wordsworth reading, the “tropological spectrum” starts from the sun metaphor, and through the eyes it ranges, or curves to the tongue and the ability of speaking. Its vaulting curve, at the same time, refers to the movement of the sun (the trope of light) on the horizon and to the perceptive and reading human eyes. Thus, the de Manian prosopopeia, of which reading “assumes face,” becomes the trope not only of autobiography, but also of reading. Derrida also regards the figure as the Man’s “central metaphor,” which “looks back and keeps in memory, we could say, clarifies and recalls [...] everything.”³⁴ The figure becomes de Man’s commemorative, or rather “sepulchral inscription” and later/now Derrida’s

³¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 20.

³² Both Derrida and de Man often refers to puns in which they use de Man’s name, starting from the obvious ‘man,’ through ‘demand’ to ‘domain’ or ‘demesne’ – moreover, as an anagram in ‘madness’.

³³ Paul de Man, “Autobiography As De-Facement,” in Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 67-81, 76.

³⁴ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 27.

monument as well.³⁵ In his “White Mythology” Derrida names the heliotrope as the dominant metaphor of philosophy since everything turns around light, the natural light of truth. The trope of the central metaphor, revolving around the sun, that is, being a *helios-tropos*, signifies at the same time the movement of the sun and the movement of turning towards it.³⁶ Thus, in the metaphors of a text, the rhetoricity of language is outspoken, or rather comes to (day)light, if we read the Derridian text with the help of de Man’s prosopopeia.

Yet we should not forget about the reflective structure of reading and face-giving. The rhetorical figures, besides being the “the solar language of cognition”³⁷ and giving-face as textual tropes, are likely to assume a form, take a turn and deface. As de Man sums up: “[o]ur topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces,”³⁸ and he, with pleasure, utilises the meanings of the words deriving from *face* and *figure*. The expression of *defacement* in the title is related to the word, mask, which appears in the definition of prosopopeia, and it also recalls the problem of fiction vs. autobiography. According to Cynthia Chase, though “Autobiography As De-Facement” masterfully represents the disturbing effects caused by the dependence on figurative language, a ‘perceptible’ explanation is given in another de Man text titled “Wordsworth and the Victorians.”³⁹ In this text, besides the frequent usage of the terms, face and face-making, de Man – almost compelling the reader to make a *face – effaces*⁴⁰ the difference between Wordsworth’s rhetoric and his own. He quotes the passage from the third book of “Prelude,” where the poetic eye / I while observing the various forms of nature “[c]ould find no surface where its power might sleep” (3.164).⁴¹ Interpreting the line, de Man puns on the hidden *face* within *surface*, and he draws a parallel between the coming to the *sur-face*, the unexploited

³⁵ Derrida was alive when I started to write my essay in 2004. And now, in 2008, Derrida’s *Mémoires* can also be read as his own sepulchral monument. In “Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida,” Joseph G. Kronick claims that every autobiographical texts can be read as “an allegory of the writer’s death, an ‘autobiothanatology’” (MLN, Vol. 115:5, 997-1018, 1014. Italics in the original).

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the text of Philosophy,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 207-271).

³⁷ de Man, “Autobiography As De-Facement,” in *RR*, 80.

³⁸ de Man, “Autobiography As De-Facement,” in *RR*, 76.

³⁹ Cynthia Chase, “Giving a Face to a Name: de Man’s Figures,” in *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 82-113.

⁴⁰ I recall the verb, effaces, in a de Manian statement about the effacement of memory. See earlier in the present paper.

⁴¹ Quoted in Paul de Man, “Wordsworth and the Victorians,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, 83-92), 92. The whole passage runs: “an eye/ Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,/ To the broad ocean and the azure heavens/ Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,/ Could find no surface where its power might sleep” (*The Works of William Wordsworth*, Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1994, 651).

figurative richness of the text and the trope of face-giving: “The face, which is the power to surface from the sea of infinite distinctions in which we risk to drown, can find no surface.”⁴² We are obliged to feel that there really is no resting place / surface for our understanding, and in a pun, in the twinkling of an eye, the reading of de Man’s central metaphor, the prosopopeia, becomes questionable.

In another text of *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, entitled “Shelley Disfigured,” in which de Man analyses Shelley’s last and fragmentary *The Triumph Life*, we can again meet the key figures of the above-read “defacing” text. Yet here the textual plasticity is given not by the gravestone, or the epitaph inscribed on it, but by architecture and statuary: Rousseau, who greatly influenced Shelley’s way of thinking, is presented as a stiffened statue with empty eye-sockets. De Man places the allegory of Narcissus as the focal point in the text while paying attention to the sun-imagery of the poem. In his analysis, the movement of sunrise and sunset, together with the associated human activities – as birth/death, waking/sleeping and remembering/forgetting – are shown not in their disjunctive detachment, but in their intertwining (inter)relation. The lines – “So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell; / And whether life had been before that sleep”⁴³ – reveal, in a Platonic way, that human awakening is connected with the state of coming into the world (birth). Accordingly, they claim that our life is characterised – and sealed – by a slumber, in which, to quote de Man, we are in “a deeper sleep replacing a lighter one, a deeper forgetting being achieved by an act of memory which remembers one’s forgetting.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, in the poem, the trope of light does not follow its right path on the sky – Shelley’s sun is rather suspended as a pending question awaiting the answer. De Man brilliantly finds the appropriate metaphor: while in Wordsworth’s works the sun usually “hangs” in the air,⁴⁵ in Shelley’s poem the sunlight glimmers from time to time as if it could be seen through a veil. In the reading, the play of the light with its appearance and disappearance refers to the uncertainty of human life and the lack of true knowledge, which de Man calls the “*tantalizing*” “play of veiling and unveiling.”

⁴² de Man, “Wordsworth and the Victorians,” 92.

⁴³ The quoted passage reads: “So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell; / And whether life had been before that sleep/ The heaven which I imagine, or a hell/ Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep, / I know not.” In *The Works of B. Shelley* (Wordsworth Poetry Library, Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1994), 458.

⁴⁴ Paul de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 93-123, 105.

⁴⁵ Paul de Man, “Time and History in Wordsworth,” in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism. The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers* (The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993, 74-94), 79. According to de Man, the floating instability of the earth, due to the frequent usage of the words, *hung* and *hanging*, becomes vertiginous in Wordsworth’s poetry.

Having bound and fastened the threads, de Man shows us the central knot, where the problems of “knowledge, oblivion and desire hang suspended.”⁴⁶ In the lyric passage chosen and placed in the centre by de Man, “the ‘silver music’ of oblivion” can be heard and its scene is coloured by the brightening light of the sun, the crystalline mirror of the water and Iris’s “many coloured scarf,” that is, the rainbow or the iris.⁴⁷ The metaphorical chain marks the line of the blazing sun – the reflective surface of the water – the rainbow/iris, and, finally, there is the iris of the eyes reading the lines. In the centre of the interpretation (or every interpretation), Narcissus’s *figure*, i.e. the floating image of his face mirrored/reflected in the water can be seen. To be precise, Narcissus’s look, the iris of his eyes, gives the topological centre of prosopopeia. Looking back, de Man claims that “[t]he sun, in this text, is from the start the figure of this self-contained specularly. But the double of the sun can only be the eye conceived as the mirror of light.”⁴⁸ The sun, similarly to Narcissus, can “see” only the reflection of his image/light in the water, and the mirroring surface of the water functions as a mirror and as the seeing eye. The sun-eye with the rainbow (iris) becomes seeing, while the water of the fountain as a mirroring surface makes it visible. That is, reading prosopopeia, the text functions as the mirror of the interpreter, in which it can be seen that Shelley is reading Plato, Rousseau and himself, or that de Man is reading Shelley – who is reading Plato, Rousseau and himself – and himself, or as the reader is reading de Man, who is reading himself and Shelley – more exactly, as Shelley reading Plato, Rousseau and himself – and herself. In this mirror-play “the text serves as a mirror of our own knowledge and our knowledge mirrors in its turn the text’s signification.”⁴⁹ With this statement, we have already started to remember and write a story that, of necessity, can be turned over by the insight of figurality in the twinkling of an eye.

Now just remember, in his earlier writing de Man characterises the rhetorical figures by saying that they always say something other than they mean; and here he sums up: “[l]anguage, as trope, is always privative.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the reader’s life-forgetting and floating textual reverie/musing is drastically interrupted by the awareness of the text’s “monumentality.” The mythical Narcissus pines away in his desire for self-knowledge, Rousseau is petrified, the poet drowns, and the text – like other masterpieces of romanticism – *recalls* the atmosphere of a cemetery. Yet the illusion breaking moments of irony are again forgotten, thus, the tropes are suspended, then later interpreted – in facing and

⁴⁶ de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *RR*, 106.

⁴⁷ “A shape all light, which with one hand did fling / Dew on the earth, as if it were Dawn / Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing // A silver music on the mossy lawn, / And still before her on the dusky grass / Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn.” Quoted in de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *RR*, 108.

⁴⁸ de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *RR*, 109.

⁴⁹ de Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *RR*, 112.

⁵⁰ de Man, “Autobiography As De-Facement,” in *RR*, 80.

defacing. According to de Man's *demand*, "to read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat – that is to say, the endless prosopopeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophise them in turn. No degree of knowledge can ever stop this *madness*, for it is the *madness* of words."⁵¹ In its mo(nu)mentalisation, reading gives a face, then listens to the voice-from-beyond-the-grave, from which, in our case, such characteristically de Manian puns can be heard as *demand* or *demise*.

In the disjunctive allegorical readings of figuration, we should always embed the moments of the ironical turnings/reversal, or rather we should *face* the risk that we cannot tell when an allegorical reflective disjunction leads to facing or to defacing. Although Werner Hamacher regards "read!" and "understand!" as de Man's imperatives, he accepts that "no allegory can grasp the incidences of irony by which it is disrupted, none can catch up with the positing violence of the imperative, but each one – for each one remains exposed to its positing – must undertake the attempt to translate it into a cognitive content. [...] Ironically, the imperative – of language, of understanding – allows no decision whether it is to be allegorical or ironic."⁵² De Man's allegorical readings and Derrida's psyche-promise about the coming of the other reveal the same: the possibility, or rather the impossibility of the understanding of the other. The undecidability of the question can be represented by a metaphor taken from Genette, namely, the revolving door (*tourniquet*), of which the vortical/whirling and accelerating motion borders on insanity. In his *Mémoires* Derrida also quotes the important passage from de Man's "Autobiography As De-Facement": "The specular moment that is part of all understanding reveals the tropological structure that underlies all cognitions, including knowledge of self. The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge – it does not – but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is, the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions."⁵³

In other words, self-understanding in autobiographical texts (actually, all texts are self-understanding) heightens the swirling motion of tropes and makes the mirror-play more spec(tac)ular. The word *tourniquet*, translated as "whirligig" in de Man's text, signifies not only turning around, but also rolling over and over – stirring and returning endlessly. The picture of the revolving door reminds us of *psyché*, the revolving mirror, while in the verb, *tourner*,

⁵¹ de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 122. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁵² Werner Hamacher, "LECTIO: de Man's Imperative," trans. by Susan Bernstein, in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. by Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, 171- 201), 199. See also in *Entferntes Verstehen. Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998, 151-194), 192-3.

⁵³ de Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," in *RR*, 71. Also quoted in Derrida, *Mémoires*, 25.

the endless reflection of mirrors is recalled.⁵⁴ The vertiginous dizziness is caused by the endless chiasms of the allegorical disjunctions and the ironical reversals of the figures. The rhetorical revolving mirror is called into play by de Man's "trope of tropes," irony, which is "unrelieved *vertige*, dizziness to the point of madness."⁵⁵ In the third lecture of his *Mémoires* (titled "Acts") Derrida, in a rather lengthy footnote, comments on the above quoted sentence:

[we could play here on the French word 'vertige': as we say in French, it makes one's head turn (*il fait tourner la tête*), and it is the experience of a turn – that is, of a trope which cannot stop turning and turning around (*tourner et retourner*), since we can only speak of a (rhetorical) turn by way of another trope, without any chance of achieving the stability of a metalanguage, a metatropé, a metarhetoric: the irony of irony of which Schlegel speaks and which de Man cites is still an irony; whence the madness of the regressus ad infinitum, and the madness of rhetoric, whether it be that of irony or that of allegory: madness because it has no reason to stop, because the reason is tropic].⁵⁶

In Derrida's expressive "whirligig," which spins the de Manian statement and recalls the motion of Genette's revolving door, the reader has the feeling that she is going to swallow her own tongue – the mnemonic or amnesiac source of all the troubles. In Wordsworth's short lyric poem that has been referred to several times in my text, the turning of the tropes is intensified to extremes. By the end of the work, we are forced to be "rolled round" together with the globe and the dead beloved in the allegorical remembrance of the mourning man, while this revolving is guaranteed by the ironic interrupting moments of forgetting. In the poem the beginning state of slumber fetters, more exactly, "seals" the interpretation. The word, seal, is frequently used in de Man's texts, consequently, it often appears in *Mémoires*, where Derrida remembers de Man. He speaks about (sealing) wax in connection with Mnemosyne's activity, then about stamps and later about a mark or signature – "as if the ironic moment were signed, were sealed in the body of an allegorical writing."⁵⁷ The key (and the lock) to *Mémoires* is de Man's seal and at the same time his name, sign, or signature will be the trademark of the irony of allegory. Thus, Derrida is mistaken, or rather speaks ironically, when – assuming the irony hidden in the de Manian allegorical readings – he claims that irony hardly helps us tell the story.

⁵⁴ In the French verbs, *tourner* and *tourner*, and the noun, *tournequin*, the root is given by the verb, *tourner*, that is, to turn or revolve.

⁵⁵ de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *BI*, 215.

⁵⁶ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 152-153.

⁵⁷ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 84.

On the contrary, being aware of the ironic force in the power of allegory, we must declare: only irony can help us proceed with our story.⁵⁸

In *Mémoires*, however, we can also read about whether it is possible to find the source of the two fountains, Mnemosyne and Lethe, and to arrive at an anamnesis of an ancient time concept. So to say, to arrive at the slumber of timelessness, since the work is “sealed” by the cause of its writing: Derrida writes it for the dead de Man, and in his memoirs his own work of mourning is expressed. Therefore, the metaphor of the seal leads us to the immediate context of the work, namely, (Derrida’s) work of mourning; more exactly, to the impossibility of mourning and its allegorical-ironical narcissism. According to de Man, “[t]rue ‘mourning’ is less deluded [and] [t]he most *it* can do is to allow for non-comprehension.”⁵⁹ In the statement, the italicised *it* emphasises that true “mourning” is only a tendency which actually denies the truth of mourning. Derrida also thinks that the Freudian “normal” work of mourning is unsuccessful as it operates with the other’s interiorisation, that is, with the abandonment of the other’s otherness. Whereas, true mourning is the impossible work of mourning, which will be successful if it fails: it is “an aborted interiorization [that] is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us.”⁶⁰ In Derrida’s mourning, de Man’s texts become the prosopopeia of the-voice-from-beyond-the-grave and the rhetoric of the allegorical remembrance.

Thus, connecting the de Manian true “mourning” with the promise of “Psyche,” we can understand what Derrida means by “true (work of) mourning.” It is not “the most deadly infidelity[,] that of a *possible mourning* which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives in us,” but “that of the impossible mourning, which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or the vault of some narcissism.”⁶¹ That is, in true mourning one tries to keep the dead at the other side of the revolving mirror/*psyché*, and starting the endless mirroring, he tries to

⁵⁸ “It is the power of allegory, and its ironic force as well, to say something quite different from and even contrary to what seems to be intended through it” (Derrida, *Mémoires*, 74). This quotation foreshadows the rest, or refers back to the previous ideas in my text/book, and it provides disturbing insights concerning *aletheia*. What is hidden in the story? Certainly, (an)other one(s)!

⁵⁹ Paul de Man, “Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 239-262, 262. Italics are in the original; also quoted in Derrida, *Mémoires*, 30.

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 35. On the Derridian work of mourning see Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, ed. by Pascal-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁶¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 6.

‘allow the other to come in his otherness’ – or rather, let the other go, disregarding interiorisation. Nevertheless, these questions, though they help to proceed with the story, will return from time to time haunting; the figure of Narcissus is *unforgettable* since all the time he is (at) the other (side of the mirror). Even if we think that we make an effort to give the leading part to the other in “impossible mourning,” it again demonstrates our narcissism – just like in this sentence. With his promise in “Psyche” and the (promised) endless mirror-play, Derrida exactly attempts to move away from it/himself and, in his withdrawal, he tries to get closer to the other. Remembering the other, he wants to go beyond the mirror of speculation, over the narcissistic structure, of which “ruses, mimes, and strategies can only succeed in supposing the other – and thus in relinquishing in advance any *autonomy*.”⁶²

I do not intend to discuss the possibility and impossibility of the work of mourning. Now I simply accept Derrida’s summary that in normal mourning “Narcissus, who turns back to himself, has returned”⁶³ – there is nothing extraordinary in it. However, Narcissus taken as an allegory gathering and then spreading the other figures, is also only a figure: only a returning (*revient*) ghost. As the artist of memoirs says: “The ghost, *le re-venant*, the survivor, appears only by means of figure or fiction, but its appearance is not nothing, nor is it a mere semblance.”⁶⁴ That is to say, that while the true impossible mourning can work without rhetoric and silently accept death, in the recollecting texts we become living dead conversing with ghosts. I again refer to the ending of Wordsworth’s poem, where the ironic moment(s) of the awakening, recollecting the previous forgetting(s), interrupt(s) the continuity of allegorical remembrance and dreamlike mourning. In his earlier cited writing, Hamacher also points out that understanding, i.e. reading as “the allegory of the linguistic imperative is an endless work of mourning the traumas inflicted by irony.”⁶⁵ So far nice things have been written about death since, as we know about writing, it is capable of disguising the dead as living, giving lively colours to the corpse, the mask and (dis)simulation.⁶⁶ The remembering texts are haunted by the rhetorical figures, which remind us of de Man’s, Derrida’s and, in time, – actually, always already – of our own remembrance (and oblivion).

“Müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn”; poetic words are supposed to bloom like flowers – paradoxically, in de Man’s reading of the Hölderlin passage, we can hear the true nature of language. Unlike naturally originating

⁶² Derrida, *Mémoires*, 32. Italics are in the original.

⁶³ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 66.

⁶⁴ Derrida, *Mémoires*, 64.

⁶⁵ Hamacher, “LECTIO: de Man’s Imperative,” in *Reading de Man Reading*, 199. I slightly altered the translation. See in the original Hamacher, *Entferntes Verstehen*, 193.

⁶⁶ See about the meanings of writing in Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 61-172.

flowers, words can only originate *like* flowers, they are always ‘like’ something else. To quote de Man’s summing statement: “For it is in the essence of language to be capable of origination, but of never achieving the absolute identity with itself that exists in the natural object.”⁶⁷ In the ironic reflections of the allegorical unfolding, it *turns* out about the textual flowers of rhetoric: they are dead. Contrasted with the (seemingly) ‘lifelike’ heliotrope recalled in Derrida’s “White Mythology,” in our texts we have mostly read about “the forgotten heliotropes that beyond all nostalgia mime death with the apotropaic mask of stone and treasure whatever light they have been granted.”⁶⁸ Actually, looking for the figurality of the Derridian “solar language,” all the time we have been revolving around the pseudo-heliotrope – the narcissus. Although the heliotropic metaphors seem to move round the sun they can only turn round themselves. Derrida claims that, on the one hand, a metaphor always embodies its own death, on the other hand, it is capable of sublation (cf. *Aufhebung*) and becoming “a dried flower in a book.”⁶⁹ In our collection of (dried) flowers, in our anthology,⁷⁰ we can only collect figure-phantoms, that is, the (dead) flowers of rhetoric. Reading about these figures, we enter the world of the dead, where like asphodels,⁷¹ (the mythical death-flowers) the sepulchral flowers are blooming and unfolding their stories. And even if we know about it, suspending our doubts, we start to remember again and again. And looking in the mirror, we try to see the other – always already allegorically and from one ironic moment to the next.

⁶⁷ Paul de Man, “The Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984, 1-17), 6.

⁶⁸ Dirk De Schutter, “Words Like Stones,” in *(Dis)continuities: Essays on Paul de Man*, ed. by Luc Herman, Kris Humbeeck and Geert Lernout (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989, 99-110), 108.

⁶⁹ Derrida, “White Mythology,” 271.

⁷⁰ Derrida also mentions that the Greek word *anthologia* originally meant flower-collection. See in “White Mythology,” 272.

⁷¹ The Greeks planted asphodels near tombs, thinking that the dead took their bulbs as a form of food; they also believed that there were asphodel-fields in Hades (cf. in Homer’s *Odyssey*, XI.539, XI. 573 and XXIV.13). The flower belongs to the liliaceae, together with the narcissus. See Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 88-90.

PYGMALIONS' READING OF READING PYGMALIONS

<i>Agalmata, na ginomastan agalmata</i>	Statues, if only we were statues
<i>Afti tin agia ora touti ti stigmi,</i>	In the sacred hour, this moment,
<i>Na pethena mes ta xeria sou agapi mou</i>	I would die in your hands, my love
<i>Na pethenes mes ta xeria mou ki esi.</i>	You would also die in my hands.

(Greek song)

Is the status of a text like the status of a statue?
(Paul de Man)

Reading my narcissistic text on recollection and forgetting (again and again), I admit that I have raised several questions about memoirs, autobiography, and self-writing/ writing of the self.* In his "Autobiography As De-Facement" de Man claims that "autobiography [...] is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts."¹ If every text is autobiographical, then the study of autobiography, being the figure of reading, cannot reveal self-knowledge, but presents "the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions."² In the present text I try to study life-writing, that is, the writing of (a) life, starting with the beginning, while in the previous text I preferred to concentrate on the possible – and somehow inevitably impossible – ending of the story. Re(g)a(r)ding the figurative language of my previous text, in an ethical way of self-reading, I should admit that two images are neglected: the stony blind statue (of Rousseau) and the sealing, melting wax (of identity). Here and now it is time to focus on the stony orbs and the stony arch in the readings of narcissistic Pygmalions and in their versions of prosopopoeia. Although the *apropos* of my reading are the blind Rousseau and Pygmalion,³ I cannot help also writing about Narcissus, who as a wax-figure, or rather 'as a reverant ghost' keeps reappearing in the text.

* The 'apropos' of this re-reading was provided by a roundtable-discussion held at the Centre for Life Narratives of Kingston University and I am extremely grateful to Professor Rafey Habib for his stimulating remarks and to Dr Matthew Birchwood for organising the talk. I am also grateful to the Hungarian Scholarship Board (Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság) as my 3-month research in London was funded by a Hungarian State Eötvös Scholarship granted by the Board in 2008.

¹ Paul de Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," in *RR*, 70.

² Paul de Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," in *RR*, 71.

³ See more about the "à propos of à propos" in Derrida's "Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2)" in Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002, 71- 160), 76-77. As all texts are autobiographical, the present text cannot be an exception and it does not

Why is Rousseau presented as a blind statue in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* and in de Man's "Shelley Disfigured"? We can suspect that it can be explained by the main concern of romanticism with architecture and statuary, as de Man refers to it. But we cannot forget about de Man's phrase, namely that the romantic poet was deeply concerned with the "encrypted statues of Truth" of philosophy.⁴ For Shelley, Rousseau is basically the philosopher of the self-quest though in *The Triumph of Life* he is shown to fail in his quest for self-knowledge. In the figural language of the poem, as de Man points out, Rousseau's brain becomes 'sand,' his eyes turn to 'stony orbs,' that is, Rousseau is disfigured, defaced.⁵ In my narcissistic text (what else a text can be?) the self-reflexive moment of reading is beautifully displayed with the 'seeing' sun-eye, the reflecting well and Narcissus' rainbow-like iris. But what if we take into consideration that "the sun 'sees' its own light reflected, like Narcissus, in a well that is a mirror and also an eye"?⁶ What if in the frozen moment of self-understanding the viewer is stoned and blind, and his iris/the rainbow becomes "a rigid, stony arch"? As we know in (rhetorical) reading/understanding "the text serves as a mirror of our own knowledge and our knowledge mirrors in its turn the text's signification."⁷ The romantics favoured the idea of "monumentalization," consequently, their texts can be read as their epitaphs and monumental graves. As de Man adds, "they [viz. the romantics] have been made into statues for the benefit of future archaeologist"⁸ – all readings are monumentalisation.

De Man's face-giving and face-taking monumental prosopopoeia is regarded by several theorists of autobiography as the primary rhetorical figure presiding over self-writing.⁹ However, if de Man's name is not mentioned, the impact of deconstructive discourse can greatly be sensed in the recent theoretical writings on autobiography. For instance, when Louis A. Renza thematises the problematic status of the 'I' of autobiographies, he refers to Derrida's ideas, namely that generally, in written discourses "the 'I' can never in itself signify the writer's self-presence" as "it signifies his absence from being present to

pretend to be something else. I composed it during my three-month stay at Kingston University and though a great part of my notes and the outline of the paper had been made before my travel, the work itself was done there and then. I would say, it was like the sculptor's work when the figure is revealed, brought to light, from the solid block of stone.

⁴ Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 95.

⁵ Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 100.

⁶ Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 109.

⁷ Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 112.

⁸ Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *RR*, 121.

⁹ See, for instance, John Sturrock in *The Language of Autobiography* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), where in his "Introduction" he refers to de Man's prosopopoeia (4), or Williams Huntington who also names de Man with Starobinski and Lejeune as his main influences in the writing of his great book, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* (Oxford: OUP, 1983).

himself.”¹⁰ On the other hand, we can also meet such opinions as, for instance, that of Sturrock, who argues that the autobiographer has had a *real* face. Quoting his claim:

We can agree that, in writing, an autobiographer does not so much put his name to his life-story as put his life-story to his name; or, should he be more drawn to self-portraiture than to narrative, that he provides for that name a psychological identity. Whether it be a story or portrait – and all autobiographical stories are in practice part portrait, just as all self-portraits are in part story – autobiography *wills* the unity of its subject.¹¹

Here, I prefer to put emphasis on the will and the wish for the unity of the self, which otherwise can be the main purpose of all life-stories – written, painted, or performed.

Nevertheless, the autobiographical form cannot be labelled as fictive or non-fictive, not even a mixture of the two. Autobiography is the popular form of life-narratives, on the other hand and it tells the story of a self-quest at its best. According to Renza, “we might view it [viz. autobiography] instead as a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression, one that allows, then inhibits, its ostensible project of self-representation, of converting oneself into the present promised by language.”¹² In autobiographical works the writer does not only and truly become the author of his life-story, but he also creates his own masks, or faces of the self that, through writing, become another. Although in his study Renza refers to the other characters in the work as others, he fails to realise that the autobiographer’s ‘I’ is another ‘other’ in his story, or the self is to become another – from the perspective of the writing self of the present. Jean Starobinski in his article titled “The Style of Autobiography” says that in self-writing there is the myth of the “authentic” image of the man who “held the pen.” As every autobiography is a self-interpretation, the *I* of an autobiographical narrative (Starobinski awkwardly speaks about pseudo- and sincere ones) “is assumed by a nonentity; it is an *I* without a referent, an *I* that refers only to an arbitrary

¹⁰ Louis A. Renza, “The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton: PUP, 1980, 268-295), 292. He develops his ideas quoting from Derrida’s *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*. Renza also points out the vicious circle in the dreamlike quality of autobiographies, “as estranged, autobiographical referents tend to appear within a dreamlike setting to the writing self” (294).

¹¹ Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, 5. Italics are mine. É.A.

¹² Renza, “The Veto of the Imagination,” 295.

image.”¹³ In his/her autobiography the writer creates his/her own image, face or mask reflecting on his/her past self. In the special reflecting structure of the life-narrative, the distancing in time results in a distancing of the self: the past tense questions identity making the writing of the self the main aim of the author. Starobinski suggests that the figures of rhetoric should be analysed more thoroughly as besides grammar they also contribute to the particular autobiographical style.

In theoretical writings on the form, we can compulsorily find the discussion of Rousseau’s *Confessions* though the chosen form, being a confession, complicates the analysis of the narrative.¹⁴ In *The Forms of Autobiography* Spengemann in his chapter on Rousseau’s work calls attention to the way “the narrative center moves continually, rearranging the protagonist’s life in order to prolong that pleasure of remembrance which has become the narrator’s primary motive for rehearsing the loss of happiness.”¹⁵ Rousseau as “the arch catastrophist among autobiographers”¹⁶ refers to at least fifteen events as the prime cause of his wretchedness, which makes him either a notorious liar, or a great entertainer – the author of the first ‘misery memoirs’. Starobinski goes even further in his reading of the autobiographical form in Rousseau’s *Confessions*, when he emphasises its unique quality expressed in the diversity of styles and “tonalities.” He says, “it is not unusual to find elegiac episodes intimately mixed with picaresque, the change occurring back and forth with great rapidity.”¹⁷ He sees it as a ‘true’ description not only of a life, but also of a more general theme:

Shouldn’t we recognize, here, in this full re-creation of lived experience, the equivalent of an important aspect of Rousseau’s ‘system,’ a *replica* of his philosophy of history? According to that philosophy, man originally possessed happiness and joy: in comparison with that first felicity, the present is a time of degradation and corruption. But man was originally a brute

¹³ Jean Starobinski, “The Style of Autobiography,” trans. by Seymour Chatman, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton: PUP, 1980, 73-83), 75.

¹⁴ See more about it in Starobinski’s “The Style of Autobiography” and Jacques Derrida’s highly inventive “Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2)”.

¹⁵ William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography (Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre)*, (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1980), 67.

¹⁶ Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, 142.

¹⁷ Jean Starobinski, “The Style of Autobiography,” 83. Derrida in his “Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2)” mentions the sentimental description of the dying Mme de Vercellis, who in her last words actually comments about her farting on her death-bed (95). I cannot help finding it ‘emblematic’ of the mixing of tones in Rousseau’s *Confessions*. See the episode of ‘work of art – work of fart’ (É.A.) in Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. by J. M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1967), 86.

deprived of “light,” his reason still asleep; compared to that initial obscurity, the present is a time of lucid reflection and enlarged consciousness. The past, then, is at once the object of nostalgia and the object of irony; the present is at once a state of (moral) degradation and (intellectual) superiority.¹⁸

Thus, Rousseau is not only the philosopher of the self-quest, but also the one who reflects on this quest in his works. As Jean Starobinski states, “with reflection the man of nature ends and ‘the man of man’ begins.”¹⁹ That is, we have a ‘man of man’ (a philosopher, or a rhetorician?) here, and I would rather think that Rousseau – in his own egoistic style – shows and (dis)plays (on) that the rhetoric of memory works this way. Sturrock quotes Rousseau’s confessing statement about the relation between truth and rhetoric in his writing; namely, “[his] role [was] to tell the truth, but not to get it believed.”²⁰

In “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self” Paul de Man also highlights that contemporary criticism has found relevant the problem of the self and the problem of the ‘speaking voice’ in the romantic works. The main concentration on the emergence of the self in Wordsworth’s, Shelley’s, Keats’, Hölderlin’s, and Rousseau’s works goes together with their realisation of the problematic relationship between origin and totality, what’s more, the temporality of literary language. De Man finds that the problem of “the split, the disjunction between the empirical and what we have called the literary, or poetic self” is still crucial in the understanding of writing and reading.²¹ It is obvious that the abyssal or labyrinthine structure of self-writing invites the reader to join the writer’s self-quest with the “presence of a double self in the terms of self-knowledge and self-deception.”²² While reading, we fancy/imagine that we identify ourselves with the speaking voice and Rousseau is a test case for de Man, being claimed to be “a philosopher of the self.”²³

In his works Rousseau dramatises the (ironic) duplication of his empirical self and the one appearing in his work; the most remarkable ‘duplication’ can be noticed in his *Dialogues*, where the two conversing figures are called Rousseau and Jean-Jacques. According to de Man, Starobinski shows that Rousseau

¹⁸ Jean Starobinski, “The Style of Autobiography,” 83. Italics are mine É.A.

¹⁹ Quoted in Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, 155.

²⁰ Quoted in Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, 151.

²¹ Paul de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism. The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers* (eds. E. S. Burt, Kevin Newmark, Andrzej Warminski, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993, 25-49), 25-6.

²² de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 27-8. Thus, it is not by chance that Rousseau’s readers had mistaken the author’s voice several times for his own, for instance, Mme de Staël adored the passionate voice of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, while Hazlitt disliked his overegotistical self-centeredness.

²³ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion),” in *The Allegories of Reading*, 163.

succeeds in escaping the dangers of reflection as “he claims to be entirely separated from his own existence, pushing the reflexive disjunction (*dédoublement*) to the point where the reflected image would become, for the reflecting consciousness, an objective figure, kept at a distance and observable as from the outside.”²⁴ It is true that we can observe some “oscillation between materialistic naturalism and transcendental intuition in Rousseau’s works” and that Rousseau tends to call his imaginative works *fiction* referring to the “fiction-engendering faculty” of the self, but the pragmatic self uses imagination for the own benefit of its pragmatic purposes. De Man thinks that Rousseau’s self-transparency is only a trick, the above mentioned “oscillation is [...] a succession of flights from self-knowledge.”²⁵ I would rather think that Rousseau thematises the face-giving and face-taking of memory, writing ‘the history of his soul’. Let me refer to only one section, where he discusses the problems of recollection and forgetting in relation to the self: “My first part has been entirely written from memory, and I must have made many mistakes in it. [...]but I cannot go wrong about what I have felt, [...]. The true object of my confessions is to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life.”²⁶ It seems that an autobiographical piece cannot work without the (double) irony of *dédoublement* caused by the allegorical-ironical structure of forgetting and recollection embedded in the ironic context of writing *itself*.

This quotation is worth putting side by side with the starting of *Confessions*:

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself. Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. Whether Nature did well or ill in breaking the mould in which she formed me, is a question which can only be resolved after the reading of my book.²⁷

²⁴ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 35.

²⁵ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 37-8. He also quotes Starobinski’s telling passage to show Rousseau’s double perspective about the work of remembering in *The Confessions*: “By abandoning myself *simultaneously* to the *memory* of the impression I received and to the present sentiment, I will paint the state of my soul in a *double perspective*, namely at the moment when the event happened to me and at the moment I described it” (38. Italics are mine. É.A.).

²⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. by J. M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1967), 262.

²⁷ Rousseau, *The Confessions*, 17.

Besides the striking self-assuredness of his voice, we should notice two motifs: the promised portrait of the self (of this ‘simply myself’) that is being formed and going to unfold in the act of reading. In his *Memoirs of the Blind* Derrida questions the mirroring quality of self-portrait as we cannot be sure whether in a self-portrait a painter is “showing himself drawing *himself* or *something else* – or even himself *as something else, as other*.”²⁸ We can sense the parallel here between self-portrait and autobiography, what is more, it is also true in relation to every writing and reading. Derrida makes the self-portrait the ironic emblem of understanding and interpretation. Being his own model, the painter/writer/reader/critic is working “in a stupefying or a stupefied tranquillity” and “[his] memory open[s] like an eye, or like the hole in a bone socket that lets you see without showing you anything *at all*, anything *of the all*. This, *for* showing you *nothing at all, nothing of the all*.”²⁹ Here with the mentioning of ‘stupefied tranquillity,’ we are again by Narcissus’ pool admiring his stupefying gaze of himself.

Similarly, de Man says that in his prosopopoeia, behind the mask of Rousseau’s conceitedness, “an element of distance, of disinterestedness is introduced from the start, and the confessional statement is admittedly fictionalized, changed by an imaginative act of writing, which prevents it from coinciding entirely with itself.”³⁰ To understand the Rousseauian confrontation between the artist and his work dramatised in the questions of selfhood, both Starobinski and de Man analyse two of Rousseau’s brief dramatic works: an early piece, *Narcisse* (with its “Preface”) and *Pygmalion* that was written between the philosophical-literary and the confessional parts of his life-work in 1762. In another writing, de Man says about *Pygmalion* that it focuses on the self’s getting closer to being in artistic creation, where the work is given priority over the self.³¹ Before reading about Rousseau’s version of *Pygmalion* and reading about the others’ versions of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*, it is quite fruitful to read and re-read the ‘original’ story in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid’s narrative is the storehouse of great stories of human transformations, while his own personal wish is to be commemorated as the writer of these stories. In the work on metamorphoses the lasting substance is the poet himself, “who gave enduring life to the dead myths and thereby made himself

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, trans. by M. B. Naas and P.-A. Brault (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 65. Italics in the original.

²⁹ Derrida: *Memoirs of the Blind*, 69. Italics in the original.

³⁰ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 39.

³¹ Paul de Man, “Madame de Staël and Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” in *Critical Writings, 1953-1978*, ed. by Lindsay Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 178: “[...] the fiction, by the intermediary of artistic creation, brings the private self closer to being. The same movement occurs in Rousseau when Pygmalion’s self, engendering Galatea, permits her to become the self’s true center. The priority of the fiction is achieved in self-renunciation.”

immortal.”³² Although in the work most mythical transformations are related to love and passion, human artists and skilful artisans – for instance, the weaver Arachne, the poet Orpheus, and the inventor Daedalus – are punished as the Olympian gods cannot endure human rivals.³³ The sculptor Pygmalion’s story about his bringing the self-made statue to life is a central and a uniquely positive one in the work. The myth – more exactly, the Ovidian telling of the myth – is placed within the song of Orpheus, who has a verbal power over death, while Pygmalion has a visual and tactile power over dead material; Ovid has all kinds of power displayed in his work, as Hardie puts it.³⁴

Actually, the Ovidian narrative of the ‘life-giving’ artist’s story is another reading of ‘Pygmalion’. In an earlier (original?) one, in Philostephanus’ version of the Cyprian legend, Pygmalion was a king, not an artist, who “lustfully infatuated with a statue of the goddess Venus, which he took from the sanctuary and polluted with his embrace.”³⁵ It is important to emphasise that Ovid changed the original story because in his version he *made* the King of Cyprus (or of Paphos) from “the perverse *agalmatophilic* [viz. statue-lover] of the traditional version to a pious lover.”³⁶ Pygmalion becomes the elegiac lover and the artist who in his creative fantasy fulfils his desire. While in the Greek myth Pygmalion was a tyrant and sinner who offended Venus, in Ovid’s version he is made a shy sculptor who turns away from love and women. More exactly, he turns away from women seeing the lechery of the prostitutes in Cyprus. Temple-prostitution was frequently practised in Cyprus as a form of worship and was considered as an act of piety related closely to the cult of Aphrodite. But these prostitutes probably ‘worked’ outside the temple for their own profit and in this way they acted against the Goddess’ will. In Ovid’s poetic version of the myth the “loathsome Propoetides” are punished in a highly inventive way – they are turned to stone. To quote from *Metamorphoses*: “Then, as all sense of shame left them, the blood hardened in their cheeks, and it required only a slight alteration to transform them into stony flints.”³⁷ Readers of the passage find different meanings of the stoniness of women here: while Gross takes it as a chiasmic relation, Solodow remarks on the metaphoric ‘hardness’ of the prostitutes that is

³² G. Karl Galinsky, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 44.

³³ Elaine Fantham, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 51. She also highlights that besides the obvious parallels between Ovid and the poet Orpheus, the other artist-stories have some relevance in the narrative. For instance, Arachne’s web stands for the Ovidian narrative ‘telling’ stories of mythical rapes: while her tapestry is bordered with ivy interwoven with entwining flowers, the connected stories are framed and decorated with the flowers of rhetoric (54).

³⁴ Philip Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002.), 188.

³⁵ Fantham, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 59. See more on it in Jane M. Miller, “Some Versions of Pygmalion,” in *Ovid Renewed*, ed. by Martindale Charles (Cambridge: CUP, 1989, 205-214), 205.

³⁶ Galinsky, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 89. See the ‘agalmatophilic’ Greek song of my motto.

³⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Mary M. Innes (Penguin Books, 1955, repr. 1961), 231.

made literal by Ovid playing on its figurative and literal meanings.³⁸ It is not difficult to see Ovid's irony in the prostitutes' turning to stone and, as a refusal, Pygmalion's making of a perfect ivory statue to avoid the 'stony' ladies. As it goes from stone to stone:

When Pygmalion saw these women, living such wicked lives, he was revolted by the many faults which nature has implanted in the female sex, and long lived a bachelor existence, without any wife to share his home. But meanwhile, with marvellous artistry, he skilfully carved a snowy ivory statue. He made it lovelier than any woman born, and fell in love with his own creation.³⁹

After its creation Pygmalion starts to court his 'stony' maiden: speaking and giving presents to it, dressing and embracing the statue. Then at the feast of Venus he prays to the goddess for a wife "one like the ivory maid," and the statue is brought to life. Philip Hardie in *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* focuses on Pygmalion's prayer to "golden Venus, present at her festival in person."⁴⁰ More exactly, Pygmalion, the agalmatophiliac, is speaking to the statue of Venus as the goddess is present in the form of her golden cult-statue, a statue animated through religious ritual. Then, in the myth, her power is displayed when she bestows on Pygmalion's ivory statue her own ability to pass from the inanimate to the animate.

Unfortunately, Ovid's version of Pygmalion is only a link in a chain of events. Pygmalion's story leads to the tragic tale of Myrrha, the great granddaughter of Pygmalion and his statue-wife, that is, the granddaughter of their child named Paphos. Hardie is right claiming that "Pygmalion succeeds in passing into the impermissible, but in so doing stores up trouble for a future generation, in his great-granddaughter Myrrha's incestuous desire to cross another kind of impermissible boundary."⁴¹ While we can take Pygmalion as a 'spiritual' father to Galatea, Myrrha fatefully falls in love with Cinyras, her own father. That is to say she passionately loves her *own* creator/maker, which is rather devastating and questions the celebrated positivity of the previous story.

³⁸ Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 72 and Joseph B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2.

³⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 252. Here nature is accused for the defects of the 'stony' women. Fantham calls attention to another 'stony' episode in *Metamorphoses* when in Pyrrha's story the stones that are cast behind soften and begin to put on a shape (*forma*) of humans. She says: "Here is the most amazing of all metamorphoses, as nature is compared to the sculptor's art" (Fantham, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 30).

⁴⁰ Philip Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002.), 190. See in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 253.

⁴¹ Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*, 186.

In fact Ovid's Pygmalion also offends the goddess rejecting love, i.e. questioning her power, and he is punished for it. The coming to life of the statue seems to be a reward and the miracle is thanks to Pygmalion's prayer to Venus and his worship, but in *Metamorphoses*, punishment cannot be avoided. Pygmalion's great-granddaughter, Myrrha is destined to love her own maker and to have a child from her own father. Her beautiful son, Adonis, is born from a weeping myrrh-tree as, escaping her shame, she is transformed to a tree by Venus. But, going full circle, Venus falls in love with Adonis and when he dies, she experiences the grief caused by the loss of a mortal lover. That is, though Venus rules over life and death, an artist and his creation, a maker/father and maiden/daughter; finally she is ruled over by passion, and her story is monumentalised, or fossilised, in a 'stony' narrative by an artist (and now by a critic).

In some readings of Ovid's Pygmalion-story, the (quite obvious) eroticism of the myth is highlighted by the reminiscence of the original story in which the King of Cyprus wanted to have sex with the statue of Venus, and, ultimately, he contaminated it. Jane M. Miller thinks that the sexuality of the original tale is balanced with the life-giving power of art in the Ovidian version.⁴² It is true that Pygmalion's story becomes a metaphor for the creative process, but it is also revealed in the Ovidian description that Pygmalion has a sexual relationship with the statue using it as a substitute for a mistress "calling it his bedfellow." Returning home to his statue from the sanctuary, Pygmalion leans over their bed and kisses it. Then he senses that it, or rather, for the first time, 'she,' seems warm:

[...] he laid his lips on hers again, and touched her breast with his hands – at his touch the ivory lost its hardness, and grew soft: his fingers made an imprint on the yielding surface, just as wax of Hymettus melts in the sun and, worked by men's fingers, is fashioned into many different shapes, and made fit for use *by being used (fit utilis usu)*.⁴³

Practically, the statue is softened by Pygmalion's life-giving rubbing that naturally produces warmth, melting stoniness, and that rubbing can be read as the act of love-making. The statue melts like wax in the warm hands of the lover/creator; where wax is the "emblem at once of the unity and changeability of all matter."⁴⁴ We can say that the co-operation of the seeing/heating sun and

⁴² Jane M. Miller, "Some Versions of Pygmalion," in *Ovid Renewed*, ed. by Charles Martindale (Cambridge: CUP, 1989, 205-214), 206. Kenneth Gross even claims that Pygmalion's courting of the statue does not lack the impression of fetishism and necrophilia (Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue*, 75).

⁴³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 253. Italics are mine É.A.

⁴⁴ Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh. Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 77.

creative human hands results in a true, a real metamorphosis. After melting, the wax becomes solid again taking its final shape in the form of a real woman. I find Barkan's summary really appropriate here: "And, once the wax has softened and changed its form, it does not stay in the shadowy realm but rather becomes real. [...] Pygmalion is potentially narcissistic since he falls in love with his own creation, but metamorphoses through his art and his belief in his art makes of shadow a very real substance."⁴⁵

We should agree with Barkan that Pygmalion's treat of the statue as a living human recalls, (or *echoes*), Narcissus' "passionate devotion that refuses to know the identity of its object and cannot distinguish between shadow and substance."⁴⁶ Pygmalion's blind devotion to his self-made lover resembles Narcissus' obsession (*furor*) and his tragic inability to extend beyond himself. But in the artist's 'imaginative' story – let us imagine – there are two lovers, while Narcissus himself is simultaneously the lover and the beloved in his life and in his death. Hardie also thinks that Pygmalion's and Narcissus' stories are similar, though in the former there is a progression from death to life via the image, while in the latter the direction is in the opposite direction; Narcissus' own image and his realisation of it being just an image of his causes his death.⁴⁷ His stupefied (viz. Greek *narke* numb) gaze and his motionlessness makes the image at which he marvels even more like a statue. In his pool he takes his illusionary reflection as an image of a marble statue: "[s]pellbound by his own self, he remained there motionless, with fixed gaze, like a statue carved from Parian marble."⁴⁸ Narcissus, like Pygmalion, is praying for the coming to life of (t)his statue, but his statue is literally his own reflected image in the virgin pool. The award of his statue's coming to 'life,' that is, his realisation of loving his own *image (imago)*, causes his death. Barkan says that Narcissus like the other characters/figures of the great stories of discovery 'acts' in the spirit of *nosce te ipsum* (to know thyself) and they are all figures of the mirror:

[...] *intus habes quem poscis* 'he whom you seek is within you' [...] It stands in a credo for human experience in the world of metamorphosis. We contain our own identity, and we find it in the mirror of transformation. We contain our destinies within us, petrifications of ourselves into stone and image. Narcissus-like, we often seek in love what is within us, and it is revealed through transformation.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 78.

⁴⁶ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 76.

⁴⁷ Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*, 189.

⁴⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 92.

⁴⁹ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 92.

Related to Narcissus' tragic story, there is Echo, the nymph, who, being rejected by the youth, is trapped in imitation and reflection. Even before Narcissus has seen his reflection, Echo's love presents her struggling "with the paradox that being identical with your loved one is an obstacle rather than an aid to union with him."⁵⁰ The nymph pines away leaving behind her voice and her 'death,' her disappearance, foreshadowing Narcissus' wasting away: "Only her voice and her bones were left, till finally her voice alone remained; for her bones, they say, were *turned to stone*."⁵¹ It means something; a sign, a signal remains after her; likewise after the death of Narcissus, a flower grows. The original white petals of the narcissus turned orange-red and yellow commemorating his beauty, that is, a mark is left shadowing the pure whiteness of the flower. The colouring of the flower alludes to Narcissus' beating his own marble-white chest when "his breast flushed rosy where he struck it."⁵² The reddening of stone-like flesh also appears in Pygmalion's story. The statue coming to life reacts to his maker's caressing by blushing in embarrassment, which proves that she is a modest woman.⁵³ Narcissus' bruises bring his death, while, conversely, Pygmalion's desire magically colours the statue bringing it to life.

There is another element in Narcissus' story that recalls the description of Pygmalion's life-giving creation. Before beating his own 'marble' body and before the recognition of his own 'tainted' image in the pool, Narcissus is crying and his dropping tears make his reflection dim in the pool. The youth's last moment of frenzy is described as follows:

When Narcissus saw this [viz. the bruise on his marble chest] reflected in the water – for the pool had returned to its former calm – he could bear it no longer. As *golden wax melts* with gentle heat, as morning frosts are thawed by the warmth of the

⁵⁰ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 48. Fantham also discusses the Echo-episode drawing attention to the other meaning of the Latin *imago* as it also "denotes both an echo – or aural reflection – and a reflection, which we might conceive of as a visual echo". Being misled by the echo of his own voice (*imagine vocis*), Narcissus urges the unknown to come to meet him, but he rejects the real woman, Echo (*Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 45).

⁵¹ *Ovid, Metamorphoses*, 91. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁵² *Ovid, Metamorphoses*, 94.

⁵³ To collect and write about the episodes with the motive of blushing, bleeding and colouring in *Metamorphoses* is a highly exciting task, but I can only scratch the surface here. See more on the stains in Pygmalion's story Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. In the case of the original story, the young agalmatophilic even contaminates the statue of Venus leaving stains on the monument. "That alien stain here replaces the coloring that had marked the possibility of some interiority in the statue, however contested or opaque, or bound to external occasions; that stain does not bring the statue to life, indeed it reinforces its lifelessness, yet nevertheless it magically transforms the statue as a testimony of a different sort of miracle, recreates it as a different sort of monument" (Gross, 81-2).

sun, so he was worn and wasted away with love, and slowly consumed by its hidden fire.⁵⁴

His death means his entering the realm of images expressed in the imagery of dissolution: like the melting wax he pines away while his tears are flowing in his eyes. The heat of his fiery passion is balanced by the cold surface of the water, his mirror. As Barkan puts it, “the boy has entered completely into the mirror realm,” as if through the tear-tain he had gone the other side of the mirror.⁵⁵ While Narcissus is literally reduced to an image of himself, the artist Pygmalion (like the other artists in *Metamorphoses*) creates an/the image of himself. Actually, the two processes seem to be different but are in chiasmic relation, and, quoting Barkan’s statement, “all metamorphoses are in a sense transformations to imago, [...] the turn to *imago* is [...] in fact identical to the stony transformation.”⁵⁶

In Pygmalion’s story “Ovid creates a figure for the viewer rather than the artist, producing a narrative about the ‘beholder’s share’ in creating the impression of real presence in a work of art.”⁵⁷ The opening ‘close’ reading gives life to the stone-like closed text so that the particular reading should melt it like wax so as to freeze it again into stone, into another reading. In reading, passionate attention and ardent vigour are needed so that the text should produce its meanings in different forms of interpretations. “Each critic becomes a Pygmalion,”⁵⁸ when in his/her Narcissistic petrification, he/she gives life to a stony work of art in the chiasmic structure of reading. In Narcissus’ gaze we should recognise a general paradigm for the beholder of a work of art and the narcissistic quality of the beholder’s response. I think, Philip Hardie describes the narcissistic features of reading very well in his *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion*:

[...] the viewer reads into the image his own phantasies, and in so doing transgresses the boundary between the world of the viewer and the world of the artwork, [...]. The surface of the pool is also the interface between reality and illusion for those outside the text. Narcissus is a figure for the desiring reader, caught between the intellectual understanding that texts are just

⁵⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 87. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁵⁵ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 52. Interestingly enough, in *The Matrix*, the opposite happens to Neo when he comes back from the mirror-world (the world of false/made up images) into reality. Remember the striking visual effects of the scene when, after taking the mind-altering drug, he is united with his mirror-image then he goes to the other side of the mirror engulfed in its silver tain.

⁵⁶ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 90.

⁵⁷ Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion*, 189.

⁵⁸ Leo C. Curran, “Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” in *Arethusa* 5 (1972) 71-91, 71.

texts, words with no underlying reality, and the desire to believe in the reality of the textual world. Narcissus turns into a sophisticated reader at the moment he recognises that the reflection is himself.⁵⁹

Narcissus' situation mirrors that of the engaged reader as he/she knows with his/her rational mind that the reflection has no reality, but cannot stop thinking as if it had. Metaphorically, the reader becomes one with his/her image-reflection and in a (narcissistic) text, the voice/persona is able to become one with his image in the images/figures of rhetoric.

What Philip Hardie says about the narcissistic reader is strikingly *echoed* in what Joseph Hillis Miller expresses on the Pygmalion-quality of reading in his *Versions of Pygmalion*. Miller puts personification and prosopopoeia in the centre of his analysis, claiming that "the act of personification (is) essential to all storytelling and storyreading."⁶⁰ In his "Proem: Pygmalion's Prosopopoeia" he discusses the story told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and he again emphasises that for him one of the characteristic features of the Ovidian narrative is that each metamorphosis can be seen and defined as "the literalization of a metaphor." Miller straightforwardly blames the rhetorical figures of language: "[i]n the cruel justice of the gods we see the terrible performative power that figures of speech may have. [...] The *Metamorphoses* shows what aberrant figurative language can do. The power of the gods to intervene in human history is the allegorization of this linguistic power."⁶¹ He also calls attention to the interrelatedness of stories in Book 10 emphasising that Venus seems to have overwhelming power in the happenings bringing the statue to life so as to be overcome by something greater than herself, love (or rather passion) in the Adonis-episode. Actually, Pygmalion, whose self-celibacy is caused by his aversion to the 'stony' and 'painted' prostitutes, is destined to fall in love with a stony and painted statue. That is to say, that Miller pays attention to the textual irony of the narrative and concentrates on figurative language, which I have also done in my rhetorical reading.

Miller sees Pygmalion's error in "taking prosopopoeia literally," since he regards metamorphosis as the literalising allegory of the face-giving prosopopoeia. The trope gives face, name and voice to the absent, the inanimate and to the dead, as it is also the trope of mourning. To quote Miller's summary on the myth:

⁵⁹ Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*, 147-8.

⁶⁰ J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, "Preface," vii. Although de Man's 'prosopoeia' is spelled here as 'prosopopoeia, and there is a footnote referring to de Man's ideas, his works are not cited in "Proem".

⁶¹ Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 1.

For Pygmalion, the other is not really other. Pygmalion has himself made Galatea. She is the mirror image of his desire. His relation to her is not love for another, in an attachment always shadowed by the certain death of the other. It is a reciprocity in which the same loves the same. Here Narcissus' vain desire seems fulfilled [...] For Galatea, to see at all is to see Pygmalion and to be subject to him. It is as if Narcissus' reflection in the pool had come alive and could return his love.⁶²

In Pygmalion's story an inanimate object comes to life, i.e. an anthropomorphism takes place, while in the other stories the transformation goes into the other direction from human being to an animal, plant or an object. Thus, the story of Pygmalion is a unique one: in a Millerian phrase, it is "a prosopopoeia of prosopopoeia." Pygmalion's story can be read as a face-giving story of a face-giving, and in this phrase (in the reading of the phrase), even this 'of' is to be taken metaphorically.⁶³

Miller also refers to the 'waxing' erotic passage in the narrative, when the ivory becomes flesh. Here, on the one hand, he emphasises the importance of male productive work on passive (female) material, taking wax as the traditional figure of/ trope for man's shaping power.⁶⁴ On the other hand, he clearly sees the possible "abuse" or "misuse" of Pygmalion's creative "use" of wax, which is also related to his own self-abuse taking prosopopoeia literally.⁶⁵ Not only Pygmalion makes the mistake of taking a figure of speech literally. According to Miller, in reading we are likely to take the statue as a real person, or to think of "black marks on the page" as stories of real persons. Readers, critics, and teachers personify, that is, give faces to the characters in the narrative of the texts: "[...] stories are all versions of Pygmalion and Galatea, that is, stories in which the act of prosopopoeia essential to any storytelling is overtly thematized, as when someone falls in love with a statue."⁶⁶

⁶² J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 4-5.

⁶³ J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 6. See more on the metaphorical 'of' in Paul de Man's *The Resistance to Theory* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986), 16-17 and J. H. Miller's *Theory Now and Then*, 355-356.

⁶⁴ J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 7. Miller's 'waxing' remarks celebrating male power over female passivity will be fought back by Rousseau's Galathée and Weber's reading of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*. Be patient, my gentle reader.

⁶⁵ Besides the visual and tactile images of wax, I cannot help thinking its other meaning is related to hearing, more exactly, non-hearing (viz. ear-wax). All of my texts are accompanied by some music; in this case a Greek song can be heard that is commemorated in the motto. Otherwise, my Kingston days were spent listening (involuntarily) to the landlady, Maureen's favourite 60's songs on BBC Radio 2, while my nights were dedicated to the striking of the bell-tower. For a while, I even tried to use ear-plugs but I got used to the sounds later.

⁶⁶ J. Hillis Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 14.

Now, it is time to return to Rousseau and his self-questi(oni)ng version of Pygmalion. Huntington Williams in his thorough study of the oeuvre titled *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* follows the steps of (t)his quest. He finds that Rousseau's actual fondness of solitary walk metaphorically reveals the importance of 'reveries' in his writing, saying that "the act in which Rousseau discovers his identity always involves a distancing from self and even a self-forgetting."⁶⁷ Besides its different denotations, reverie for Rousseau primarily means a revelation of himself, or of what he might become. Huntington also analyses the relationship between two important concepts in the oeuvre: *amour* and *amitié*, that is to say love and friendship. The understanding, or rather imagining, of the others' suffering marks the transition from Nature to Culture, the movement from natural self-love to 'social' pity. Imagination mediates between nature and culture and though it does not belong to either 'you' or 'I,' Rousseau can show them as interchangeable.⁶⁸ Huntington differentiates between *amour* and *amitié* on the basis of their relationship to imagination; while in *amitié* it is an "extrinsic catalyst," in *amour* it is an intrinsic, final cause. On the other hand, "*amitié* implies a symmetrical, reciprocal, and essentially circular relationship, based on identity," but "*amour* implies an asymmetrical, non-reciprocal, relationship, based on difference."⁶⁹ Rousseau is greatly concerned with the differences between the real and the illusory, and *amour*, intensifying these differences, makes him aware of this discrepancy. For him love is not a dialogue between two persons, but between the actual world and the third party, imagination.

Rousseau made distinctions between self-love (*amour de soi*) and vanity (*amour propre*): the latter is an infectious disease and "the most corrosive of emotions," while the former means the natural and "the unreflective, loving passion." He also claimed "in his evolutionary story of the human heart" that self-love was corrupted by the later kind of love.⁷⁰ De Man sees that "in contrast to the solitary self-concentration of self-love, *amour propre* is entirely directed towards the approval of others": while the paraphrase of self-love can be '*je*

⁶⁷ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 20. Rousseau claims to receive his reveries from the positive force of imagination, not from God, and the second stage of reverie involves the construction of a personal aesthetic sphere. Then he dramatizes his intuition and turns it into a work of art, "an imaginative vision of personal identity" – a work is a reverie (Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 33).

⁶⁸ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 39.

⁶⁹ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 56-7.

⁷⁰ Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, 155-7. He also associates *amour de soi* with the Freudian 'primary narcissism' and sees a unique combination of the two kinds of love in self-writing: "Autobiography may be a form of writing directed to the satisfaction of the writer's *amour-propre*, but he will use it, uniquely, for the expression of his *amour de soi*, or true self-love" (155-7).

m'aime, of *amour propre* it is 'on m'aime' or 'je suis aimable'.⁷¹ Rousseau's early dramatic piece *Narcisse ou l'Amant de lui-même* (*Narcissus, or, the Lover of Himself*) is a comic play where Valère (with a telling male-female name) falls in love with his own portrait disguised as a woman. Valère is a classical comic figure, the type of conceited young fop, who is mystified by vanity. He is not like the Ovidian Narcissus, who recognises that he loves his own image, since Rousseau's Narcisse remains blind *in/to* his self-love and fails to realise his own self-centredness. On his wedding day Valère is tricked and deluded by the 'fake' portrait and only with the help of the other characters can he get back to his senses. He is not an artist and the portrait is painted by her sister who wants to play on her brother's vanity and is also tricked by the others in the play. *Narcisse* is about delusion and self-delusion in love. Through the interplay between self-love (*amour de soi*), vanity (*amour propre*) and the love of others, Valère's misreading of the portrait mainly presents his vanity. His narcissism is not metaphorical, or tropical, as it only reveals his *amour propre*, making the comedy satirical and didactic. Thus, de Man's statement, namely that "the self here never really becomes another, but remains all too much its own interested self," is true in relation to all the characters.⁷²

In the rhetoric of *Narcisse*, there are a lot of puns and grammatical plays on the reflexive mode. The most frequently quoted one is in Scene XIII when Valère's drunk valet Frontin reveals the secret of the portrait to his master's sister, the trickster: "It is a portrait ... metamor... no, metaphor ... yes, metaphORIZED (*métaphorisé*). It is my master, it is a girl... you have made a certain mixture."⁷³ The portrait is associated with a metaphor but we can take it as a slip of tongue as the drunk valet could have wanted to say that the portrait has been 'metamorphosed'. Frontin also says here that Valère has fallen in love not with the portrait, not himself as he failed to recognise himself in it, but with the "resemblance." That is, he is suspended between self-love and the transitive love of the others – between the love for the self and the love for the other. Similarly, the portrait is not entirely fictional since it exists in the mode of simulacrum. De Man thinks, "[...] resemblance is 'loved' because it can be interpreted as identity as well as difference and it is therefore unseizable, forever in flight."⁷⁴ Valère, that is Rousseau's Narcisse, (mis)reads his own portrait and the misread self-portrait stands for the beloved. According to de Man, "the portrait is a substitution, but it is impossible to say whether it substitutes for the

⁷¹ de Man, "Self (Pygmalion)," in *AR*, 165.

⁷² de Man, "Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self," in *RCC*, 41-2.

⁷³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcissus, or, the Lover of Himself*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 10, ed. and trans. by Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth and Christopher Kelly (Hanover and London: Univ. Press of New England, 2004, 125-160), 150. See also in French: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcisse ou l'Amant de lui-même*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, II (Paris: Gallimard, 1961, 959-1018), 1006.

⁷⁴ de Man, "Self (Pygmalion)," in *AR*, 168.

self or for the other; it constantly vacillates between both. [...] love, like perfectibility, is structured like a figure of speech. The portrait allows for a bizarre substitution of self for other, and of other for self, called love.”⁷⁵ The portrait is “beloved” and partakes of *amour de soi*, though in the displaced version of an imagined other; and it becomes a figure: “the metaphor of a metonymy.” In the play we cannot know whether the beloved is “a person or a portrait, a referential meaning or a figure” – here “selfhood is not a substance but a figure.”⁷⁶ In *Narcisse* Rousseau “portrayed” the action as a “painter,” and as the author of the text his main concern is the rhetoric of self. As a result of this he produces misreading in his self-quest. But not only Rousseau can be taken here as the rhetorician of the self since de Man’s main concern is also the rhetoric of self-quest. Valère’s self-love is a “representation of a rhetorical structure [...] that escapes the control of the self,” which shows that the rhetorical resources of language are incompatible with selfhood. I will quote the revealing passage about the ironic relation of rhetoric (language) and the self in full from de Man’s writing:

Rhetoric all too easily appears as the tool of *the self*, hence its pervading association, in the everyday use of the term, with persuasion, eloquence, the manipulation of the self and of others. Hence also the naïvely pejorative sense in which the term is commonly used, in opposition to a literal use of language that would not allow the subject to conceal its desires. The attitude is by no means confined to the popular use of ‘rhetoric’ but is in fact a recurrent philosophical topos, a philosopheme that may well be constitutive of philosophical language itself. In all these instances, *rhetoric functions as a key to the discovery of the self*; and it functions with such ease that one may well begin to wonder whether the lock indeed shapes the key or whether it is not the other way round, that a lock (and a secret room or box behind it) had to be invented in order to give a function to the key.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion),” in *AR*, 169. Taking love as a rhetorical figure recalls Freud’s ideas, for instance, on the narcissistic partner choice. Moreover, de Man refers to Ricoeur’s statement on Freud showing him as “the rhetorical undoer and the hermeneutic recoverer of the self” (de Man, “Self (Pygmalion),” 174). The topic of parallelism between literary deconstruction and the psychological deconstruction of selfhood in Freud, would lead us far away, but it shows again that I should perhaps discuss Freud’s “On Narcissism: an Introduction” – in another paper

⁷⁶ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion),” in *AR*, 170.

⁷⁷ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion),” in *AR*, 173. Italics are mine. É.A. The passage goes on: “For what could be more distressing than a bunch of highly refined keys just lying around without any

In this allegorical passage of highly refined rhetoric, de Man does not only question the relation between the Self/selves shown as locked rooms or boxes and language with its keys to the locks, but he also suggests that some rooms/boxes should be kept locked. I think, in our life we should try to open as many boxes (books?) as we can, there will always be other (locked) ones – perhaps, in the form of Chinese boxes (*mise en abyme*).

According to Huntington, in his *Narcisse* Rousseau shows the relationship between imagined and real objects of love, as “the literary or linguistic model mediating between the sentiment of the lover and the object of his love insures that they will never fully coincide.”⁷⁸ *Amour* relates to its object indirectly, through ‘*autre univers*’ (Rousseau), or world of imagination and it develops through the confusion of an imagined model of love with an existing person, and on the assumption that they can be one and the same. Moreover, Huntington claims that the rhetorical figures of language – especially in the literary discourse of love – are to be blamed for the linguistic confusions, when the figures are taken for actual referents. In *Narcisse* the man, not recognising his own portrait, actually loves resemblance, while in *Pygmalion*

If Galathée’s birth is a shared identification among two persons, it is also a ‘réveil’, the instant of awakening in a reverie, in which the primary identification is not between two persons, but between the illusory and the real. Galathée moves from illusion toward reality, Pygmalion from reality toward illusion. From different starting points, they meet in one ‘Moi’, at a point somewhere between illusion and reality, or even prior to such a distinction.⁷⁹

Similarly to the other critics, Paul de Man, in two of his writings, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self” and “Self (Pygmalion),” presents Rousseau’s dramatic pieces as the key-texts to understand self-writing and writing of the self. While *Narcisse* (the work that he is supposed to have written at the age of 18 but is probably lying according to de Man) marks the beginning of his creative period, *Pygmalion* rather shows the problem of the fictional versus empirical selves in retrospective meditation. He says, “in the figure of the sculptor Pygmalion contemplating his handiwork, Galathea, we thus have a clear

corresponding locks worthy of being opened? Perhaps there are none, and perhaps the most refined key of all, the key of keys, is the one that gives access to the Pandora’s box in which this darkest secret is kept hidden. This would imply the existence of at least one lock worthy of being raped [viz. it refers to Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*], the Self as the relentless undoer of selfhood” (ibid). See also Waterhouse’s painting, *Pandora*, on the cover of my book.

⁷⁸ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 53.

⁷⁹ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 62.

equivalence of Rousseau reflecting on the feelings that develop between the author of *Julie* and the fictional character he has invented in that work.”⁸⁰ In his self-quest, the “scène lyrique” *Pygmalion* marks Rousseau’s transition from theoretical and fictional to autobiographical works. Correspondingly, the main theme here is that an author/maker is confronting his own finished work and the relation(ship) between the work of art and the artist is focused on. Leaving behind Narcissus’ lonely stone-like wax-figure, or rather melting him so as to be re-shaped, we move to the stony world of Pygmalion. According to de Man, Rousseau’s Pygmalion, similarly to his Narcissus, is mystified and does not show a progress from error to truth. To show it he refers to the sculptor’s last statement to the statue/Galatea: “Yes, dear and charming object: yes, worthy masterpiece of my hands, of my heart, and of the Gods ... it is you, it is you alone: I have given you all my being; I no longer live except through you.”⁸¹ Nevertheless, we can see some steps in Pygmalion’s progress: at first, he admires the statue, then examines it and finally desires it. The very first step of his ‘fetishism’ recalls Narcissus’ vain contemplation on his counterfeit image, when Pygmalion says “Vanity, human weakness! I cannot grow weary of admiring my work; I intoxicate myself with amour-propre; I adore myself in what I have made....”⁸² In his admiration of the statue Pygmalion’s *amour propre* is clearly presented that is quite akin to Valère’s ‘je m’aime aimant’. There is another similarity between the two works, namely that Pygmalion is also in love with resemblance saying: “It is not at all this dead marble with which I am infatuated, it is with a living being who *resembles* [*ressemble*] it; it is

⁸⁰ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 40. He also comments about *Julie* that for Rousseau it is just like Pygmalion’s statue: perfect and flawless and its/her coming to life “symbolizes the full authenticity of the fictional figure” (42). It is interesting how de Man in his essays on Rousseau’s writings keeps giving hints at a Rousseau-biography, while Huntington even builds the biographical references into his own version of Rousseau’s life-work. Huntington thinks that after losing his maternal love-figure, Mme de Warens, Rousseau begins to establish himself as an author. He moves from this sentiment to writing activity, to the writing of an autobiography, and Pygmalion marks the critical stage in the move to autobiography. In his work, *Pygmalion*, despite his losing ‘Maman’, the statue comes to life, that is to say the work itself comes to life/existence. With Galatea’s sigh and statement “encore moi”, Rousseau realises that all of ‘his’ women projected as love-figures in the work(s) are in his memory, are his own. As Galatea moves from non-being to being, Rousseau’s actual women are forgotten so that he should be able to remember and reflect on them (Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 61-62).

⁸¹ In his “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self” de Man himself translated the quoted lines but here I quote from the ‘standard’ collection of the English translation of Rousseau’s works. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 10, ed. and trans. by Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth and Christopher Kelly (Hanover and London: Univ. Press of New England, 2004, 230-236), 236. Cf. in French: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, II (Gallimard, 1961, 1224-1231), 1231.

⁸² Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 232. Cf. in *Oeuvres II*, 1226.

with the *face* [cf. *shape* for de Man; *figure* in French] that it offers to my eyes.”⁸³ On the level of appearances, he is in love with something that is shaped/made by/in his own mind. On the one hand, it refers to *Narcisse* where Valère was in love with resemblance, on the other hand, it starts “the tropological pattern of substitution that makes *Pygmalion* into an allegory of figuration.”⁸⁴ Moreover, de Man’s statement makes the life-giving artistic Pygmalion’s story the allegory of reading as in reading not the dead leaves of paper, but the rhetorical figures of the text will incite desire and give the illusion of life to the eyes/mind.

In his desire Pygmalion is ashamed of himself, but the pattern of Pygmalion’s/Rousseau’s desire can be read as “truly aesthetic.”⁸⁵ In desire the consciousness moves toward something that it has lost, and now wants to possess to be complete again. It shows Pygmalion’s desire as a lack, as a shortcoming, as a striving for/after a “beautiful soul.” Desire is a temporal experience caused by the loss of the source of being and “the text of *Pygmalion* makes clear that the source is not located in the self of the artist, but that it exists in the work that he has created.”⁸⁶ Accordingly, as the source is outside the empirical self, the painfully desired union would imply the death of the self:

Alas! it stays immobile and cold, while my heart, set ablaze by its charms, wants to leave my body in order to warm its body. In my delirium I believe that I can hurl myself out of myself; I believe that I can give it my life, and animate it with my soul. Ah! that Pygmalion might die in order to live in Galatea!⁸⁷

In this ‘apocalyptic moment’ the desired unity would result in an absolute negation/annihilation of the self due to the desired exchange between the self and other. Besides *echoing* Narcissus’ struggle with his own reflection, the confused Pygmalion is also speaking about himself in third person, not only in the above quoted wish, but also earlier in his worshipping of the perfection of his creation. Then, in his meditation, Pygmalion realises, the dead self loses not only his own life but the contact with the other. Here the paradoxical dialectic of

⁸³ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 233 and in *Oeuvres*, II, 1227. Italics are mine. É.A. Also quoted and translated in de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 183. De Man translates the French *figure* as ‘shape’, while in the English collection the word is translated as ‘face,’ which is closer to the de Manian prosopopeia. I would prefer to keep the original *figure* in the sentence, relying on the Pygmalion-quality of rhetoric offered to my eyes.

⁸⁴ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 183.

⁸⁵ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” 45. Then in his other text on *Pygmalion* de Man admits that Pygmalion’s desire is not only “truly aesthetic”, as the sculptor’s sexual aggression is quite literal in the story. We cannot forget that, in the original Greek narrative, the King of Cyprus wanted to copulate with the statue of Venus. See in de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 181.

⁸⁶ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 46.

⁸⁷ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 233.

selfhood and otherness is revealed: how can one truly experience the other without giving up one's self? The dialectic of self and other in the act of reflection, and the dialectic of self-love and desire are also shown in the linguistic complexity of Pygmalion's cry: "No, that my Galatea live, and that I not be she. Ah! that I might always be another, in order to wish always to be she, to see her, to love her, to be loved by her."⁸⁸

Actually, Rousseau's Pygmalion does not get (and cannot get) closer to the self in his quest for the experience of the other. I agree with de Man that in this "ironic epiphany"

the [real] progression has taken place, not in Pygmalion, but in the figure of Galatea, who, at the end of the scene, has not only come to life but has been able to define the nature of her own selfhood in relation to herself, to Pygmalion, and to the natural world. And a similar progression has taken place in us as readers, who are now able to understand the entire complex relationship that exists between the three entities (the artist, the live sculpture, and the piece of marble); this progression is a correlative of a progression that has taken place in Rousseau himself as the author of the play, who controls the patterns of truth and error, of insight and blindness, that organize the action.⁸⁹

In the end, following an ironic reciprocity, Galatea's coming to life freezes Pygmalion and astonishes him – he is petrified with astonishment. Now Galatea exists as a self claiming to be (her)self, uttering "Me" [*Moi*]," and pointing at the marble, she says: "This is me no more [*Ce n'est plus moi*]."⁹⁰ She becomes self-conscious and, as a work of art, she is still flawless. Although art can achieve the ultimate triumph of consciousness by an act of imagination, it cannot recapture the fullness of Being. At the end of the play Galatea puts her hand on Pygmalion and says sighing: "Ah, still me [*encore moi*]."⁹¹ It shows Rousseau's efforts to transcend his actual self into a language, a work that now exists outside himself.

⁸⁸ Ibid. In French: "Non, que ma Galathée vive, et que je ne sois pas elle. Ah! que je sois toujours un autre, pour vouloir toujours être elle, pour la voir, pour l'aimer, pour en être aimé..." (*Oeuvres II*, 1228).

⁸⁹ de Man, "Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self," in *RCC*, 43.

⁹⁰ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 235 and in *Oeuvres, II*, 1230. Hardie records in *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* that in the 1778 edition of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* there was an illustration made by Jean-Michel Moreau showing that "the statue, Galathée, has just stepped down from her pedestal, and touches another of Pygmalion's sculptures, whose tensed posture and raised hands, in context, turn him into a figure of the astounded and frozen viewer of the statue newly brought to life, himself a 'Statue of Surprise'." (183)

⁹¹ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 236 and in *Oeuvres, II*, 1231.

But his writings only record his failure to transcend his own selfhood. As de Man concludes: “The work is ‘encore moi,’ the half-resigned, ironic mood of self-reflection that predominates in Rousseau and in the readers who recognise themselves in him. The romantic artist is still Narcissus, though a Narcissus who has come back alive from his trip to the other side of the mirror – perhaps what Rilke will call later, in one of his French poems, *le Narcisse exaucé* – the demystified Narcissus.”⁹²

However, there is a great difference between Valère’s deluded self-love and Pygmalion’s worship of his self-made creation, namely that the sculptor sees a goddess in the statue. As an artist, he used to make statues of gods and goddesses, that is, he was/is capable of giving shape to the divine. Although we can read it as the sign of extreme self-adoration, in his allegorical reading of *Pygmalion*, de Man takes it as Pygmalion’s experience of the sublime. He says, in the story, the artist “is paralyzed by the feeling of awe that is characteristic, to use Kantian terminology, of the sublime.”⁹³ As we know, the Kantian sublime is not an exterior power but it has rather much more to do with imagination reflecting on that power. Pygmalion regards his work of art as godlike/divine and “the goddess metaphor is an aptly monstrous concatenation of self and other.”⁹⁴ Without realising it, with these remarks, de Man alludes to the original Ovidian, or perhaps to the origin of the Ovidian narrative, where the confrontation – either spiritual, or physical – with the divine is more emphatic. Right from the beginning, in accordance with the dichotomy of human vs. divine, in the dynamism of the text, as readers, we are to *face* several antinomies that are engendered by the arch-antimony of the two polarities: the self vs. the other. Besides the most obvious cold vs. hot – expressed in the coldness of the marble statue and the figurative coldness of Pygmalion’s ‘virginal’ condition that is opposed with his melting passion and his fire of creation – de Man lists several other antinomies, such as inside/outside, art/nature, life/death, male/female, heart/senses, hiding/revealing, eye/ear, lyric/dramatic etc.⁹⁵

With the introduction of the sublime, de Man seems to move away from the rhetorical reading of the ending and he tries to interpret it with reference to the generality implicit in the sublime itself. However, he still shows the ending of Pygmalion aporetic but he gets to this conclusion in a different argument. Pygmalion wishes for their union, but “instead of merging into a higher, general

⁹² de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 49.

⁹³ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 177.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ “The hot-cold dichotomy comes [...] from a transference from the figural to the literal that stems from the ambivalent relationship between the work as an extension of the self and as a quasi-divine otherness” (de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 177-180.). This argument recalls Brooks’ analysis of Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” where the ‘cold’ immortality of the urn is balanced with the vivid scenes of mortal human life depicted on it.

Self, two selves remain confronted in a paralyzing inequality”⁹⁶, as Galatea’s ‘moi’ is more self-assured than Pygmalion’s amorous ‘moi’. And when Pygmalion starts kissing the woman’s hand, she utters “encore moi” with a sigh. She has just previously stated that she is no longer the stone, and now she accepts that she is one with Pygmalion. Their union hardly be labelled as an ecstatic one as Galatea, leaving her stone-prison, is just about to enter Pygmalion’s ‘love-prison’. De Man thinks (or rather presupposes) that Galatea should be taken here as ‘the Self’, that is, she has to contain all individual selves including Pygmalion. Galatea’s disappointment can also mean “a persisting, repeated distinction between the general Self and the self as *other*.”⁹⁷ Thus, de Man reaches to the same aporetic conclusion, although via *another* route:

Galathea’s coming alive rewards the access to his advanced level of understanding. The point of the text however is that even this mode of discourse fails to achieve a concluding exchange that would resolve the tension of the original dejection. The part of the action that follows Galathea’s epiphany disrupts the dialectical progression that leads up to it and merely repeats its aberrant pattern. The discourse by which the figural structure of the self is asserted fails to escape from the categories it claims to deconstruct, and this remains true, of course, of any discourse which pretends to re-inscribe in its turn the figure of this aporia. There can be no escape from the dialectical movement that produces the text.⁹⁸

To find a way out of the self in a text about the Self, I will be assisted by Shierry M. Weber’s article “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*.”⁹⁹ In the article Weber places Rousseau in the context of 18th and 19th aesthetics, questioning and defining the status of the work of art and its relation to reality. But Rousseau – somehow close to Kant’s critical ideas – does not give primacy to the artist’s consciousness or to the absolute expressed in their work: “he shows how artist and work can both be characterised in terms of selfness and yet be different, and he tries to relate that difference to the physical existence of the work of art, its presence within ‘earthly life’.”¹⁰⁰ According to Weber, in the work, the main

⁹⁶ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 185.

⁹⁷ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 186.

⁹⁸ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 187.

⁹⁹ Shierry M. Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” (*Comparative Literature*, Dec., 1968: 900-918). My final, less aporetic, conclusions are thanks to her article that I found and read just at the right moment in the British Library in April 2008. Otherwise, I should admit that a paper is to be finished in a convincing rhetoric – the promise of a less aporetic ending will do.

¹⁰⁰ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 902.

concern for Rousseau is Pygmalion's desire for Galatea, and in the end, after Pygmalion has given (his) being to Galatea, Rousseau seems to give priority to the work over the artist. By that I mean that Rousseau/Pygmalion gives priority to his *Pygmalion*/Galatea. Weber's main focus is on Rousseau's notion of the reflective, discontinuous nature of the self that is thematised in the work culminating in the final utterances of the two characters: "Ah, still me. – Yes, dear and charming object: yes, worthy masterpiece of my hands, of my heart, and of the Gods ... it is you, it is you alone: I have given you all my being; I no longer live except through you."¹⁰¹

Weber also refers to different misreadings of the work, for instance, to Goethe's attack on *Pygmalion* accusing Rousseau of degrading the spiritual work of art to a sensuous object, or, to Starobinski's misinterpretation of Pygmalion's desire as a narcissistic one longing for a complete union of self and other – and she could also have mentioned de Man's aporetic rhetorical reading. Both/All err since Rousseau's ideas are akin to Kant's, emphasising the negative or paradoxical presence of the absolute in the work of art. Opposed to the previous readings, and somehow recalling de Man's sublime re-reading of the work, Weber sees that in *Pygmalion* "the sensuous artistic representation thus points beyond itself to the infinitude of the supersensuous realm."¹⁰² The aesthetic image for Rousseau leads not *to* but *away* from the natural. From Pygmalion's point of view, priority is given to the work of art as Galatea can be taken as his "externalized better or past self and thus seems free from the negativity of reflective consciousness."¹⁰³ Going beyond Rousseau's ideas, we can think that the work with its non-reflexivity is given priority over consciousness. Ironically, Rousseau's *Pygmalion* shows the differences between the result of the reflected artistic activity and the unreflected status of the work, while both can be reflected upon in other artistic or critical pieces.

In Rousseau's work the negation of the self happens earlier (not only in the 'work'), when Pygmalion makes the statue, his masterpiece. He feels that he gives away his genius to give 'life' to the work of art, uttering: "I have lost my genius" [J'ai perdu mon génie].¹⁰⁴ His genius becomes – later? – Galatea's animating spirit, as if it/she had been imprisoned in stone, in a 'stony' slumber.¹⁰⁵ Pygmalion dies in some sense (similarly, love-making is little death)

¹⁰¹ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 236. In French in *Oeuvres*, II, 1231.

¹⁰² Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*", 903. But Rousseau moves beyond the Kantian aesthetics, because "he unites the productive and receptive aspects of the aesthetic subject (genius and taste) in the figure of the artist as spectator, and he moves beyond the artist-spectator to consider the nature of the work of art itself more fully than Kant will do. Pygmalion can thus be considered a further step in the development of a critical aesthetics" (904).

¹⁰³ Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*," 916.

¹⁰⁴ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 231. In French in *Oeuvres*, II, 1225.

¹⁰⁵ I cannot help remembering Wordsworth's "A Slumber did my spirit seal", where the life-forgetting slumber makes the persona forget about the mortality of the beloved so that he

creating Galatea, but he survives to experience the consciousness of the “scène lyrique.” Weber calls our attention to a crucial thing, namely that Rousseau presents us not the action, not the creation of the statue, but the artist’s reflection on it. Quoting her ideas:

Pygmalion is a phenomenon of reflective consciousness; in Kantian terms, it is ideal rather than real. The recapitulation of Galathée’s creation is an internal reliving of it, and the scene is Pygmalion’s mind. Rousseau shows us the aesthetic subject not as producer but as one now contemplator, having been artist. He shows us not Pygmalion making a statue but *Pygmalion reflecting on the act of making it*, Pygmalion interpreting creation as animation. [...] In that what reflection examines is not only action but the transition from action to reflection – for the act of making the statue is itself the transition, the transfer of being – it is a movement inward toward the self, as reflective consciousness.¹⁰⁶

Thus, Pygmalion has finished his (act of) creation, and now he is reflecting upon the completed action. I can accept this version of Pygmalion, but I still wonder what we mean by creation. Weber admits that Rousseau’s Pygmalion is a reflection on the Greek story, not a nostalgic one but it moves to a further stage in aesthetic thought. In a footnote Weber refers to the third meaning of Rousseau’s reflective *Pygmalion*: a *Reflexion in sich* (to use a Hegelian term), which reflects on the ‘ideal’ reading of the making of the statue.¹⁰⁷ I would rather take the third one as ‘the reflection of reflection,’ in which one’s own reflection is reflected on. Weber does not realise what (always-already) happens here is the deconstruction of the dichotomy of action – reflection. Actually, the reflecting on an action is another acting that can be reflected on so that the other reflected action should be reflected on again (and again) etc. Similarly, Rousseau’s version of Pygmalion’s reflecting on his creation, i.e. his *Pygmalion*, is read (reflected on, or, acted on) by Weber here, and now I will re-act/reflect upon her reading of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*, that is, her version of *Pygmalion*, in my text with Pygmalion duplicated in its title.

should realise/remember that the girl is ‘stony’ dead. Pygmalion’s story definitely moves backwards from the beloved’s motionless stony thing-like ‘existence’ to her coming to life. But, on the whole, both girls are imprisoned in the lover’s text telling their story.

¹⁰⁶ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 905. Weber keeps the ‘original’ French Galathée, de Man names ‘his’ statue-work Galathea and I stick to ‘my’ Galatea of the Greek myth (also used in the English collection).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Pygmalion's desire is ideal, not real; it is aesthetic rather than sensual, simply because if his were a real desire then it would display a subject having desire and an object being desired. But, as Weber points out, in *Pygmalion* "the self encompasses the polarities subject and object, self and other. The ideal moment of desire, as opposed to its real or sensuous moment, is desire for something which is self and other at once."¹⁰⁸ In the end, 'the lovers' turn out to share the same self, and Pygmalion should recognise that his desire is ideal, not real. First, he moves towards the object, longing to be united with it, then, realising the impossibility of love, he has to move back away from the object, "because the love relationship is possible only when lover and beloved are separate. In order to love Galathée, Pygmalion must be other than she."¹⁰⁹ Weber, though analysing the dynamism of desire well, reads the ending as self-alienation since Pygmalion seems to have given up his selfhood to the other. I do not approach it so radically. I think, the self goes a full circle here, or rather makes his journey along a spiral-line: through the momentary union with the *other* the *self* becomes *another* (self). In fact, when the artist utters in the end that he has given his being/self to Galatea, he is affirming that he has become another. What Weber says about the Rousseauian notion of desire, namely that it "does not have the assimilation or destruction of the object as its goal but rather preserves the object in negating, momentarily, the subject," recalls Derrida's impossible claim about 'allowing the other to come in its otherness'.¹¹⁰ Weber calls attention to Rousseau's irony, reflecting upon the paradoxical structure of desire, since at the end of *Pygmalion* the work and the artist have once again become separate. As she sums up: "desire involves the other becoming self and the self becoming other. The 'real,' authentic self is separated from the experiencing self, and the experiencing self seems to be merely the negation of that other, real self."¹¹¹

If we accept that in the ideal the real is negated/annihilated, what could we claim about the status of the work of art? The statue has a physical reality and Pygmalion is struggling to define the source of (its) beauty. Having realised that he has sexual desire for the statue, he speaks about the spiritual beauty of it referring to the beauty of (its) soul: "How beautiful the soul *made* [l'âme faite] to animate such a body must be!"¹¹² Actually, we must see that in his reflection, Pygmalion is speaking about the making of a soul, that is, he is speaking about the beauty of his soul in his 'spiritual' narcissism. He tries to go beyond the

¹⁰⁸ Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*," 907.

¹⁰⁹ Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*," 908.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. See more about Derrida's coming of the other and the impossibility of 'true' morning in my previous writing. In our discussion with Professor Habib, following Derrida's ideas, he asked me whether 'true' love is (also) impossible. In this sense, the answer should be affirmative – yes, it is 'truly' impossible. However, despite the 'mission impossible' of 'true' love, we should still try to reach the other in all of our life.

¹¹¹ Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*," 909.

¹¹² Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 232 and in French in *Oeuvres*, II, 1227.

polarities of body and soul giving the source of the beauty an aesthetic form. He is still praying to find a model that resembles the statue as it surpasses all the models in beauty. But he knows that the only model is an imaginary one, or an absent one as Galatea is a perfect work. Pygmalion says that “such a perfect model is the image of that which it is not [qu’un si parfait modele soit l’image de ce qui n’est pas]” – that is, the statue is image in itself, the statue is the image of an image. Pygmalion’s prayer is heard by Venus, and in the culmination of his error, the animation of Galatea fulfils his false desire. As Weber sums up: “Pygmalion prayed for the original of the statue, and the result was the animation of the statue. The statue thus has no model other than itself; it is its own original. But it remains an image as well as its original; it is not real as a natural object or a living person is real.”¹¹³ Galatea’s first movement is reflective, “the work of art is selfness as it has been constituted by reflective consciousness. The statue derives not from nature but from Pygmalion’s consciousness [...] it is the image of his negativity. [...] Consciousness constitutes itself through its negativity as negativity, as lacking the continuity of the organic.”¹¹⁴ The animation of the statue means its realisation as an image but it also has a negative aspect, being the image of a reflective self and the negation of the real. In *Pygmalion*, reflection shows the act of the petrified consciousness.

In the scene when the artist sees Galatea come to life he remarks that “it is too funny for the lover of a stone to become a man of visions.”¹¹⁵ On the one hand, this statement can be read as if in his ecstasy (recalling his ecstatic love-making that gives life to the statue in the the Ovidian story) the ‘mad’ Pygmalion imagined that the stony beloved was brought to life. On the other hand, in the moment of his insight into the blindness of his passion Pygmalion becomes not only the man of visions but also a man of rhetoric, because for Rousseau, figural language is the playground of love. Huntington shows that Pygmalion also marks the point when in Rousseau’s works “the tension between fiction and reality begins to take the rhetorical forms.” In several *loci*, the figurality of language is discussed together the passion of *amour*. Huntington explains: “Like *amour*, Rousseau’s linguistic world will be open-ended and valuable because his use of language can never attain a reciprocal, one-to-one correspondence with its referent. Any final referent, if we must name one ourselves, must result from the process of taking an illusory passion for an actual referent.”¹¹⁶

Weber also refers to the second preface written to *Nouvelle Héloïse*, where Rousseau speaks about the relation between love and the aesthetic, claiming that

¹¹³ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 914.

¹¹⁴ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 915.

¹¹⁵ Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 235.

¹¹⁶ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 115-6.

love is an illusion – it is ideal. Moreover, in the language of love the figures of speech used are “ideals constituted by consciousness”¹¹⁷ – as de Man sums up, “‘love’ is a figure that disfigures.”¹¹⁸

Similarly, a passion – perhaps, the passion of the ‘mad’ Pygmalion – that figures and disfigures works in reading. According to de Man, for readers “the critical insight seems to occur at the moment when the consciousness of the reader and that of the writer merge to become a single Self that transcends the two empirical selves that confront each other. This encounter forces the reader to leave behind his own everyday self, as it exists at this particular moment of his history, to re-establish contact with the forgotten origin of this self, and to gauge the degree of conformity he has maintained with his origin.”¹¹⁹ It can describe the process of reading an autobiographical text and the process of reading in general. It is highly philosophical alluding to a universal *Dasein* and at the same time it leads us to the interrelatedness of *amitié*, *amour* and pity in the forming of human relationships – reading is a bond-creating activity.

Nevertheless, Weber also thinks that Rousseau, like Kant, sees the irony of human existence, showing reflection and desire as the “manifestations of an ironic negativity of the self, a discontinuity within the self.”¹²⁰ This negativity simply means that the self is finite and mortal, which makes Pygmalion’s ideal desire for Galatea ironic. Huntington also ends his Rousseau-book with the discussion of irony; to be precise he ends it with the discussion of the lack of irony in Rousseau’s character. Although I can find ironic traits in Rousseau’s works, I do not intend to disagree with him – I cannot simply do it *per definitionem*. Moreover, I cannot help quoting his flattering description of the ironist:

[...] the ironist never claims to understand, and actively refuses to identify with any form of textual world. He remains instead in a virtual position of withdrawal, the better to proclaim fiction as no more than fiction, and to deflate the claim for understanding that anyone so ‘mistaken’ as an autobiographer might make. [...] the ironist, [...] remains [...] sceptical about everything, and most of all about himself. This response aptly characterises the critical spirit. Some critics, giving close attention to texts, have come to see irony as the limiting rhetorical category, not just as one

¹¹⁷ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 917.

¹¹⁸ de Man, “Self (Pygmalion)”, in *AR*, 198.

¹¹⁹ de Man, “Rousseau and the Transcendence of the Self,” in *RCC*, 32. In “Allegory (Julie)” (in *Allegories of Reading*) de Man clearly connects the self vs. other substitutions of the lovers in *Narcisse* and *Pygmalion* with the relationship not only between the author and the work but also between the author and the reader (*AR*, 213).

¹²⁰ Weber, “The Aesthetics of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion*,” 911.

among several possible character traits. When this position is taken to its logical conclusion, misunderstanding and the impossibility of reading are the norms for the author and the critic. They become trapped in the *alluring mirror-play of the textual worlds* that they or other writers create.¹²¹

The mirroring surfaces that make all these reflections possible are in the receptive minds and in the works. The very first mirror, in this case the mirror of mirrors, is Galatea, the work of art, who serves as the tain of the mirror. The other mirroring surfaces (sur-faces) are the texts and their readings. In the reflection and in the works of reflections through endless 'ironic' mirror-play, the self – of the maker, the writer, the reader, or the critic – in the act of confronting with the Other/other, or each other, can/will become another. The act of confronting means the passionate 'wax-melting' efforts made in reading, writing, interpreting, and understanding. In this way, my text, reflecting on Pygmalion-reflections, will be(come) *another* 'petrified' mirror that tells the story of Pygmalions' reading of reading Pygmalions.

¹²¹ Huntington, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, 223. Ironic italics are mine. É.A.

RHETORICAL PRACTICE OF READING

THE ‘THING’ BETWIXT AND BETWEEN –
IRONY AND ALLEGORY IN WORDSWORTH’S “A SLUMBER DID
MY SPIRIT SEAL”

And *already* you are *in memory* of your own death.

(Derrida)

A slumber did my spirit seal;	No motion has she now, no force;
I had no human fears;	She neither hears nor sees;
She seemed a thing that could not feel	Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course,
The touch of earthly years.	With rocks, and stones, and trees.

(W. Wordsworth)

The rhetorical figures haunt our discourses and narratives communicating about the experience of time. In de Man’s “The Rhetoric of Temporality” allegory and irony are shown as two modes of representing a ‘paradoxical’ (authentic?) experience of time: “Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the inauthentic. [...] The temporal void that it reveals is the same void we encountered when we found allegory always implying an unreachable anteriority”¹. In several points I agree with de Man but I find stronger connections between the two tropes in their relation to recollection. I would prefer to accept Derrida’s suggestion that allegory can be presented (rhetorically) by the classical goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, and irony operates as the goddess (and also the river) of forgetting, Lethe, which – according to Derrida quoting de Man – “knows neither memory nor prefigurative duration.”² The chosen textual playground in my further analysis of the problematic *relationship* (and also the relationship of the relationship) between the two tropes is William Wordsworth’s romantic poem, “A slumber did my spirit seal.” The choice is not arbitrary as besides so many great critical readings of the poem, there are two radically different rhetorical interpretations – an ironic and an allegorical – also *dis*-played.

¹ de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *Blindness and Insight*, 222. Abbreviated as *BI*.

² de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 226 and Derrida, *Mémoires*, 84. See more about it in the chapter titled “The Ironic Allegory of Remembrance and Oblivion”.

In “Irony as a Principle of Structure”, Cleanth Brooks, the New Critic, analyzes the poem paying attention to its irony expressed in the tension of the opposing themes. In the first stanza the lover thinks that his beloved is an eternally unchangeable ‘thing’ and in his trance-like worship of love he is without (mortal) feelings and worry. Brooks feels ‘an ironical effect’ even here; to be precise, he writes about its precipitation which – according to him – becomes overt in the second part. In his reading the death of the loved one and its description are connected with the lover’s initial sealed slumber, as “[it] is evident that it is her *unnatural* slumber that has waked him out of his.”³ This remark about the ‘unnatural’ slumber becomes ironic as in the second stanza the image of death is presented as something natural: the dead body of the beloved revolves with the natural things. But it is this unnatural recognition that gives the lover’s insight, namely now the lifeless body that cannot hear and see moves around “in a violent, but imposed motion” together with the earthly things. Although Brooks admits that he would not necessarily call the poem ‘ironic,’ in his summary he claims that “the statement of the first stanza has been literally realised in the second, but its meaning has been ironically reversed.”⁴ The irony of the poem is given by the contrast between the past, the girl’s apparent ‘insulation’ against ‘the touch of earthly years’ actually still affecting her life, and the present being dead when she really becomes insensible – that is to say, all the time she is subjected to (earthly) time. While in her life she seemed unchangeable and immortal, now with her death she truly becomes immortal: as a lifeless thing she is a(n embedded) part of eternal nature or natural eternity.

In “The Rhetoric of Temporality” de Man refers to the allegorical as the “overcoming of irony” and tries to give examples of the non-ironic “pure poetry.”⁵ About the selected poem he states that “[it] clearly is not ironic, either in its tonality or in its meaning.”⁶ Paying attention to the temporal structure, he finds a contrast between the past stage of consciousness, the stage of the mistaken ‘slumber’ expressed in the first four lines and the present state, the *now* in the last four lines describing the speaker’s recovery from his past error. The change in time grammatically shown by verbs in past and present tenses refers to the alteration in the speaker’s mind as well as to the (quite radical) change in the beloved’s life. In the first stanza the girl ‘seemed’ like something that could not show the changes of time, ‘now’ she is dead. De Man calls the attention to the

³ Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *Critical Theory since Plato*, 1045.

⁴ Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *Critical Theory since Plato*, 1046.

⁵ Quoting Baudelaire’s “De l’essence du rire” (On the Essence of Laughter) de Man asks: “would some of the definitely non-ironic, but, in our sense of the term, allegorical texts of the late Hölderlin, of Wordsworth, or of Baudelaire himself be this ‘pure poetry from which laughter is absent as from the soul of the Sage’?” (de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 223).

⁶ *Ibid.*

word, ‘thing,’ that can be a playful hint at the lady’s youthful charms so that in the second stanza it is to become a deadly true ‘thing’:

She now has become a *thing* in the full sense of the word, [...] and, indeed, she exists beyond the touch of earthly years. But the light-hearted compliment has turned into a grim awareness of the de-mystifying power of death, which makes all the past appear as a flight into the inauthenticity of a forgetting.⁷

Though it could be ironic – and Brooks has found it ironic in a similar way –, de Man refuses this possibility despite the fact that he himself refers to that “ominous” ‘seemed’ preceding the thing in the first stanza. In de Man’s reading, the *realisation* of death makes the lover wise and he painfully has to admit that “things [seem] as they actually are.”⁸ As opposed to its Brooksonian ironic reading the allegorical de Manian shows the temporal scheme of error-death-recognition-wisdom, in which the ironic moment can be built.

In his reading of the poem de Man also questions “whether Wordsworth could have written in the same manner about his own death ... [being] one of the few poets who can write proleptically about their own death and speak, as it were, from beyond their own graves.”⁹ The first two, introductory, lines make it obvious that from the very beginning the speaker’s consciousness and his (initial or original) unconsciousness are in the centre; to be precise, the focus is on the speaker’s confrontation with death, time and its/his passing. Wordsworth’s keen interest in the problem of the voice-from-beyond-the-grave constitutes the central theme in his prose work, *Essays upon Epitaphs*. These texts are inspired by the poet’s personal belief in immortality as it is needed to annihilate or neutralise the fear of death- (his voice-from-beyond-the-grave says):

I confess, with me the conviction is absolute, that if the impression and sense of Death were not thus *counterbalanced*, such a *hollowness* would pervade the whole system of *things*, such a *want* of correspondence and consistency, a disproportion so astounding *betwixt* means and ends, that there could be no repose, no joy.¹⁰

⁷ de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 224.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 225.

¹⁰ William Wordsworth, *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, in *The Prose Works. Volume II.*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, 605-617), 607. The ironic italics are mine. É.A.

According to Wordsworth, the belief in the immortality of the soul naturally belongs to a human being and also leads to the respect of the ‘corporeal frame of Man’ being the soul’s ‘habitation’. Therefore, he considers it important to protect the bodily remains of the deceased by erecting sepulchral monuments, preferably in nature, and likewise to preserve their memory by writing commemorative epitaphs “that it should speak, in [...] the general language of humanity as connected with the subject of Death – the source from which an Epitaph proceeds; of death and of life.”¹¹

As it is expressed in the poet’s argument, the blending of the gravestone into a natural landscape together with the lifelike death-language of its inscription are supposed to strengthen the connection between death and life. In his “Autobiography As De-Facement” de Man analyses Wordsworth’s essays stating that here “one moves, without compromise, from death *or* life to life *and* death.”¹² I would say that it is more accurate to make a slight alteration, stating that it is *about death and life*: as if reading the commemorating text of the deceased, the mortal-survivors were thinking back from death to life. Above all Wordsworth also suggests that the simple language of the epitaph should not personify the dead, i.e. the departed should not be allowed to speak from his own tombstone, instead it must be about the survivors’ memory. However, he accepts that the voice coming from beyond the grave and “[its] shadowy interposition also harmoniously unites the two worlds of the Living and the Dead [...]”¹³

So why this palinodic remark? According to de Man, the cause of the confusion in the text is that Wordsworth himself realises the danger of the fictitious voice-from-beyond-the-grave – to use a de Manian term, *prosopopeia* (*prosopon poein*). This rhetorical figure is used to give figuration or disfiguration of a mask or a face and means the tropological centre (spectrum) to de Man in the understanding of autobiographical texts, memory and writing. Here de Man interprets Wordsworth’s writing (and also the author’s autobiography) as an epitaph and with its *prosopopeia* it becomes possible for the inscription to speak to us: in Wordsworth’s essay the text of the (speaking) gravestone is read by the (watching) sun. And what is so dangerous in it? In de Man’s reading while the dead are given face and voice, the living have their smile – and words – frozen on their lips:

[...] by making the death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies, by the same token, that the living are stuck dumb, frozen in their own death. The surmise of the ‘Pause, Traveller!’ thus acquires a sinister connotation that is not only the

¹¹ Wordsworth, *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, in *The Prose Works. Volume II*, 612.

¹² de Man, “Autobiography As De-Facement,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 74. Abbreviated as RR.

¹³ Wordsworth, *Essays Upon Epitaphs*, in *The Prose Works. Volume II*, 616 .

prefiguration of one's own mortality but our actual entry into the frozen world of the dead.¹⁴

It is *time* to return to Wordsworth's spirit sealing slumber, which can now be interpreted using the key ideas of the previous readings, that is to say, playing with the (problematic) allegories of 'the thing,' '(earthly) time,' death and the epitaph. If the first line is given proper attention, in the initial slumber besides the lover's daze – that Hartman calls "ecstatic consciousness"¹⁵ – death is also proleptically evoked though in a hallucinatory, dozing way. Since in the essays Wordsworth displays his belief in the soul's life after death, the 'seal,' (the seal of the spirit) can refer to the body and the ecstatic death-forgetting caused by bodily pleasures. Accordingly, the 'thing' can be understood as the girl's body (or in Hartman's reading: her hymen) being the object of male desire; what's more, before her death she only exists as a thing and actually not much is said about her spirit.¹⁶ In his "Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal': Heidegger, de Man, Deconstruction", John Baker interprets the word, thing, reading Heidegger's "Das Ding," where the beloved's presence is taken as a gift, thus, in the self-delusive amorous daze "the speaker [...] forgets not only her mortality, he forgets his own as well."¹⁷

But in the poem this strange 'thing' is capable of changing as it is revealed in the verb 'seemed,' and in my reading I find its temporality more emphatic. In accordance with Baker (but only to some extent, as reading the poem he concentrates more on the poem's grammar than its rhetoric) and getting closer to the Brooksonian irony, I do not think there is such a big gap between the *then* of the first and the *now* of the second stanza, as de Man claims. In the analysis of the allegorical structure of the poem, it is necessary to emphasise the distance between past and present, but if the line, 'she seemed a thing,' and the present 'now' are studied more thoroughly, then its allegory can also be understood on another level. The verb, 'seemed,' can have positive or negative connotations

¹⁴ de Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," in *RR*, 78. And later in Derrida's lectures dedicated to his friend's memory, in his *Memoires for Paul de Man*, the quoted study of prosopopeia itself also becomes a prosopopeia: de Man's own epitaph. See the chapter titled "The Ironic Allegory of Remembrance and Oblivion (In Memory of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida)" in the book.

¹⁵ Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987), 27.

¹⁶ Similarly to Hartman's reading, Joseph Hillis Miller in his analysis of the poem also pays attention to the opposition sealed vs. unsealed, giving a highly sexual reading of Lucy's 'thing' and showing "death as penetrator" (*Theory Now and Then*, 181-2).

¹⁷ John Baker, "Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal': Heidegger, de Man, Deconstruction," in *Studies in Romanticism*, 1997/1: 103-123. Baker quotes the section from Heidegger's treatise when Meister Eckhart adopts a saying from Dionysius the Areopagite, namely: "love is of such a nature that it changes man into the things he loves" (Baker 113). In fact, the 'thing' in the poem can be an ironic reading of Heidegger's "Das Ding".

concerning the quality of a thing, and in the second stanza it becomes obvious that she (Lucy) is not who/what she looks like; that is, she is not like she seemed to be. With this verb the girl becomes an allegory that stands for her own entity, which is confirmed looking back from the ‘now’ of the second stanza. Nevertheless, this ‘now’ in the present is only momentary: in the speaker’s recollection the allegorical image of the beloved flashes but together with the loss, the shadow of (her) death. Baker cites Heidegger about the authenticity of the moment in human existence stating that the *Augenblick* (moment of vision) of the poem gives “the temporalizing of time” which is death itself.¹⁸ And with death, Derrida says “it is the moment when there is no longer any choice – could we even think of any other – except that between memory and hallucination.”¹⁹

Susan Eilenberg considers the poem – together with other mourning Wordsworth-poems – a bad and “abortive elegy” because instead of the pain-soothing pathos of the elegy (and also its normal work of mourning) it shows the impossibility of detachment from death; as a result in its (poetic and figurative) language, the loss makes the deceased a ghost and the poet a living dead. The girl “allegorizes the problems of allegory”: as an unnamed phantom she lives in the figures of speech and in the rhetorical tropes, while nomination can kill her. Accordingly, this ‘she’ can be read as the allegory of poetic language and imagination, which can be made lifeless by paraphrasing and translating. The ‘she’ of the speaking ‘I’ dis-plays the paradoxical nature of the (romantic) poetic self-consciousness/awareness showing the split of the poetic and the linguistic ‘I’:

The ambiguities of Lucy’s otherness engender anxieties about the poet’s identity: she symbolizes both his integrity and his division, his comforting wholeness and his possible fragmentation. Her existence both confirms and undermines what it doubles, hence the effect of simultaneous splitting and convergence.²⁰

In this way, the poem can be read as the deconstruction of romantic allegorical elements: on the one hand, the deconstruction of the unnamed ‘she’ and the speaker’s figurative ‘I’; on the other hand, that of the belief in immortality. Deprivation and negation prevail in the text. For example, the

¹⁸ Baker, “Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth’s ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’,” 109.

¹⁹ Derrida, *Memoires*, 28.

²⁰ Susan Eilenberg, “The Haunted Language of the Lucy Poems,” in *Strange Power of Speech* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 133. Similarly, using Walter Benjamin’s idea on the temporality of allegory – “allegory goes away empty [‘Leer aus geht die Allegorie’]” – Baker says that in the second stanza the process of “the hollowing out of the loved one’s seeming” happens, and this process works as “the agency of death within allegory” (Baker, “Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth’s ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’,” 112).

negative particle appears five times in different forms – as if the poem justified the fear expressed in Wordsworth’s essays, namely: what if there is no thing after death, what if there is only *nothing* after death?

De Man in “Time and History in Wordsworth” says that “the relationship with time is, however, always a negative one for us, for the relationship between the self and time is necessarily mediated by death; it is the experience of mortality that awakens within us a consciousness of time (that is more than merely natural).”²¹ And *now*, reading the poem, de Man asserts that “the ‘now’ of the poem is not [and cannot be É.A.] an actual now, which is that of the moment of death, lies hidden in the blank space between the two stanzas”²² – and the moment of remembrance calls it into life. In the poem the hollowing out of allegory is done by irony as the agent of death – day by day, from minute to minute; while immortality is only referred to in the second stanza by the eternal revolving of the globe, which is already ironic in Brooks’s reading. Thus the poem’s irony connects the moments of the speaker’s remembering in the eternally cyclic course of time. The ‘deadly’ moments of memory roll together with the earth and the girl’s dead body, so as to, from time to time, return in the speaker’s thought “insofar as he cannot exempt himself from the instantaneous relapse that is the temporal feature of irony.”²³ Repetition – taken in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term as “recollection forward” – is impossible; more exactly, to cite Constantin Constantinus “the only thing that is repeated, can happen is the impossibility of repetition.”²⁴ Only ‘recollection backwards (or negatively)’ of the deceased, that is the negation of repetition, is made possible as if it were the irony of Kierkegaard’s concept on repetition.

Although even Brooks pays attention to the nature of the earth’s whirl shown as a meaningless motion that “mechanically repeats itself,” he does not emphasise its adjective, ‘*diurnal*’.²⁵ Being a cold, scientific and technical term meaning of ‘daily’ and used in relation to the movement of the orbits, the word creates a clear connection between the discourse of human time and cosmic time,²⁶ between the limited linearity of man’s life and the eternal cycles of nature. However, besides this repetition of daily movement four other words are

²¹ de Man, “Time and History in Wordsworth,” *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, 93. Abbrev. as *RCC*.

²² de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 225.

²³ Baker, “Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth’s ‘A slumber did my spirit seal,’” 108.

²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, in *Kierkegaard’s Writings*, trans. by H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP), III/173. He also claims here: “Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward” (ibid).

²⁵ Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *Critical Theory since Plato*, 1046.

²⁶ Michael Riffaterre quotes Norman E. Holland’s statements on the word in “Undecidability as Hermeneutic Constraint,” in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. by Collier and H. Geyer-Ryan (NY: Cornell UP, 1990, 109-124), 119.

hidden in *diurnal*: ‘die,’ ‘eye’/‘I’ and ‘urn,’ as if in the speaker’s imagination – in the twinkling of an eye – the whole globe has become the “funeral vessel” (Holland) of the beloved. It is also worth mentioning that the line of the poem where the word ‘diurnal’ appears is full of the trilling ‘r’ sound expressing the dynamism of the earth’s revolving and also its whirl imposed upon both the dead and the living. The rotation of the *earth-urn* with its iteration measures time in human life and the thing, the girl’s body, is finally and definitely “touched by and held by earthly time in its most powerful and horrible image.”²⁷ In the poem the things in the world that are ‘rolled round’ together with ‘she’ and ‘I’ in the con-text of earthly time allegorise death and nothingness. The dizziness caused by the earth’s rolling (and ‘suspension’²⁸) implies its rhetorical *vertigo* (vertige), which now seems to whirl my reading along. Now the poem is an (ironic) epitaph on the (t)urn of the poetic ‘she’/‘I’ and the readers. Hence we are to revolve together with the lifeless things and the dead beloved in the negative moments of recollection.

The momentary insight shown in Wordsworth’s poem is to be repeated, or should I say recollected again and again. Its rhetoric of temporality does not display linearity; instead, a vortex can be envisaged, as the vortex is usually associated with the textual (parabasis-like) appearances of irony. De Man describes the rhetoric phenomenon (I prefer calling irony a rhetoric phenomenon or the trope of tropes): “it relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference and allows for no end, for no totality [...] it dissolves in the narrowing spiral [...] that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral.”²⁹ But in itself irony cannot operate, it needs the allegorical efforts: Lethe cannot exist and work without Mnemosyne. If we accept de Man’s statement, namely that “the structure of irony is the reversed mirror-image of allegory”,³⁰ then we should admit their chiasmic relationship. Their relationship “could be unfolded in the form of an infinite number of chiasm” due to the endless transformation irony together with allegory can produce.³¹ One can remember the ‘endless series of mirrors’ described in Friedrich Schlegel’s 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment, or evoke the image of Walter Benjamin’s mirroring mirrors.³² We can take the opening up of the perspective

²⁷ Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *Critical Theory since Plato*, 1046.

²⁸ According to de Man, in Wordsworth’s poetry the frequent usage of the word ‘hanging, hung’ referring to the earth’s instability evokes the feeling of dizziness. See in “Time and History in Wordsworth,” in *RCC*, 79.

²⁹ de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 222.

³⁰ de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *BI*, 225.

³¹ Jacob Bøggild, “An Inquiry into a Couple of Examples in Kierkegaard and Paul de Man,” in *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook 1997*, ed. by N. J. Cappelørn and H. Deuser (Berlin – NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1997, 253-269), 267.

³² See more about the mirroring mirrors in my paper “The Ironical Allegory of Remembrance and Oblivion”.

into infinity either as a trick of rhetoric or the sign of true love (faith), in the end the irony of prosopopeia shows a face, a reflection in a mirror that is faced by death – perhaps.³³

³³ M. C. Escher has a drawing, *Eye*, showing a human eye with a skull in its pupil; that is – as Escher himself comments on it – “with the reflection of the (One) Thing waiting for all”. See in M. C. Escher, *Grafikák és rajzok* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1992), 13. In the conclusion of my paper I refer to the (de Manian) irony of the Kierkegaardian concept of irony: without the belief in (true, transcendental) repetition we can only get the ironic-rhetorical moments of recollection.

“LABOUR OF LOVE” – OVIDIAN FLOWER-FIGURES IN WILLIAM BLAKE’S *SONGS*

*Dixit et ignotas animum dimittit
in artes naturamque novat.
(Met. 8.188-9)*

*To create a little flower is the labour of ages.
(A Proverb of Hell in MHH)*

In de Man’s and Miller’s writings we can often meet references to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as they both see that the Ovidian work presents the anthropomorphic process of prosopopoetic naming in its narratives. However, while de Man thinks that in the stories “anthropomorphism freezes the infinite chain of tropological transformations [...] into one single assertion,” Miller emphasises the power of “aberrant figurative language” exercised by the gods (via Ovid).¹ Actually, in the literary allusions to *Metamorphoses*, we can see ‘the allegorisation of linguistic power’ revealed by the Ovidian (not only deconstructive) readers. In her collection of essays, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid*, Sarah Annes Brown, tracing the so-called ‘Ovidian’ line in English works, discusses the different levels of *Ovidianism* emphasising that such a research is definitely fruitful:

Identifying a relationship between two poets, pinpointing verbal *echoes* or the provenance of a plot motif, does not necessarily enhance our appreciation of a text, or affect the way we interpret it. We have to perceive a dynamic interplay of some kind between the two works if source hunting is to become an interpretative tool not just a footnote opportunity. [...] So an understanding of the way one text lies behind another text (or image) may radically *alter* our perception of that later text, offering new interpretative possibilities.²

¹ de Man, “Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984, 239-262), 241 and Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion*, 5.

² Sarah Annes Brown, *The Metamorphosis of Ovid* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1999), 14-16. Italics are mine. É.A. It can happen that *Metamorphoses* transforms our reading of Blake. Actually, Brown’s ideas echo Charles Martindale’s on hermeneutics quoting T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (“Introduction” in *Ovid Renewed*, ed. by Charles

Echoing Brown's ideas, in the present paper I intend to map connections between Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and William Blake's *Songs*, concentrating on their transformed anthropomorphic flower-figures. I will analyse the Ovidian reminiscences in the Blakean "unmediated visions," reflecting on "the inherent tension that resides in the metaphorical language" of the mythological stories and the lyrics.³

William Blake (1757-1827), being the one of the forerunners of the Romantics, started to write poems in the last fading decades of the Augustan period of neoclassicism. In fact, he was less influenced by the greatest satirists' – Pope's, Swift's, Gay's, and Dr Johnson's – works than by the new trends of nature, Graveyard and Gothic poetry. Moreover, in his works, the classical English and ancient sources and readings were re-contextualised by his greatest inspiration, the *Bible*. Apostrophising the Bible as the Great Code of Art, "he warmly declared that all knew was in the Bible."⁴ Although Blake knew and read the great classics of literature, he displayed an ambiguous relationship to the dominant neoclassical trend of his own age, namely, the imitation of the style, patterns and forms of the classical Greek and Roman literary works. On the one hand, in several of his writings, the deeply Christian poet ardently attacks neoclassicism and the copying of the great classical authors. In "Preface" written to *Milton*, he claims that "we do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations." Here he also names the 'spiritless' ancient authors: "[t]he Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to contemn, are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible."⁵ According to S. Foster Damon, Blake thought that the original source of the Greek and Latin accounts of the Creation and the Flood could only be in the Bible, therefore the classical writers not only 'robbed' the text, contextualising it in Greek or Roman culture, but also deprived it from its spiritual sublimity.⁶ Writing about Virgil's poetry ("On Virgil"), Blake also expresses that the ancient cultures seemed to support and foster arts

Martindale, Cambridge and New York: CUP, 1989, 2). In her work she tries to show the indebtedness of English literature to the classical work. Here we can find an impressive list of English authors starting from the greatest ones, such as Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton through Marvell, Keats, and Beddoes to Browning, Joyce, and Woolf.

³ Paul de Man, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 7. In my text on the flower-figures, I was greatly inspired not only by the proximity to 'divine nature' expressed in the Greek stories and Blake's works, but also by de Man's writings on the 'nature' of the rhetorical tropes in romantic poetry.

⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson, one of Blake's friends, recorded this statement in his diary. Quoted in Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art* (Princeton: PUP, 1982), 3.

⁵ William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: OUP, 1969, repr. 1976), 480. Subsequently referred to as Blake.

⁶ S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (rev. edn., Hanover and London: UP of New England, 1988), 313.

and sciences, however, being a “War-like State,” they were destroyers rather than producers (Blake 778).

On the other hand, in his poetic works (and also in his paintings) Blake the visionary frequently alludes to the fantastic stories of Greek and Roman mythology. In *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, he says:

Vision or imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is Form'd by the daughters of Memory. Imagination is surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration, [...] Let it here be Noted that the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Visions, which are lost & clouded in Fable & Allegory, [...] The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative ; it is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients call'd the Golden Age. (Blake 605.)

While Blake attacks the simple work of memory and imitation, he defends the original power of Greek imagination, which is related to the only true source of inspiration, and finds its expression in the visionary transformations.

For Blake, the storehouse of these sublime though pagan visions was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which he probably read in Sandys' translation in the early 1780s then in the original in 1800s, and he was fascinated by the imaginative figurality of Ovid's work. It is recorded in Bentley's *Blake Records* that the poet was very fond of Ovid and in his youth, besides Shakespeare's works, his favourite readings were Ovid's writings.⁷ Furthermore, above his desk, next to Dürer's *Melancholy*, there was a painting about an Ovidian figure as it is recorded in Gilchrist's biography:

Samuel Palmer, in a letter to Gilchrist of 23 August 1855, wrote that Blake delighted in Ovid, and, as a labour of Love, had executed a finished picture from the *Metamorphoses*, after Giulio Romano. This design hung in his room, and close by his engraving table, Albert Dürer's *Melancholy the Mother of Invention*, [...].⁸

Giulio Romano (1492-1546), the Italian mannerist painter and Raphael's pupil, was rather famous for his highly sexual works, such as the scandalous drawings, *I modi: Positions* illustrating Aretino's erotic sonnets. Although the importance of sexuality is also emphasised in Blake's works, a stronger connection between their *oeuvre* should be revealed, namely that Romano, like Blake, dedicated

⁷ G. E. Bentley, *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 428 and 527.

⁸ Quoted in Bentley, *Blake Records*, 565. n. 3. See also Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake Pictor Ignotus*, ed. by Richard Holmes (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 324.

several of his works to Greek mythological love-stories. As Janet Cox-Rearick comments, the eroticism of the earlier drawings also pervades Romano's later Mantuan paintings and frescoes in Palazzo Te, when the "greatest inspiration [...] was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, specifically the stories of the amorous adventures of the gods (particularly Jupiter), known as the Loves of the Gods."⁹

Thus, it can be imagined that the painting above Blake's desk, showing an Ovidian episode designed in Romano's style, might show a passionate love scene of *Metamorphoses* emphasising virility. Nevertheless, if we consider the title of the other picture, *Melancholy*, and the placing of these two together, we should assume that a more spiritual drawing hung in Blake's working-room, which was related to the idea of human transformation as it had a central role in his way of thinking.¹⁰ In his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789-1794) Blake tries to show "the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" relying on the Biblical description of the alterations, or rather *transformations*, in human conditions before and after the Fall (Blake, 210). However, embedded in his Christian universe, we can find several references to Ovid's mythical transformations – mainly, in his flower-poems.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* we come across lots of references to flowers: the word itself, either in singular or plural, appears more than 40 times in the 15 books. In several cases flowers are taken as natural beauties, which the "the soft breeze of tender zephyrs wafted and caressed" (*Met.* 1:108), or, as springtime flowers "bloomed" in the pastoral landscape (*Met.* 2.27; 7.284; 15.204).¹¹ In other passages flowers are used as decorations in garlands (*Met.* 10.123; 13.928) and at commemorating feasts (e.g. *Met.* 9.87; 15.688). In the text, besides their natural and occasional usage, flowers are taken metaphorically as *flowers of*

⁹ Janet Cox-Rearick (ed.), *Giulio Romano – Master Designer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 76. In the Camera di Ovidio *The Rape of Europe* is accompanied by the depictions of the rape of Proserpina by Pluto and of Amymone by Neptune. The expressive drawings illustrate the Ovidian episodes when Jupiter transformed himself into different animal guises in order to seduce the chosen mortal maidens. While the above mentioned works are very erotic, in the pornographic *Jupiter and Olympias* the God disguised as a half-serpent, half-eagle beast is just about to rape the woman, which is indicated by his erection (Cox-Rearick, *Giulio Romano*, 84-85).

¹⁰ Although I have already started to do some research on the relationship between Romano and Blake (via Ovid) and I have some results concerning the topic of the lost drawing, I do not intend to publish my speculation about it in this paper.

¹¹ The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, trans. by Allen Mandelbaum (New York and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1993). Subsequently abbreviated to *Met.* Besides the Latin text, I read and used different English translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Mary M. Innes popular prose translation (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, The Penguin Classics, 1955, repr. 1961), the seventeenth-century verse translation made by Sandys (1626) and the eighteenth-century version published by Garth (1717) as Blake was supposed to read the former one (<<http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/sandys>>; <<http://classics.mit.edu/ovid/metam.html>> (20.05.2006)). In the paper, the direct quotations are from Mandelbaum's poetic translation while the numbering of the lines follows the original Latin text.

rhetoric, referring to someone's youth (*Met.* 7.216 and 9.436), beauty and virginity (e.g. *Met.* 10.85 and 14.764). In addition to general references, several flower-types appear; most frequently violets, lilies, and roses. These flowers are associated with specific colours – white, crimson, purple, and yellow – and their colours can fade, mingle, or change. Moreover, tragic stories are started with the heroine's picking of flowers, usually lilies and violets. We can consider Europa's garlands, with which she decorated the white bull's horns (*Met.* 2.867-8); Proserpina's favourite flowery meadow where she is ravished (*Met.* 5.390-401); Salmacis' flower gathering by her pool before her passionate attack on Hermaphroditus (*Met.* 4.315), or Dryope's unfortunate lotus-plucking (*Met.* 9.340-5). On the whole, to quote Charles Paul Segal's statement, in the Ovidian landscape flowers "are traditionally associated with virginal purity and also with its vulnerability [...] the flower-motif reflects the loss of innocence."¹² To expand on these general remarks, I will concentrate on the Ovidian episodes of miraculous transformations where a flower-type is put in the centre. In *Metamorphoses* these are the lily, the rose, the narcissus, the lotus, the hyacinth, and the heliotrope in the episodes of Proserpina, Adonis, Narcissus, Dryope (and Lotis), Hyacinthus (and Ajax), and Clytie, respectively.

Similarly, in Blake's textual and visual works, flowers also gain importance. His Flowers, dignified with a capital, are shown as individuals and Blake is concerned "with the hidden causes of [their] wondrous achievements."¹³ In his *Songs*, as with the settings of Ovid's work, the flower-figures are placed in pastoral landscapes recalling the Eden like world of innocence.¹⁴ In the very first poem titled "Introduction," it is revealed that these *Songs* are requested by an angelic child, who wants every child to understand the poems: "And I wrote my happy songs / Every child may joy to hear" (Blake, 111). In *Songs of Innocence* we cannot read about specific and special flowers, only happy blossoms and joyful buds (e.g. in "The Blossom" and "Night"). In the poems, blossoms and buds, being the signs of spring, are also taken metaphorically: in "The School Boy" the dreary classes threaten the boy depriving him of his "youthful spring" "if buds are nip'd / And blossoms blown away" (Blake, 124). Although the

¹² Charles Paul Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses – A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1969), 33-4.

¹³ Michael J. Tolley, "Blake's Songs of Spring," in *William Blake. Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed. by Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, 96-128), 125.

¹⁴ We can meet the atmosphere of the sensual Ovidian pastoral, not only in Blake's *Songs*, but also in his prophecies, for instance, in the introduction of *Europe, A Prophecy*, a Fairy sitting on a tulip promises a book written on petals of eternal flowers (Blake, 237). It is also worth mentioning that the description of the vales of Har in *The Book of Thel*, of Beulah in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, or, of the highly seductive landscapes in *Vala, or the Four Zoas*. In order to find and analyse the connections of these works and *Metamorphoses* it would require me to write a further paper.

vernal and peaceful atmosphere recalls the Ovidian, in *Metamorphoses* the pastoral landscape evokes desire and heightens the dangers innocent maidens have to face in the “sensual paradise.”¹⁵ In Blake’s *Songs* the happy spring days are associated with childhood and the innocence man had before the Fall in the Garden. In the ironically innocent “Holy Thursday,” the phrase “flowers of London town” refers to the colourfully dressed children marching from their Charity Schools to the St. Paul’s Cathedral, which, even in an ironic context, can express the naïvety and purity of the cheerful poor children (Blake, 122). In contrast, in *Songs of Experience* the tragic stories of individual flower-figures are told. That is to say that Blake’s two series display the complexity of the Ovidian flower-symbolism: the flowering and de-flowering of innocence. The loss of innocence here is contextualised in love relationships since in *Songs of Experience* the individual flowers represent different aspects of love.¹⁶

In Blake’s ‘flowery’ imagination, the symbolically over-burdened lilies and roses are put in the centre. In his *Dictionary* Damon several times remarks about Blake’s late prophecies that the rose, the traditional symbol of love, is associated with the lily, which is regarded as the ideal state for man.¹⁷ Before his *Songs* in one of his juvenilia titled “How sweet I roam’d,” a story of seduction is told and the two flowers appear together:

He shew’d me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his garden fair,
Where all his golden pleasures grow. (Blake 6)

The female winged creature in the poem is trapped and imprisoned by “the prince of love” in “his golden cage” (Ibid). The poem recalls the suffering and escaping Ovidian heroines and reminds us that while the rose, especially the red rose, is regarded as the traditional symbol of passion, in Greek culture the lilies are related to death. Besides the pagan symbolism of the flowers, we cannot forget about their Christian iconography, where the red rose either stands for Mary’s, or Christ’s suffering, and the white lily refers to the Blessed Virgin’s angelic purity. In his *Songs of Experience* Blake relies on the rich symbolism of the rose and the lily in order to find his central flower-figure in the ‘spiritual’ sunflower.

¹⁵ Segal, *Landscape in Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 9. In his work Segal emphasises the sexual symbolism of the Ovidian landscape, analysing the motifs of caves, water and flowers in *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁶ John E. Grant, “Two Flowers in the Garden of Experience,” in *William Blake – Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. by Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969, 333-367), 334.

¹⁷ Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 240 and 351.

In one of his rose-poems, “The SICK ROSE,” a red coloured flower-figure is suffering – according to the speaker. The beautiful rose-like maiden’s love is corrupted by an invisible winged creature who “[h]as found out thy bed / Of crimson joy: / And his dark secret love / Does thy life destroy” (Blake, 213). The voice describing her misery seems to speculate about the rose’s sickness, which may be caused by her desire, one-sided love, or pregnancy. The poem titled “The Angel” can be read as the explanation of the previous poem, where the “maiden Queen” is speaking about her secret angel-like lover. Searching for the roots of the imagery used in the poems, we are likely to think of Venus and Adonis’ tragic love-story. Venus accidentally, but fatefully, falls in love with Adonis, Myrrha’s son, and when the hunting boy is killed by a boar she creates the red anemone from his immortalised blood-drops¹⁸:

[...]she sprinkled scented nectar on
his blood, which then fermented, even as
bright bubbles from when raindrops fall on mud.
One hour had yet to pass when, from that gore,

A bloodred flower sprang, [...]
And yet Adonis’ blossoms have brief life:
His flower is light and delicate; [...]
Anemone – ‘born of the wind’ – because
Winds shake its fragile petals, and they fall. (*Met.* 10.731-39)

The anemone, also referred to as ‘the short-lived lily,’ is “an enduring reminder of the fate of the short-lived Adonis.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, we should admit that Venus cannot be referred to as ‘the maiden Queen’ and the delicate anemone (cf. Greek *anemonos* as ‘wind’) hardly resembles Blake’s superb red rose. The two poems more convincingly recall a story told in ‘another’ *Metamorphoses* known as *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius; namely, Psyche’s story. Psyche, the beautiful ‘maiden Queen,’ is frequently visited at nights by her secret invisible husband, Amor, in a mysterious castle. Due to Psyche’s curiosity, the lover’s identity is revealed, and, as a consequence, the lovers lose each other. Following several trials and only after Psyche’s death, when Amor wakes her up with an immortalising kiss, can they be happy together.²⁰

¹⁸ Although in this paper I do not intend to collect all of the Biblical references to flowers, I cannot help highlighting some of the – rather exciting – parallels and coincidences. For instance, in the Bible the anemone is frequently identified with the “lily of the fields” (e.g. Matthew 6:28-29), or, the “lily of the valleys” (e.g. Canticles 2:1-2, 16) standing for the transient beauty of human life.

¹⁹ Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion*, 69.

²⁰ See more on it in Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (trans. by Robert Graves, Penguin Books, 1950).

In contrast with the Ovidian and Apuleian love of gods, different aspects of human love are discussed in the other rose-poem titled “My pretty ROSE TREE,”. The poem is mostly read as a depiction of a married couple’s feelings toward each other. The man is tempted by a wonderful inspiring flower “such a flower as May never bore,” but, rejecting the offer, he remains faithful to his “rose tree” that reacts ungratefully to his ‘sacrifice’. Although the topical connection with Ovid’s work is obvious in *ars amatoria*, Blake’s poem discusses the moral issues of love, which Ovid neglects in *Metamorphoses*. In the flowery description of the “conflict between desire and duty, impulse and rules,”²¹ the possessive and selfish characteristics of human love are emphasised by the repetitive usage of the possessive pronoun ‘my’:

Then I went to *my* Pretty Rose-tree,
 To tend her by day and by night;
 But *my* Rose turn’d away with jealousy,
 And her thorns were *my* only delight. (Blake 215. Italics are mine. É.A.)

The man actually imprisons his partner who reacts accordingly to ownership with distrust. Moreover, the girl also has something torturous of her own: *her* ‘thorns’.²² E. D. Hirsch asserts that the poem depicts “a double crime against the divine – the speaker’s for not following instinct, and the rose tree’s for not advocating.”²³ On the whole, in the poem, selfish love recalls Ovidian reminiscences as well, when contextualised in the human world.

The rose-tree, like a rose bush, hints at the possibility of childbearing. In *Metamorphoses* the flower related to maternal love is the lotus in the Dryope-episode. In fact, the lotus does not appear in Blake’s *Songs*, but it is mentioned in an early prophecy, *The Book of Thel*. In the prophecy, the main character, Thel, who lives in a luxurious pastoral of eternal spring, wants to know the meaning of life. In the valley of the river Adona, “the lotus of the water” flowers and later “the Lilly of the valley,” one of Thel’s alter-egos, is questioned in her self-quest. Here Dryope’s story is echoed as Thel’s troubles are caused by her innocence, i.e. her ignorance of sexuality and motherhood. In *Metamorphoses*, nursing her son, from the purple water-lotus “Dryope had plucked / some blossoms to delight her infant son” when “drops of blood [...] dripped / down from the blossoms” and she was punished by being transformed into a lotus-tree

²¹ Grant, “Two Flowers in the Garden of Experience”, 336.

²² The symbolism of thorns is rather complex: we can think of Christ’s suffering, or the thornless roses of Eden. In Greek mythology, the first red rose was said to appear on the earth when Venus, running to the wounded Adonis’ help, stepped into the thorns of a white rose and her blood coloured it. See more on it in Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. by John Buchanan-Brown (Penguin Books, 1996), 813-15.

²³ E. D. Hirsch, *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1964), 253-254.

(*Met.* 9.342-5). Actually, Dryope's tragedy is caused by her ignorance of other women's suffering as the assaulted nymph Lotis' transformed body is hidden in the lotus-flower. Besides her physical transformation, Dryope also experiences a mental one because in her last warning she asks her son not to pluck flowers, that is, she tries to defend innocent maidens from being deflowered. Although in *Thel* the motherlike figure is the Clod of Clay with her baby-worm, the appearance of the lotus, quite a rare flower in eighteenth-century poetry, calls the attention to the common *lot* of women: the loss of virginity and having children.

In *Thel* the lily basically stands for innocence and in its illustration the flower is shown as a miniature version of *Thel*, the unborn spirit. Similarly to the prophecy, in the song, "THE LILLY," the flower stands for sincere purity:

The modest Rose puts forth a thorn,
The humble Sheep a threat'ning horn ;
While the Lilly white shall in Love delight,
Nor a thorn, nor a threat, stain her beauty bright. (Blake 215)

The lily here represents purity and not innocence as she is honestly capable of giving herself in love, which is not without sexual fulfilment. Consequently, together with its Christian and pagan connotations, the lily becomes the emblem of "the purity of gratified desire."²⁴ It is placed last on the floral plate because for Blake this flower represents the ideal love: Love that is described in the flower-imagery of another song, in the *Song of Solomon*. As in the Biblical song the female speaker confesses: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (Canticles 2:1-2).²⁵ In addition to its spiritual contents, the song is highly erotic and sexual, and its atmosphere echoes with the tone of the Blakean songs and the desire of the Ovidian heroines.

However, the most complex poem displaying strong Ovidian influence, is the middle one of the three songs, "AH! SUN-FLOWER." In this song several of the above mentioned amorous figures and their flowers are haunting: Clytie, Narcissus, Hyacinthus, Proserpina, and Venus. I agree with William J. Keith, who claims that "an Ovidian metamorphosis-theory lies at the very core of the poem."²⁶ To be more precise, we cannot speak about a theory, but rather a vision with flower-figures and images. The most obvious Ovidian episode is the one

²⁴ Mary Lynn Johnson, "Emblem and Symbol in Blake," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1974):151-70), 169.

²⁵ *The Holy Bible*, King James Version (Glasgow: Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1971).

²⁶ William J. Keith, "The Complexities of Blake's 'Sunflower': An Archetypal Speculation," in *Blake — A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966, 56-64), 59.

related to the flower of heliotrope that gives the central figure of the poem. In *Metamorphoses* Clytie fatefully falls in love with the Sungod, Apollo, and in her maniacal longing she wastes away. After causing the death of Apollo's other beloved, Leucothoe, in her jealous fixation, she keeps following the path of the sun in the sky day by day:

And now the nymph begins to waste away:
[...] she touched no food, no drink; her only fare
was dew and tears; she never left that spot;
and all she did was stare – she watched the god,
keeping his face in view, his path across the sky.
[...] and weirdly pale, she changed in part
into a bloodless plant: another part
was reddish; and just where her face had been,
a flower, much like a violet, was seen.
Though held by roots that grip, forever she
Turns towards the Sun; she's changed, and yet she keeps
Her love intact. (*Met.* 4.259-70)²⁷

This way the sunflower becomes the emblem of desire and in the first stanza of Blake's song it also symbolises longing though a more spiritual one. At the same time the second stanza hints at the transformed and transforming figures of *Metamorphoses*, who are destined to die and suffer in their tragic love:

Ah, Sun-flower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done.

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go. (Blake 215)

²⁷ The flower Clytie is transformed into is not the sunflower, the golden yellow *helianthus* (viz. *Helianthus annuus*), but the violet-typed lilac-blue or purplish *heliotrope*, or marigold (viz. *Heliotropium europaeum*), whose leaves always turn towards the sun. As Keith also notes, "the sunflower derives its name from its appearance, not from any habit of turning its face toward the sun. [...] In earlier centuries, however, a number of sun-like flowers were called heliotropes" ("The Complexities of Blake's 'Sunflower'," 57). The English 'sun-flower' refers to the *helianthus* ('sun flower,' *helios anthus*) and not the *heliotrope*, yet the latter one is associated with the special movement of 'sun turn,' that is *helios tropein*. In Blake's song, the above mentioned botanical differences are not thematised, though, with its golden yellow colour, the *helianthus* is visualised.

Where the colour-symbolism of the poem is concerned, the sun imagery of the first stanza is mainly characterised with golden yellow, while the second with white gives the images of death – ‘shrouded’ and ‘graves’. The dying youth and the corpse-like virgin as spirits seem to leave their graves longing for the ‘golden clime’. They can be taken as spirits but, I think, they are rather flower(figure)s growing on graves and watching the sun-path together with the heliotrope. Although in “THE LILLY” Blake relies on the Christian iconography of the flower (viz. it stands for purity and the Blessed Virgin), here he mainly uses its Greek connotations, namely, the lily – that is, the *asphodelus* – is associated with death and afterlife. The Greeks believed that there was a large meadow overgrown with asphodel in Hades (mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey*, XI.539, XI.573 and XXIV.13). Furthermore, they planted white asphodels near tombs, regarding them as the form of food preferred by the dead. Actually, the flower itself belongs to the family of the *liliaceae* – together with the narcissus, the hyacinth (also named as martagon lily), and the anemone.²⁸

In the story of the virginal Narcissus, the prototype of ‘the Youth [who] pined away with desire’, the same type of flower (a lily) appears. He falls in love with his own beautiful reflection and in his stupefied (viz. the Greek *narke* as numb) gaze he becomes the emblem of selfish homoeroticism and unfulfilled desire in *Metamorphoses*:

Yes, Yes, I’m he! I’ve seen through that deceit:
 My image cannot trick me anymore.
 I burn with love for my own self: it’s I
 Who light the flames – the flames that scorch me then.

[...]
 If I could just split from my own body!
 The strangest longing in a lover: I
 want that which I desire to stand apart
 from my own self. (*Met.* 3. 463-70)

Having realised that his beloved is his own self, he accepts his fate and his body mysteriously fades away: “They had prepared the pyre, the bier, the torches; / but nowhere could they find Narcissus’ body: / where it had been, they found instead a flower, / its yellow center circled by white petals” (*Met.* 3.507-10). The narcissus known today is yellow centred – like the daffodil²⁹ – but they were

²⁸ H. J. Rose, “The Children of Kronos II,” in *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: E. Dutton & Co., 1959), 78-101 and 88-90.

²⁹ The English name of the flower, daffodil, or *affodil*, is etymologically related to the Greek *asphodelus* because the original Greek word was taken into Latin as *asphodilus* which later was

originally lily-white, and Narcissus' death coloured the heart of the flower commemorating his beauty. In accordance with this, Narcissus' figure is only a shadow, a reflection and his disappearing body leaves a mark, a tint on an existent flower, the lily-typed asphodel.

Similarly, in Hyacinth's story, after Apollo's beloved had died in an accident, his blood stained the earth leaving an imprint:

[...] the blood that had
been spilled upon the ground and stained the grass
is blood no more; instead – more brilliant than
the purple dye of Tyre – a flower sprang;
though lily-shaped, it was not silver-white;
this flower was purple. Then, not yet content,
Phoebus [...] inscribed upon the petals his lament:
With his own hand, he wrote these letters – AI,
AI – signs of sad outcry. (*Met.* 10.209-17)

The newly sprung flower with its mourning sounds is recalled in another episode of *Metamorphoses*, when the great hero, Ajax kills himself. From his blood “a purple flower sprang, the very same / that had – long since – sprung up when Hyacinth / was wounded. On the petals one can read / these letters, ‘AI-AI,’ asking us to think / of Ajax’ name and Hyacinth’s lament” (*Met.* 13.394-8). Although the same flower is referred to, the latter heroic one is associated with the larkspur (*Delphinium Ajacis*), while the former flower of love with the hyacinth proper. Barkan remarks, “the flower to which he gives his name is a sign both of his immortality and [...] his suffering is literally imprinted on the flower in the *aiai* (or ‘alas’) that shows on the petals.”³⁰ The hyacinth speaks in the language of mourning and tragic love, while Ai-ax/Ai-as is remembered as a ‘man of woe,’ and the fateful ‘Ai Ai’ is echoed by the Blakean ‘Ah!’ in the title of the poem. Contrasted with the imprinted and blood-stained fatal lilies, the white lily in the song “THE LILLY” remains spotless and purely bright.³¹

The ‘pale Virgin’ cannot only be associated with Clytie, but also with all the suffering amorous maidens and nymphs of *Metamorphoses*. In the line, “the pale Virgin shrouded in snow,” Keith clearly sees a reference to the virginal figure of Proserpina,³² who “was playing, gathering / violets and white lilies” (*Met.* 5.391-

distorted into *affodilus* in Medieval Latin. See more on it in Keith, “The Complexities of Blake’s ‘Sunflower’,” 60-1.

³⁰ Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh*, 80.

³¹ Regarding its origin, the anemone is another lily-flower that is created from the dead Adonis’ blood *staining* the ground (*Met.* 10.731-9). Furthermore, at the very beginning of Book 4 the metamorphosis of the crocus is mentioned (*Met.* 4. 283-4). Both of them belong to the family of the bulbous *liliaceae* – the Greek humanised flowers.

³² Keith, “The Complexities of Blake’s ‘Sunflower’,” 59.

2). That is to say that she was picking snow-white asphodels in the fields of death visualised as her shroud (viz. winding sheet), when Pluto ravished her. Afterwards, she was destined to live partly in the underworld with her husband, a period which is marked by the dying of nature in autumn and winter, then she spent the other two seasons happily with her mother, Ceres on the earth: “he [Jupiter] divides / the turning year into two equal portions. / Proserpina is shared by the two kingdoms / the goddess [Proserpina] is to spend six months beside / her husband [viz. Pluto], and six months beside her mother” (*Met.* 5.564-568).

Obviously, besides the Ovidian references, the poem has strong spiritual connotations. The expressions of “golden clime” and the end of “the traveller’s journey” clearly refer to the end of human life hinting at the possibility of afterlife. Regarding the heliotrope and its philosophical implications, in Book 15 of *Metamorphoses* Pythagoras asserts the immortality and the reincarnation of the soul claiming “but over our soul – be sure – death has no sway: / each soul, once it has left one body, takes / another body as its home” (*Met.* 15.157-9). He also speaks about the true nature of transformations:

‘There is no thing that keeps its shape; for nature,
the innovator, would forever draw
forms out of other forms. In all this world –
you can believe me – no thing ever dies.
By birth we mean beginning to re-form,
A thing’s becoming other than it was;
And death is but the end of the old state; [...]. (*Met.* 15.252-8)

With Pythagoras’ statements, the idea of metamorphosis is *altered*, and the ‘miraculous transformations’ of bodies into flowers, animals, rivers, or winds, are said to be related to nature. Accordingly, if the soul is immortal, the dead lovers’ alterations can be taken as an “untragic alternative to death.”³³ The Blakean meaning of the sunflower given by Damon is also true with regards to the other flower-figures of *Metamorphoses*: “The sunflower, rooted in the earth yet keeping its blossom turned towards the sun, is a symbol of man’s spiritual aspirations, which cannot be attained while he is still rooted in the flesh.”³⁴ In Blake’s song, the personified flower-figures are imprisoned by their unsatisfiable longing: Narcissus cannot fulfil his self-love, Proserpina cannot escape her sexual abuse – in their mortal form. Nevertheless, there is great power in human aspiration, which is emphasised by five expressions in the poem: ‘seeking after,’ ‘desire,’ ‘arise,’ ‘aspire,’ and ‘wishes’.

³³ Galinsky, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 61.

³⁴ Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 390.

John E. Grant draws attention to the placing of the three floral poems on the same plate, and he claims that “as a group the poems evidently present a threefold vision of love [...]’earthly love, poetic love, and Human love’.”³⁵ The last poem, “The Lilly,” is the most spiritual in this context, showing that “however subject the natural body might be to force and threats, man’s spiritual body, like the Lilly, could never be essentially debased.”³⁶ For Blake, flowers, being transient creatures, do not only stand for man’s short earthly life but, due to creative imagination expressed in the Ovidian fables or Blake’s *Songs*, they can also speak about man’s spirituality. The different kinds of lilies – narcissi, martagons, hyacinths, and loti – do not only symbolise death and afterlife, but also the spiritual connection between life and death. This is the main point where Blake departs the Ovidian flower-symbolism. In *Metamorphoses* the source of the transformed figures is always an outside divinity while Blake internalises it, emphasising that the source of spiritual transformation should be looked and found inside man.

In the last ‘flowery’ poem, “The Garden of Love,” Blake provides a rather ironic reading of the Ovidian tragic love-stories:

So I turn’d to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;
And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be; (Blake 215).

In the world of experience, where true love fails and lovers are fated, creative imagination is destined to be “lost & clouded in Fable & Allegory” (Blake, 605.). According to Blake, though the idea of transformation is divinely inspired, in the heart of *Metamorphoses* the main drive of the events is selfish love and the desire for possession, i.e. “*amor sceleratus habendi* [the cursed love of having] (*Met.* 1.537-38).”³⁷ In the fables we cannot read about true visions and spiritual mysteries but about allegorical commemorations over tomb-stones of lovers. In this sense the mythical narratives tell the stories of the repetition compulsion, commemorative repetitions of the dead beloved – practised in yearly festivals.³⁸ I agree with Harold Bloom that the flower-figures “have not

³⁵ Grant, “Two Flowers in the Garden of Experience”, 333.

³⁶ Grant, “Two Flowers in the Garden of Experience”, 345.

³⁷ Quoted in Enterline Lynn, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 32.

³⁸ In *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion* Hardie puts emphasis on the festivals and celebrations held yearly that were related to the myths: “Metamorphosis as a process that closes the narrative of a human life takes the place of death. But metamorphosis as product is structured according to the logic of funerary commemoration and memorialisation. The dead person himself ceases to exist, but enjoys survival of a kind, through modes of both continuity and transformation: continuity, through the memory-images stored in the minds of those who knew him in life;

escaped nature, by seeking to deny it; they have become monuments to its limitations.”³⁹ The sunflower-song can also be read ironically, as all of the flowers/figures are imprisoned in vegetation, in their natural cycles – even the goddess Proserpina is forced to follow the order of the seasons.

Furthermore, the Ovidian gods and goddesses cannot escape their fate as “*fatum*, the agent of death” is their superior.⁴⁰ In the above mentioned episodes, they cannot save their beloved ordained by Fate to die by being victimised by passion. Solodow remarks, “there are plenty of gods, but no divinities,” no almighty omnipotent agents.⁴¹ Nevertheless, being immortal, they cannot accept death, and try to conquer it transforming their dead lovers into living natural entities. Venus, after his tragic death, transforms Adonis into the transient flower of love; Apollo creates a hyacinth from the dead body of his lover; Narcissus’ beauty is preserved in a flower named after him; while in the sunflower Clytie’s mortal love is immortalised. The latter episode with its love-preserving transformation, “*mutata servat*” might almost serve as a motto for the *Metamorphoses*.⁴²

According to Solodow, the Ovidian metamorphosis is a process marked by continuity between the person and the transformed entity. It is a process of clarification

by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental, are given physical embodiments and so are rendered visible and manifest. [...] a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form.⁴³

It seems rather difficult to provide a general definition of the specific transformations and, though this definition is applicable, it fails to emphasise one element: creativity. In the stories creative fantasy works and the

transformation, in the surrogate existence of funeral memorial and funeral inscription” (81). Nowadays the Greek ‘celebrate’ the day of death of the deceased relative every year and the commemoration is named ‘mnemosyno’ (cf. Mnemosyne).

³⁹ Harold Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse – A Study in Poetic Argument* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 140.

⁴⁰ Iiro Kajanto, *Ovid’s Conception of Fate* (Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1961), 18.

⁴¹ Solodow, *The World of Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 93.

⁴² Solodow, *The World of Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 183.

⁴³ Solodow, *The World of Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 174. Galinsky expresses a similar view: “Most metamorphoses deal with the changing of a person into something else, such as, for instance, a tree, a stone, or an animal. Regardless of the way they are brought about, such transformations often are not capricious but turn out to be very meaningful because they set in relief the true and lasting character of the persons involved. The physical characteristics of the personages are subject to change, but their quintessential substance lives on” (*Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 45).

transformators are artists, or creators, while – to some extent – the transformed creatures become works of art.

Although the ideas of creative transformation, the connection between the mortal and eternal, and the victory of love over fate come from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the pagan author cannot escape Blake's Christian judgment. As he explains in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*:

In Eternity one Thing never changes into another Thing. Each identity is Eternal: consequently Apuleius's Golden Ass & Ovid's Metamorphosis & others of the like kind are Fable; yet they contain Vision in a sublime degree, being derived from real Vision in More ancient Writings. [...] A Man can never become Ass nor Horse; some are born with shapes of Men, who may be both [sic!], but Eternal Identity is one thing & Corporeal Vegetation is another thing. (Blake 607)

In fact, the tragic stories reveal “the impossibility of true metamorphosis: the outward form may change but not the eternal identity.”⁴⁴ According to Wittreich, Blake, following the Renaissance commentators, distinguishes the allegories of the ancients and of the apostles as “they observed a fundamental difference between the classical habit of perverting truth through allegory and the Christian habit of concealing eternal truths in allegory [...]”⁴⁵ But we should admit that, Blake, as the first ‘true’ critic of Ovid concentrating on the Roman poet's visual imagination and artistic freedom, emphasises the connection between the poetic and divine creation. Imagination is claimed to be the only power that makes a true poet as it is the divine vision (Blake, 782). In his *Songs*, Blake calls attention not only to the striking visual imagery of Ovid's work, but also to the power of the transforming gods' creativity. In the floral language of the introduction of his prophecy, *Europe*, Blake describes him confronting the fairy-like inspiration: “[...] as we went along / Wild flowers I gather'd, & he shew'd me each eternal flower [...]” (Blake, 238). That is to say, the imaginative eye can see that the vegetative universe hides the secret of eternity, it can see that “[t]he Vegetative Universe opens like a flower from the Earth's center / In which is Eternity” (Blake, 633).

Accordingly, my rhetorical reading ‘opens up’ the allegorical and ironical potentialities (and make them flourish) that are hidden in Ovid's and Blake's flower-symbolism. What's more, the Ovidian allusions are transformed and built up in the Blakean oeuvre. Here in his *Songs*, sexual desire is shown as being sinful, but only experience can lead man to insight, only through experience is

⁴⁴ Leopold Damrosch, Jr., *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), 149.

⁴⁵ Joseph Anthony Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse – Blake's Idea of Milton* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 177.

man able to reach a higher state of innocence. The Ovidian flowers cannot escape cyclical changes, yet they at least display the possibilities of some transformation/alteration. Later Blake realises the importance of cycles and speaks about the spiral of changes, the vortex, where spiritual development is possible. Mitchell asserts, “Blake uses the word ‘vortex’ [...] because he wants an image that suggests both convergence toward a center or apex (the ‘inner being’ of the object) and doubleness, the interaction of contrary forces” as for him “vision does not travel in a straight line, but oscillates between contrary forces, converging on a moment of illumination.”⁴⁶ In his *Songs* Blake expresses that love and desire, from the viewpoint of innocence is fatefully tragic, but it is inescapable. In *Milton* he says, “[m]en are sick with Love” (Blake, 521), which echoes the sexual love-sickness of the Song of Solomon (Canticles 2:5; 5:8).⁴⁷ In his later prophetic works Blake elaborates on the importance of passion and sexuality that is fatefully human but, also divine in origin. Thus, in human love and sexual desire the source of divine love can be traced with the help of imagination:

This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity ; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite & Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite & [for a small moment *del.*] Temporal. (Blake, 605.).

While in the transformations of the Ovidian narrative love tries to conquer the fate that even the anthropomorphic gods and goddesses cannot escape, the Blakean love/passion is doomed to die in order to be ‘resurrected’ in its altered version in the later works. In the name of Love, ‘flowery’ human life is shown by Blake as the labour of love; thus, he *transforms* the meaning of the maxim: *AMOR FORTIOR MORTE*.

⁴⁶ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake’s Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 72.

⁴⁷ Cf. Tolley, “Blake’s Songs of Spring,” 127.

“(T)HE (DEVIL) WHO DWELLS IN FLAMING FIRE” – BLAKE’S
APOCALYPTIC VISION AND ANIRONIC SATIRE IN *THE MARRIAGE
OF HEAVEN AND HELL*

*All Genius varies Thus.
Devils are various.
Angels are all alike.
(Blake)*

*The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.
(Milton, Paradise Lost I. 254-5)*

The title of this chapter comes from Blake’s early prophecy, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), and it refers to a ‘correction’ in the text. According to Geoffrey Keynes, Blake changed the expression because in its own context he had “found it redundant to name him again, the description, ‘he who dwells in flaming fire,’ being all that was needed.”¹ What’s more – as Keynes goes on – (t)his (whose?) error could easily be corrected on the copperplate by deleting the letter ‘t’ of the article, ‘the,’ and the word, ‘Devil’. And later the gap is “filled with a flame touched with gold.”² With this deletion Blake eliminated half of the striking alliteration-complex destroying the sounds of ‘the devil who dwells’ while leaving (him) ‘in flaming fire’. Otherwise, due to this alteration His/his living-space is emphatically damned to be on fire and now the expression can be compared with the Biblical phrase when the Lord, our God, is named “consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29).

The broader context of the expression gives one of the most complicated in the ironical-satirical work as it contrasts Blake’s ideas on the Devil and Christ with the Miltonic conception – in particular, with Blake’s interpretation on the Miltonic conception – of Satan and the Son (Messiah). In these short paragraphs the points of view are suddenly shifted producing such difficult sentences as the one containing the corrected phrase (lines 3-6 on Plate 6) and the one before (starting at the bottom of Plate 5 and going on in the first two lines on the next Plate):

¹ Geoffrey Keynes, “Introduction and Commentary to William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*” (Paris: Oxford UP & The Trianon Press, 1975), xxii.

² Ibid.

It indeed *appear'd to Reason* as if Desire was cast out; but the Devil's account is, that the Messiah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss.

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter, or Desire, that *Reason may have Ideas to build on*; the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than [the Devil *del.*] he who dwells in flaming fire.³

I cannot promise that by the end of my paper the Blakean-Miltonic conception will be totally understood but at least we can learn more about him 'dwelling in flaming fire' – *toned* with the Blakean irony. I suppose that being the only and quite spectacular correction in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* it *reveals* (cf. *apokalupsis*) the truth of the tone of the work, the artist's way of thinking and also of his working process. This correction can be regarded as a visible – or, being engraved, a tactile – expression of Blake's irony, an ironic undercut *expressis verbis*. This paper is concerned with the possible interpretations of the ironical-satirical context of the apocalyptic work and, while paying attention to the figures of the text, it will focus on three facets of the tone – which I call the apocalyptic, the ironic and the satirical.

Apocalypse Here and Now

Derrida thematises the problem of the textual complexity of the apocalyptic tone relying on the original meaning of the Greek word *apokalupsis* as "disclosure, uncovering, unveiling."⁴ Consequently, he basically tries to reveal the meaning, the truth of the tone, accepting the definition of the Greek *tonos* (viz. 'pitch,' 'tension') as "[it] first signified the tight ligament, cord, rope when it is woven or braided, cable, strap – briefly, the privileged figure of everything subject to strict-ure."⁵ Moving away from the obvious musical associations of strict tonality, Derrida claims that the analysis of the tone in writing should be done "in terms of contents, manners of speaking, connotations, rhetorical staging, and pose taken, in semantic, pragmatic, scenographic terms."⁶ In the complex *truth-*

³ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in *Complete Writings*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 150. Afterwards MHH. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," trans. by John Leavey, Jr, in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Fenves (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999, 117-171), 119. Although Derrida's quoted essay "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy" is supposed to be a "transformative critique" of Kant's enlightened writing on tone (see "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy"), he deals with the question of tone and apocalypse in general and his ideas greatly influenced my analysis.

⁵ Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," 127.

⁶ *Ibid.*

revealing tone, the writer makes the voice of the other (in us) audible – and in Blake’s case also visible – which inevitably results in *delirium*, that is derangement, or rather out-of-tune-ness (*désaccordement*).⁷

Although the Blakean vision operates with a disturbing multiplicity of voices – namely, Rintrah, the Devil, the *I* persona, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Angel, and the illustrator – the first striking impression is the assured clear-sightedness that characterises all of them. On the one hand, while an apocalyptic writing always keeps some mystery in the core, the clear tone desired for revelation deconstructs the speculative and visionary discourse itself. Edward J. Ahearn in his *Visionary Fictions* also draws the attention to the rhetorical confidence of such writings displayed “to make us experience what we think to be impossible.”⁸ On the other hand, this polytonality and the sudden change of tone seem to *reveal* “the disorder or the delirium of destination.”⁹ In an apocalyptic discourse the destination, the end is (its) truth itself, and the text becomes – and actually every text is always already – apocalyptic:

And the genre of writings called ‘apocalyptic’ in the strict sense, then, would be only an example, an *exemplary* revelation of this transcendental structure. In that case, if the apocalypse reveals, it is first of all the revelation of the apocalypse, the self-presentation of the apocalyptic structure of language, of writing, of the experience of presence, in other words, of the text or the mark in general: *that is, of the divisible envoi for which there is no self-presentation nor assured destination.*¹⁰

In his essay Derrida mainly discusses the characteristics of the ‘apocalyptic discourse,’ not dealing with the problems of the genre, and he refers to such a work as a conservative and apocryphally coded mixed form of writing. He also claims that “among the numerous traits characterizing an apocalyptic type of writing, let us provisionally isolate prediction and eschatological preaching, the fact of telling, foretelling, or preaching the end, the extreme limit, the imminence of the last.”¹¹ Tracing the sources of apocalyptic literature, attention is paid to its links with eschatology, millennium and with a possible holy utopia, or the utopian myths of the lost Golden Age and Atlantis; moreover, with some gnostic, hermetic or esoteric ideas. Certainly, the prototype – and also the name giver – of the genre is John’s Book of Revelation, but in the New Testament

⁷ Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 132.

⁸ Edward J. Ahearn, *Visionary Fictions – Apocalyptic Writing from Blake to the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 11.

⁹ Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 150.

¹⁰ Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 157. Italics in the original.

¹¹ Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 144.

other descriptions of the so-called little apocalypse of Matthew, Peter, Daniel and Isaiah should also be mentioned.¹²

In his book, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry*, Paley collects and analyses the possible apocalyptic writings in English literature elaborating on their political, scientific and social connections. At the end of the 18th century the radical thinkers of the age were greatly influenced by the ideas of the Swedish visionary, Emanuel Swedenborg, and joined the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church. The Church was “a gathering-ground for a miscellany of seekers after mystic experiences” from Behmenists and Rosicrucians, through masons to enthusiasts for mesmerism and magnetism.¹³ Blake and his wife were sympathisers of the New Church in 1790 when he started to compose *The Marriage* and Swedenborg’s figure, or rather ‘Swedenborgianism,’ is presented in the work (on Plates 3 and 21-22). Blake did not only read but also annotated the English translations of Swedenborg’s apocalyptic and millennial prophecies entitled “Wisdom of Angels concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom,” “The Wisdom of Angels concerning Divine Providence” and “Heaven and Hell”, in which the mystic published his conversations with angels. In his remarks Blake welcomed the visionary’s expressive language and his way of differentiating between man’s natural, or rational understanding and spiritual understanding, or wisdom, which were originally joined by Love, or the Will.¹⁴

It is recorded, in 1790 the master first taught the doctrine of concubinage, namely that the Swedenborgian married man could engage in adulterous relationships in case of the wife’s disease, insanity, or difference of faith. It cannot exactly be said that Blake rejected the idea of free love and sexual liberation but in his eyes such disputable doctrines made Swedenborg the figure “barring the way to the millennium by blocking the improvement of sensual enjoyment.”¹⁵ As Foster Damon summarises, Blake was inspired by his “divine teacher” but he found that “Swedenborg’s greatest error lay in his not understanding the real nature of ‘evil,’ and therefore accepting conventional morality.”¹⁶ Thus, opposed to Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell* prophesying the start of the New Heaven in 1757, Blake in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, due

¹² See more about in Ahearn, *Visionary Fictions*, 2-7 and Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 3-8.

¹³ E. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast – William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135.

¹⁴ See Blake, *Collected Works*, 89-96, 131-133 and 929.

¹⁵ Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry*, 37. See also Thompson about the doctrine in the chapter titled “The New Jerusalem Church,” *Witness Against the Beast*, 129-145.

¹⁶ Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 392-394. Damon’s conclusion is also not without irony. In *The Marriage* with Blake’s re-interpretation of good and evil, he says, “the dreadful dichotomy of official Christianity, which Swedenborg had accepted, was healed; the universe was one again; and a new period of human thought was inaugurated” (394).

to his birth in the same year and now reaching the age of thirty-three, claims that new Hell has arrived pronouncing Swedenborg's heaven to be his own hell (see Plate 3).

After this shockingly and negatively positive – let us say, ironic – introduction it becomes obvious that Blake represents the true (Christian) wisdom contrasted with the “old falshoods” (MHH 157) of Swedenborg's New Church. Here referring to the apocalyptic prophecy of Isaiah about the fall of Babylon (Isaiah: 34-35), Blake – like John in ‘his’ Book of Revelation – reverses the pattern of the prophecy as *The Marriage* starts with the announcement of Swedenborg's false new heaven and ends with the portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar displaying the logical consequence of false reasoning.¹⁷ The chosen ironic title of the work criticises not only Swedenborg's vision inabilities but also attacks his ideas on marriage as Blake's *Marriage* displays a sexually active spiritual union. Moreover, he does it engraving and illustrating his work on his own, i.e. protesting against the ‘mass produced,’ printed doctrines of Swedenborgianism by refusing to have his work printed.¹⁸

In the work the apocalyptic tone is introduced by Rintrah's voice who “roars & shakes his fires in the burden'd air” (MHH 148). The very first voice introduces his apocalyptic vision of the topsy-turvy world where the true prophet, is “the just man [who] rages in the wilds” while the false prophet is “the sneaking serpent [who] walks in mild humility” (MHH 149). “The Argument” can be taken as “a miniature emblem of human history” showing up the continuous fight between the villain and the just; right in the introduction the primary rhetorical force of the work is displayed in the dialectic of opposites.¹⁹ Here the villain as a mild Angel usurps the just man's place, so,²⁰ Rintrah, “the wrathful spirit of prophecy” is forced to become the Devil.²¹ Thus, the narrator uncovers the truth (of apocalypse) in an ironic mock-argument referring to the danger of reasoning, which also becomes a characteristic feature of *The Marriage*.

Consequently, the first voice, after introducing the irony of mock-reasoning, logically goes on to herald the ironic Eternal Hell instead of the promised New Heaven on Plate 3, where Swedenborg is the ‘mild villainous’ Angel and the speaker – together with Isaiah – takes the role of the ‘devilish’ just man. In his *Angel of Apocalypse*, Wittreich, who reads the work as a true prophecy and the formation of the prophetic character, claims that the real dialectic of *The*

¹⁷ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 192-193.

¹⁸ Paley, *Apocalypse and Millenium in English Romantic Poetry*, 34 and Ahearn, *Visionary Fictions*, 13.

¹⁹ Ahearn, *Visionary Fictions*, 27.

²⁰ Consequently and obviously, but this time it is expressed without using the famous Blakean ‘so’ which mocks (false) reasoning in other places, for example, in the “Memorable Fancies” of *The Marriage*, or in his *Songs*.

²¹ Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, 75.

Marriage can be found “in the antagonism Blake establishes between it and its prospective audience.”²² It is true that the text wants to inspire its readers and wants their active response – whether its writer is a prophet or not. Reading the text, its dialectic is “figured by Rintrah and the *I* persona, who identifies so closely with the voice of the Devil”;²³ that is, in “The Argument” besides the roaring true prophet, the devilish *I* persona is introduced – ‘he who dwells’ in irony.

The Infernal Ironist

The introduction of the prophetic voice opens up its whirlwind and its “overlordly tone detones.”²⁴ Wittreich remarks: “The voice of indignation (Rintrah’s voice) is a complement, a prologue, to the voice of the Devil, *critical* of Milton, and to the *I* persona, *derisive* of Swedenborg.”²⁵ However, the first person singular speaker is really close to the Devil in his ideas, the two voices have different butts: the Devil’s voice ironises Milton while the *I* persona satirises Swedenborg – and later the Devil’s voice. According to Bloom, who is opposed to this, the overwhelming tone of *The Marriage* is ‘devilishly’ ironic because right from the very beginning, the Devil’s voice can be heard.²⁶ Although the Devil’s voice is put in the centre, not much is known about his figure. In the work the names of the Devil and Satan are used together and regarded as synonymous on Plate 5 (cf. “call’d the Devil or Satan”), but they are not identified. The word devil comes from the Greek *diabolos* (indirect derivation) meaning ‘accuser’ or ‘slanderer,’ while the word *satan* is of Hebrew origin meaning ‘adversary’.²⁷ In Blake’s later prophetic works instead of the word, devil (or devils), Satan is used to name the selfish “Evil One” (*Milton*) and he is also called the God of Men, Jehovah, who arrives with flaming fire.²⁸

But in this early prophecy it is emphasised that the two words, Devil and Satan, with their close meanings both signify that they differ, criticise or rebel against something. As negative power they cannot exist in themselves: their contrary force is needed. For Blake the devils – often in plural – present a more universal force, a principle of creative energy, which is related not only to the

²² Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 195.

²³ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 196.

²⁴ Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 133.

²⁵ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 198. Italics are mine. É.A.

²⁶ Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 78-79.

²⁷ Northrop, Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 65.

²⁸ See, for example, in *Milton* Plate 14 line 30: “I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!” and Plate 38 lines 50-51: “Satan heard, Coming in a cloud, with trumpets & flaming fire./ Saying: ‘I am God the judge of all, the living & the dead” (Blake, *Collected Works*, 496 and 530).

soul/spirit but also to the body: “Energy is [...] from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy” (MHH 149). It is usually understood that the Devil stands for bodily and sexual energy, or the id, while the Angel represents the reasonable soul, or the superego. But, provocatively, it also means that the devil stands for the union of the body and the soul; more exactly, questioning and criticising the usual categories, the Devil wants the reader to re-define these contraries. That is to say, the Devil, re-valuating the conventionally accepted assumptions, deconstructs the apparent contradictions and reveals “their primordial unity of the mind.”²⁹ Consequently, opposed to the usual meaning of the body, for the visionary “it is a portion of Soul discern’d by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age” (MHH 149). It is not by chance that the Devil is introduced as a great rhetorician using the argumentative tone of his voice here and relying on the reader’s common sense. As on Plate 3 it is stated:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion,
Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human
existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good &
Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active
springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell. (MHH 149)

Although here the opposition of good and evil is given religious denotation, their sign(ification) is not obvious. In his *Annotations to Lavater’s “Aphorisms on Man”* Blake remarks on aphorism 409 that “Active Evil is better than Passive Good.”³⁰ On the basis of the Blakean conception, hypothetically, the angelic restraining minus can be corrected by the devilish revolutionary minus – so, the double negation results in positivity.

Actually, such a ‘reasonable’ reading of the Devil’s logic shows the Angel’s viewpoint. However, in the work the Devil’s voice is fully developed through his own statements, in his antinomian proverbs and with the *I* persona having been converted to his party, whereas the Angel who stands for the reader’s ideas is less described. Blake putting on the Devil’s mask, aims at the devaluation of reason, where the reader is offered to “apprehend truth discursively, *reasonably*, like the Angel,” or “intuitively, *energetically*, like the Devil.”³¹ In fact the concepts of heaven vs. hell and angels vs. devils only exist separately from the

²⁹ Andrew M. Cooper, *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 47.

³⁰ Blake, *Complete Writings*, 77

³¹ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 206. Italics in the original.

angelic point of view. Let me mention a great example of the ‘black or white’ typed angelic thinking. In the fourth ‘apocalyptic’ “Memorable Fancy” the angel wants to show Blake his “eternal lot” saying that it is “between the black & white spiders” (MHH 156). It can refer to Blake’s and the Devil’s obsession with contraries and to the fact that the ‘normal’ way of thinking in black or white terms can obstruct the understanding of the work. This fancy ends in quite a postmodern fashion stating that all of us (readers, critics, angels or devils) impose upon each other our own ‘phantasy’ “owing to our metaphysics” (MHH 156-7). But the devils at least can reflect on it: they represent an intellectually higher level as they are able to see things in broader contexts and in more universal connections – due to their ironic ability to shift points of view. Derrida says the apocalyptic tone “leaps and rises when the voice of the oracle, uncovering your ear, jumbling, covering, or parasitizing the voice of reason equally speaking in each and using the same language with everyone, takes you aside, speaks to you in a private code, and whispers secrets to you.”³² Nevertheless, I would like to emphasise that in *The Marriage* the devilish needs the angelic in order to function, and the truth is being formed in their (ironic) ‘mental fight’.

In the work, as Wittreich points out, the devilish-angelic contraries are historically represented by Milton, the true, and Swedenborg, the false prophet. Accordingly, in the argument the work operates with a double strategy in order “to expose the false prophets, eliminating the negation they represent; and to accomplish through prophecy the struggle of contraries by which the organs of perception are cleansed and the apocalypse finally achieved.”³³ We should admit that Blake’s work was greatly influenced and liberated by Milton’s radical ideas. Searching for Miltonic sources, in his “The Reason of Church-Government” we can come across the idea of contraries, marriage and excess – the latter is one of the main topics in the “Proverbs of Hell.” On the whole, the direction of Milton’s and Swedenborg’s thinking and *oeuvre* can be contrasted since in his writings Milton moved away from orthodoxy whereas Swedenborg starting from a radical view, reached orthodoxy.³⁴ To be more accurate when referring to Bloom’s remark, in *The Marriage*, Swedenborg is shown as the ex-prophet, a priest, but he was originally a reasoner (a scientist) who could become a visionary and sect-founder; that is, in his career Swedenborg displays the rise and the fall of the visionary.³⁵

While the *I* persona mainly mocks Swedenborg’s ideas, the Devil ironises Milton since Blake puts his Milton-criticism into the Devil’s mouth. The Devil’s voice does not only aesthetically criticise *Paradise Lost* but it also ironically

³² Derrida, “On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy,” 132.

³³ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 199.

³⁴ In this part I greatly rely on Wittreich’s *Angel of Apocalypse* and Bloom’s *Blake’s Apocalypse*.

³⁵ Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 70.

attacks Milton's theology. In *The Marriage* the Miltonic Satan, the unironic "hero of Romantic rebellion,"³⁶ is put in the centre and ironised by/in Blake's Devil. However, as Wittreich emphasises, the Devil being a 'partisan spokesman' "who never exhibits the same largeness of mind as the figure with whom he is identified [viz. Blake's *I* persona, Blake, or Milton's Satan, or Milton]," misreads Milton.³⁷ Likewise, the Devil's idea that in Milton "the Father is Destiny, the Son a Ration [cf. Reason] of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost Vacuum" (MHH 150) is true only in an ironic sense. We cannot forget that besides criticising Milton, the Devil's main task is to ironise reasoning by expressing distorted views and presenting the sudden changes of perspectives. The illustration of Plate 5 depicts a naked male figure and his horse falling into the flames of fire but turning the page upside down (as the Devil wants us to see the world) the figure is seen to be in exaltation with his stretched arms.³⁸ The ironic shifting of viewpoints culminates in the complicated sentence already quoted in my introduction, where the Devil's name is deleted, which shows that in the work *his absence* presents the evasive tone itself. Opening up the vortex of contraries, *he* would rather let the reader find out that the devilish Jehovah of imagination, or the Biblical creator "dwells in flaming fire" (MHH 150). Finally, the Devil, or the 'converted' *I* persona in his ironic awareness notes on Plate 5 that

The *reason* Milton wrote fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at *liberty* when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a *true* Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it. (MHH 150. Italics are mine. É.A.)

In this statement we should pay attention to the opening word of 'reason' associated with the angelic principle which is opposed to the energy of the devilish irony expressed here; due to the ironic tone, reason is put in antinomy with freedom and truth in the rhetoric.³⁹

On Plate 16 another "portion of being" and its (ironic) opposite is revealed: the Prolific and the Devouring. According to Bloom, "if ever Blake speaks straight, forgoing all irony, in *The Marriage*, it is here."⁴⁰ I think that without

³⁶ Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment (1660 – 1830)* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 112.

³⁷ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 215.

³⁸ Keynes, "Introduction and Commentary to William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*," xxi.

³⁹ Wittreich remarks that the expression of 'the devil's party' was used to signify the royalists in the Civil War and later they used it to refer to the revolutionaries, while the diabolical party meant the Whigs. "When Blake's Devil adopts this vocabulary and introduces it into his critique of Milton, he is, in effect, transforming a rhetoric of abuse into a rhetoric of praise" (Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 214).

⁴⁰ Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, 90.

using the ironic tone, the statement – “to the devourer it *seems* as if the producer was in chains; but it is *not so*, he only takes portions of existence and *fancies* that the whole” (MHH 155, italics are mine) – cannot be uttered. Only from an evasive (betwixt and between) viewpoint and in an atonal/atoned voice can such a statement be uttered. These two classes – the imaginative, creative artists and the Reasoners, the ones of limited knowledge – should be enemies because following the main principle, their opposition and fight means the essence of human existence. As David Erdman sees: “Blake rejects [Swedenborg’s] ‘spiritual equilibrium’ between good and evil for a theory of spiralling ‘Contraries’ that will account for progress.”⁴¹ Though the interaction of contraries regarded eternal, their unique ‘union,’ their marriage – promised and illustrated in the work – can be achieved.

The interaction is figured by the dynamic vortex as in Blake’s visions it symbolises the essence of imaginative activity and “serves as an image of the gateway into a new level of perception” – to quote Professor Mitchell.⁴² Here this whirlwind is created by the devil and his attribute, his ironic attitude – his ‘flaming fire’. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* fire is the main, and indeed, the first principle: it is clearly associated with (devilish) desire, consummation and sexuality as “the word ‘consummation’ [...] refers both to the burning world and the sacred marriage.”⁴³ It is not only the means of the ‘devouring’ purification (apocalypse) and prohibition (the cherub’s flaming sword), but also of the ‘prolific’ creation and artistic imagination (see Plate 14). Moreover, fire symbolises inspiration, and as Northrop Frye says “imagination cannot be consumed by fire, for it is fire.”⁴⁴ In the first “Memorable Fancy” a mighty devil writes the infernal “Proverbs of Hell” using “corroding fires” (MHH, 150) and later the ‘devilish artist’ calls his own working method infernal:

[...] I shall do by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid. (MHH 154)

⁴¹ David V. Erdman, *Blake – Prophet Against Empire* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 178.

⁴² Mitchell, *Blake’s Composite Art*, 73.

⁴³ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 196. Frye also emphasises that the marriage of heaven and hell is given by “the union of heat and light” because heaven is taken as the eternal world of golden light, while hell is characterised by the eternal heat of passion or desire. Blake – quoting Henry Summerfield – borrows “the opposition between the Fire of the Father and the Light of the Son” from Jakob Boehme and also under Boehme’s influence he regards fire as the First Principle. Cf. Henry Summerfield, *A Guide to the Books of William Blake for Innocent and Experienced Readers* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), 70.

⁴⁴ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 196.

In practical terms, Blake, with his ‘corrosive method’, invented a new technique of engraving which Anthony Blunt describes as below: “Blake first took an ordinary copper etching plate. On this he drew the outlines of his decorative design in a varnish resistant to acid. The effect of this was that, when the plate was immersed in the acid, the unprotected parts were bitten away, leaving the parts painted out in a varnish in relief. This is roughly an inverted form of the ordinary process of etching, or transference of the process of wood engraving to a copper plate.”⁴⁵ That is to say this process does not only imply the use of the corrosive and purifying acid bath but also the working out of the design backwards while the text has to be written in black surrounded by a thin white line in the overall darkness of the space. It can be said that in this way Blake made darkness visible as the process of engraving produces such a visual paradox. It is another ironic game with the contrary-complementary points of view in our perception, meaning another challenge for our senses. As the apocalyptic and Platonic conclusion states on Plate 14:

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would
appear to man as it is, infinite.
For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’
narrow chinks of his cavern. (MHH 154)

Blake thinks that the divine (or diabolical) imagination is locked in the Platonic cave of the human skull and body which is lit by the sensory organs: nostrils, ears, eyes, tongue and skin, and genitals. The purifying and energetic flames of imagination used by Blake, metaphorically and literally, can free our perception and open the way towards infinity.⁴⁶ In *The Marriage*, the other prophetic figures, Isaiah and Ezekiel, also want to raise men into “a perception of the infinite” with their strange ‘corroding’ behaviour (MHH 154). Similarly, Blake tries to show the power of the “Poetic Genius” in his “fire of intellect and art, which must begin ‘by an improvement of sensual enjoyment’.”⁴⁷ According to Wittreich, “the true prophets must employ the devices of satire and irony”⁴⁸ – that is, following the devilish ironic logic, they can pretend to be false prophets. I would rather accept the Bloomian infernal, or poetic meaning of the work, that the creative Devil is the artist Blake’s ironic mask and “the corroding fires refer

⁴⁵ Anthony Blunt, “The First Illuminated Books,” in *Blake – A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Northrop Frye (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966, 127-141), 128.

⁴⁶ It is remarkable that Blake frequently and deliberately uses the images of the human senses – e.g. eye-globes, vaults of nostrils, S-line of the tongue appear in his paintings, drawings and texts – while the mysterious fifth sense of touch remains closely related to sexuality and imagination in his vision.

⁴⁷ Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 88.

⁴⁸ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 207.

metaphorically both to his engraving technique and the satiric function of the *Marriage*.⁴⁹

The Acid Test of Satire

The Blakean ‘corrosive method’ with the Devil’s flaming fire as a metaphor works on another level referring to the “deeply acid bitten” tone of his work. As Northrop Frye remarks, “[s]atire is an acid that corrodes everything it touches” and he compares *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* to the great English satirical works created by Swift, Fielding, Sterne or the painter, Hogarth, calling Blake’s work “the epilogue to the golden age of English satire.”⁵⁰ In his apocalyptic vision the Blakean *I* persona, as a great satirist, uses the Devil’s infernal irony. Moreover, the ‘visionary satirist’ does not only verbalise and visualise the divine visions with the use of ‘hell’s fire’ but also promises the Bible of Hell based on its reading in the “diabolical sense” (MHH 158).

In the starting point of his analysis, Wittreich states that a critic should decide whether to regard *The Marriage* as a satire or a prophecy and he obviously reads it as a ‘true’ prophecy showing the formation of the prophetic character, while, in a lengthy endnote, he mentions other critics – mainly, Bloom and Frye – who read it as a Menippean satire.⁵¹ However, in the ending he admits that the work “like Milton’s pamphlet [cf. “The Reason of Church-Government”], has all the hallmarks of reason and order, concepts reinforced by the theme of satire that pervades the work and by the strict organisation evident on its surface. Its initial argument is developed by the voice of the Devil, by the proverbs of hell, and by the amplifications of each of the memorable fancies.”⁵² It shows that reading the work, Wittreich himself has realised that though the work *is* a prophecy it cannot help using the ironic corrosives of satire. It rather means that while ironising logic and reasoning, Blake overcomes satire and displays its inadequacy. In my reading *The Marriage* is a satirical work where the *I* persona, similarly to Blake in his marginalia, uses not only the ironic tone of the Devil but also the satirical and doctrinal tone of opposition.

The structure of the work follows the pattern of a prophecy and revelation with intertextual commentaries on Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Biblical prophets’, Isaiah’s and Ezekiel’s vision. At the same time, it also displays the characteristic feature of the Menippean satire being a mixture of forms, that is, it is ‘mixed’ or a ‘medley’ – *satura*. Nevertheless, this vague definition of the Menippean, or Lucilian (or Varronian) satire is also

⁴⁹ Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 83.

⁵⁰ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 200-201.

⁵¹ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 189 and 306-307.

⁵² Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 207.

questionable and the usual discussions of Bakhtin's not necessarily satiric "menippia" or Frye's "anatomy" are rather misleading in this sense. For instance, in his *Satire and the Transformation of Genre*, Guilhamet does not regard this kind of satire as a form at all claiming that in a Menippean satire "the rhetorical structure or logical sequence of a satiric speech or discourse is excessively disrupted by fictive techniques, [...] Such techniques include irony, genre mixing and the use of a persona. An abundance of such strategies causes a malformation or deformation of the text."⁵³ Following this definition which is not without any reminiscence of Frye's and Bakhtin's ideas, Blake's *Marriage* can definitely be read as a satire – definitely, but not convincingly.

In his brilliant book, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, Relihan, quoting Frye's famous statement – namely, "the Menippean satire presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern" – makes his own quite similar definition that "it seems that the [Bakhtinian] menippea can be viewed as an intellectual attitude adopted toward the value of truth and the possibility of meaning, a particular world view, that may show up in a number of different genres."⁵⁴ Besides having the most important features of the Menippean satire, *The Marriage* also displays the essence of generic satire: the freedom of individual fantasy in presenting a universal world view in mixed forms, tones and split personality. Relihan points out that "the genre is primarily a parody of philosophical thought and forms of writing, a parody of the habits of civilised discourse in general, and that it ultimately turns into the parody of the author who has dared to write in such an unorthodox way."⁵⁵ Reading *The Marriage*, we can feel that Blake is exactly such an author who, in his satire, satirises reasoning and "opposes the word-centered view of the universe" and "denies the

⁵³ Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 12. See also on it Dustin Griffin, *Satire. A Critical Reintroduction* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

⁵⁴ Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 6. Then he summarises the 14 features of the Bakhtinian menippea which – with the exception of the elements of a social utopia – are present in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Regarding the Menippean features of the work, there is (1) the satirical *I* persona using exaggerated humour; (2) "freedom of plot"; (3) "extraordinary situations" with "journeys to heaven and hell" and apocalyptic visions in the "Memorable Fancies"; (4) "slum naturalism" mixed with the elevated, or mystical elements especially in the fourth "Memorable Fancy" in the description of the seven houses of monkeys; (5) "ultimate questions" of good and evil and philosophical universalism; (6) three levelled structure in the division of hell – earth – heaven; (7) "experimental fantasticality" with flying and burning figures; (8) "representation of abnormal psychic states" exemplified with the duplicity of the Devil's and the narrator's split voice; (9) "violations of the established norms of behavior", for instance, by the prophets, or the Devil calling Christ a murderer; (10) "love of sharp and oxymoronic contrast and abrupt transitions", e.g. Angel vs. Devil, falling vs. rising; (11) a mixture of genres and forms; and (12) "a mixture of styles and tones" (quoting Bakhtin in Relihan 6-7).

⁵⁵ Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 10.

possibility of expressing the truth in words”⁵⁶ – doing it not only in words, but also in pictures. According to Relihan, the Menippean satire is a parody of traditional satire having ironic overtones and its basic features are: a mixture of disparate elements, fantastic settings of a topsy-turvy world, intertextuality, and a “self-parodying author/narrator” lacking a consistent authorial point of view. On the whole, Blake’s *Marriage* is satirical, with its central idea of the mixed contraries, puzzling commentaries on other texts and its own visions, the figure of the ironic Devil, and its ‘devilish’ *I* persona. Thus, referring to Blake’s work, the name, *satura*, is its appropriate/proper label, of which “essence is the shocking juxtapositions of irreconcilable opposites” and in which “literary impropriety, self-parody, and the mockery of standards of judgment are all intertwined.”⁵⁷

The Blakean Menippean satire parodies other genres, and literature making a joke on authorship, unity, genre, and style; it is an antigenre, or a burlesque, a burlesque of literature. Relihan also emphasises that in the work “fantasy serves not only to undermine other forms of cultural and literary authority, but also to undermine the importance of the particular Menippean satire itself.”⁵⁸ Moreover, what he adds, is particularly true with regards to *The Marriage*:

It is too modern to say that Menippean satire champions the eternal search for truth by a refusal to be limited by *straitjacket of reason* and propriety, though certainly the genre is refreshing for its indulgence in fantasy [...]. Menippean satire rises through time to philosophical formulations of the inadequacy of human knowledge and the existence of a reality that *transcends reason* [...].⁵⁹

If we consider the tone, we should realise that the Menippean satirists from Lucian to Blake greatly use irony in its complexity. Griffin mentions the early Blakean mock-symposium *An Island in the Moon* and analyses *The Marriage* as a Menippean satire that works largely by means of provocative paradox and wit. He sees that “[t]he satire in Blake’s *Marriage* lies primarily in its continuous irony [...]. If we consider the rhetoric of provocation and paradox, then Blake stands in a long line of satirists – from Lucian through Erasmus, Fontenelle, Swift, and others – whose satire works not by drawing a clear line between ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’ but by teasing readers with the play of ‘contraries’.”⁶⁰ Griffin also discusses the problem of satiric irony which is unstable and does not operate

⁵⁶ Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 11.

⁵⁷ Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 15.

⁵⁸ Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 22.

⁵⁹ Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 29. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁶⁰ Griffin, *Satire*, 59-60.

as a binary switch with which the reader can simply reconstruct the author's meaning. In a satiric complexity the degree of irony should also be taken into consideration along with the danger that the irony of the satiric genius can run away with the satirist himself.

While the Devil's irony seems to be controlled – as he is still a reasoner though a false one – the *I* persona is likely to be taken away by his irony. In the description of the parallel visions of the orthodox Angel and the heretic and in the abundance of figures in the last “Memorable Fancy,” the same story is told from two opposite viewpoints – with understanding shamefully “imposed upon” each other (MHH 157). First, the Angel shows his fantasy about eternity with the symbols of Christ's life (the stable, the church, the vault), of the institutionalised Church (mill, cave), and, finally, with the apocalyptic pictures of the black tempest, the fiery cataract of blood and Leviathan in the black sea. Afterwards the *I* persona displays ‘his’ visionary story of Christianity flying with the Angel towards the Sun reversing Satan's journey through chaos described in *Paradise Lost*. Then descending into the abyss of the Bible, they reach the seven houses of the Church where monkeys live quarrelling, copulating and devouring each other “by plucking off first one limb and then the another, till the body was left a helpless trunk; [...] one savourily picking the flesh off his own tail” (MHH 157). In this section, as Bloom remarks: “Swift himself could not have done better [...], in the repulsive projection of the incestuous warfare of rival doctrines, ground together in the reductive mill of scholastic priestcraft.”⁶¹ I think with his most disgusting and animalistic criticism of the Church, Blake uses such a tonality that recalls Swift's sarcasm.

In his analysis of the Swiftian irony, Leavis hints at the possible parallelism or connection between Swift's and Blake's satirical style stating in his promising final sentence that “we shall not find Swift remarkable for intelligence if we think of Blake.”⁶² Comparing Swift's and Blake's satires, I can start with Bloom's ironic remark, namely, in *The Marriage* Blake is like Swift as their satires survived its victims.⁶³ But to give a serious *tone*, it is not by chance that the Swiftian irony is called negative, intellectual and instrumental by Leavis⁶⁴ since it is based on ‘cold’/angelic rationality. Contrasted with Blake, Swift could not escape from the ‘mind-forged manacles,’ though in his great satires (in Gulliver's voyages to Laputa and to the land of the clever horses) he was capable of highlighting the limits of reason. At his best his imagination starts with a parody and “takes *fire* from *mad* elaborations of metaphor” liberating

⁶¹ Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, 93.

⁶² F. R. Leavis, “The Irony of Swift,” in *Swift – A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Ernest Tuveson (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964, 15-29), 29.

⁶³ Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, 71.

⁶⁴ Leavis, “The Irony of Swift,” 16.

himself from Augustan decorum.⁶⁵ Traugott also remarks that Swift, unlike the visionary Blake, understood that “God and the devil are ordinarily reversed by the pretense of reason.”⁶⁶ Whereas Blake’s works especially display a harsh criticism of reason, the work of Locke displays a rationalist sensualism which “mock[s] Inspiration & Vision” (Blake, 477).

However, on the basis of the strongly attacking tone and the satirical-ironical context, some parallels can be found between *The Marriage* and the Swiftian tone used in his prose writings, for example, in the one discussing religious problems titled “An Argument Against the Abolishing of Christianity” (1708). In this essay the false persona suggests that true Christianity should be annihilated while ‘nominal’ (false) Christianity should be maintained. With the usage of ironic betrayal and the emphasis of the false opinion it is revealed that the very opposite is meant, namely, only the ‘nominal’ and superficial religious ‘belief’ should be abolished, while true Christianity must definitely be defended. In Swift’s satire, complex irony is used with a reformatory intention and the tone itself is turned into a weapon. In the opening paragraph it is stated: “I am very sensible what a Weakness and Presumption it is, to *reason against* the general Humour and Disposition of the World. [...] In like Manner, and for the very same Reasons, it may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent to *argue against* the Abolishing of Christianity, [...]”⁶⁷ Then the persona questions the necessary abolishing of Christianity, which sounds paradoxical “even for [the] wise and paradoxical Age,” in order to defend only nominal Christianity. From the beginning – from the long ironic title, “An Argument to prove, That the Abolishing of Christianity in England, May, as Things now Stand, be attended with some Inconveniencies, and perhaps, not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby” – the reader is trapped into following the logical though false reasoning of the work and into realising that the displayed opinion of the persona is negatively emphasised; that is, its opposite is meant.

On the one hand, due to the ironic intensity aimed at the defence, to quote F. R. Leavis’s expression, “the positive itself appears only negatively.”⁶⁸ Bullitt says that in the technique based on enthymemes: “Swift frequently tended, then, to adopt indirect refutation as the most persuasive form of demonstrating the logical absurdity of his opponents. Instead of refuting directly the arguments of an antagonist, Swift’s enthymemes were constructed in such a way as to *display* them, if possible, as ridiculous, and in the process of doing so, of course, to

⁶⁵ John Traugott, “*A Tale of a Tub*.” *The Character of Swift’s Satire – A Revised Focus*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983, 83-126), 115. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁶⁶ Traugott, “*A Tale of a Tub*,” 109.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and other Satires* (London: Guernsey Press, 1987), 225. Italics are mine. É.A.

⁶⁸ Leavis, “The Irony of Swift,” 17.

imply the affirmation of his own opposed premises. [...] It is only a short step from this method of introducing his arguments to that adopting those arguments as his own – in short, to using *irony*, as the vehicle for his refutative enthymeme.”⁶⁹ One of the best examples is when the persona, realising that the nominal Christian will lose their truly Christian allies, suggests that they should “trust to an Alliance with the Turk,” but he admits that the Turk, opposed to the nominal Christians, “believe a God.”⁷⁰

On the other hand, the persona’s argumentation is shockingly logical operating with abstract rationality and the “position is defended ironically by a logic so patently false that we are almost laughed into agreement with Swift.”⁷¹ I think that like Swift’s conception it could also have been Blake’s mission to lead men in such an indirect way *beyond reason* towards the experience of true Christianity – even if he had to use the destroying fire of irony in his satire. This central idea is not only expressed in the Devil’s ironic statement and the proverbs, but also in the *I* persona’s Swedenborg-critique. On Plate 21 the master is mentioned together with the Angels who “have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning” (MHH 157). In his satirical tone, the persona blames Swedenborg for only conversing with the religious Angels and “not with Devils who all hate religion” (MHH 157); where religion – like Swift’s attack – refers to the institution of the Church, nominal Christianity and the rational religion, Deism.

In his *Marriage* the rational ‘either-or’ typed point of view is attacked: if devils and angels separately exist in our world, the persona deliberately acts for the devil’s party. In this (ironic) sense he can be said to be the devil’s advocate who puts not only the ‘case of reason’ but also the reasonable (Swiftian) satire to the acid test. As Relihan remarks, “the anatomy of folly can only be ironically performed”;⁷² that is, irony is used upon irony, or the technique of betrayal with a false persona. The ending is not satiric but ironic and can be taken as an imaginative poetic ending, not a reasonable one, where the “fiery polemic uttered for its fire and not its light.”⁷³ But after the promise of “The Bible of Hell” another shock awaits the reader: the warning of the ‘devilish’ illustrator who shows us the repressive and degenerate state of Nebuchadnezzar. That is, the final ‘word’ is uttered by the illustrator putting on the Devil’s/*his* complex ironic mask.

⁶⁹ John M. Bullitt, *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire – A Study of Satiric Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 96. Italics in the original.

⁷⁰ Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and other Satires*, 237.

⁷¹ Bullitt, *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire*, 98. In her book, *Irony*, Colebrook also calls attention to Swift’s and Blake’s ‘ironic’ criticism of reason. See Claire Colebrook, *Irony* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 54-61.

⁷² Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 30.

⁷³ Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 94.

The (An)ironic Vision

While the textual ending of *The Marriage* describes the Angel's enlightened consummation, the last illustration on the same plate shows the biblical Nebuchadnezzar's degenerated state which can be taken as "the ironic emblem of Reason *losing* his reason."⁷⁴ In his essay "Irony and False Consciousness" Andrew Cooper emphasises the overwhelming ironic tonality of the work which he compares to the Romantic hovering of the Schlegelian irony. In his repetition of self-creation and self-destruction, due to his masks used in his works, the ironist is able to free himself from the limitations of self-consciousness.⁷⁵ Besides referring to the famous "doors of perception" as revolving doors, Cooper also claims that Blake's irony is aimed at "[the] antinomian striving to transcend 'the Body' and identify the indeterminacy of rhetorical self-consciousness with the unshackled energies of a genuinely world-consuming apocalypse."⁷⁶

In fact, concerning the different and intertwined voices of the work, the very first and very last voice – before and after Rintrah, the *I* persona, the Devil and the Angel – is the voice of the illustrator.⁷⁷ From the starting plate of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, from the title and its first 'illumination' of the title-page, the reader is contrasted with a Blakean twofold or rather a 'threefold vision': the union of two contrary forces.⁷⁸ If we want to understand, or rather imagine its meaning, we should go beyond and accept the challenge of what the whirlwind of these apparent 'contraries' indicates. Having analysed the work, I should realise that even from the very beginning in the satirical-ironical context Blake acts as the devil's advocate, the *advocatus diaboli* representing a higher state of imaginative vision. If the reader can accept the illogical though imaginative marriage of good and evil, then (s)he can see the contraries already united – in its double negative, assertive way. We have an artist who not only

⁷⁴ Erdman, *Blake – Prophet Against Empire*, 194. Italics in the original.

⁷⁵ Cooper, *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry*, 37

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry*, 46.

⁷⁷ In his reading, Eaves introduces the central voice and character of God though he is mostly *deus absconditus*. Consequently, the missing or hidden centre is *displayed* in the multiplicity of voices since humanity and human imagination encloses Blake's divinity. See Morris Eaves, *William Blake's Theory of Art*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 23.

⁷⁸ In Blake's own mythology there is a place where the contraries are equally true and live in peace. This is the land of sexual harmony and dreams lighted by the Moon (the realm of the Subconscious) which Blake calls Beulah in his late prophecies, while it is named Innocence or the Vales of Har in the early works (e.g. In *The Book of Thel*). Its name means 'married' referring to the restored happy relationship, the reconciliation, between God and Palestine (cf. Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, 42-43). In his 'cosmology' Beulah is also the world of creative energy and poetic inspiration characterised by the imaginative 'threefold vision', where the contraries live side by side in harmony.

works with ‘flaming fire,’ but uses its power in the creation of the “great synaesthesia” of his art. As Professor Mitchell sees, “Blake’s pictorial style, like his poetic form and the total form of his composite art, is organised as a dramatic, dialectical interaction between contrary elements.”⁷⁹ In his ‘illuminated’ works, in his artistic threefold vision, words and pictures – and the sculpture-like letters, motifs of the relief etchings – are composed to show the synaesthetic presentation of sensory elements, in order to open the dynamic vortex of imagination. In this sense his illustrated/illuminated prints do also function as windows, as sensory openings, and through his pictures the spectator’s sensual enjoyment can be improved by “designing visual illusions which continually demand and imply [all] the other senses in their structures.”⁸⁰

I cannot agree with Erdman that the usage of the word ‘marriage’ in the title of the work – on the basis of Blake’s aversion of this institution – can only be taken as a ‘half-jest’. In Blake’s poetic and prophetic works marriage has different meanings, from the burdensome bondage of loveless and forced marriages, through the happy sexual union, to the spiritual wedding between God and Man. According to Wittreich, “[i]f Milton thought that the marriage of truth would not occur until the Apocalypse, Blake thought the Apocalypse would not occur until such a marriage had been accomplished.”⁸¹ However, the argument of the work fails to show up the promised ‘marriage’ since the Devil’s voice is fully developed through his utterances, proverbs and the *I* persona having been converted to his party, but the Angel’s figure is less described. That is to say the *text* of the Blakean *Marriage* presents the weak and unbalanced union between the fully described figure of the Devil and the flat reasoning character of the Angel – consequently, the true expression of marriage should be looked for in the illustrations.

The title of the prophecy – written to the experienced living in di-vision – clearly refers to the world of ‘threefold vision’ and sexual unity. In the work it is visualised in the title page, in its illustration and typography, and verbalised in the last “Memorable Fancy”. The title-page can be taken as an illustration to the section where all the voices are present: the *I* persona records the conversation between an Angel and a Devil that is finally/originally depicted by the illustrator on the title-page. In the textual vision, the devil in flaming fire addresses an angel sitting on a cloud and questions the ancient traditions of orthodox Christianity, while putting emphasis on Christ’s humanity instead of his divinity. As the angel failed to defend his own ideas he “stretched out his arms, embracing the flame of fire, & he was consumed and arose as Elijah [viz. the prophet, or John the Baptist]” (MHH 158).

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Blake’s Composite Art*, 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 203.

Although in the text the two figures are masculine (referred to as 'he'), or can be taken as androgynous, in the title-page below the level of the ground or consciousness we can see an embracing love-couple: the devil is characterised with flames of fire and a nice feminine bottom, and the angel's masculine nude is shown reclining on a bluish cloud. The harmonious moment of their kissing is made dynamic by the moving fiery flames and the other embracing couples flying above the central one. The whole picture shows the whirlwind of ecstasy rooted in and raised by the union of the two main principles. That is, the main schematic form dominating the entire space of the design is the vortex, which can be "the configuration of [the Blakean] 'progression'" and "the focus of the encounter between conflicting forces."⁸² Besides the vision of the whirlpool there is another little vortex coiling around the uniting conjunction, 'and,' which seems to go *into* the (imagined) space of the drawing. Above the ground in accordance, or *toning*, with the visionary scene, we can see that the branches of the trees move towards each other in the wind (of passion), as if the word, 'marriage,' had united "the abstraction of typography [of HEAVEN and HELL] with the flowing, organic forms of Blake's pictorial style."⁸³

Finally, after regarding the ironic, satiric and apocalyptic tone of the other voices, we should pay attention to the illustrator's attitude and the Blakean irony. In his *Horizons of Assent* Alan Wilde distinguishes *mediate*, or primitive; *disjunctive*, or modern; and *suspensive*, or postmodern ironies.⁸⁴ He argues that all irony – or rather the mediate and disjunctive ones – "regarded as a perceptual encounter with the world, generate[s] in response to [its] vision of disparity (or in some cases is generated by) a complementary, more conceptual vision of wholeness or singleness," which he calls the *anironic*. Being taken not as "anti-ironic" but a complementary countervision, this anironic vision accompanies irony and the absolute ironist is capable of the intertwining of the ironic and the anironic so as to hover "folding back on himself in the sanctuary of his art."⁸⁵ Unlike the hovering of modern irony, in Blake's 'primitive' irony, the anironic apocalyptic vision about the realm of fantasy ironises the Devil's ironic tone. It means that the Devil's irony is "Blake's vehicle for carrying reason to excess, making it undermine itself and become energy,"⁸⁶ which is displayed in the illustrator's (an)irony. In this sense, marriage can refer to the intertwined unity

⁸² Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*, 70.

⁸³ Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*, 75. See more on the symbolism of Blake's typography and calligraphy in W. J. T. Mitchell "Visible Language: Blake's Wondrous Art of Writing" in Morris Eaves and Michael Fischer (eds), *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1986, 46-86), 83-86.

⁸⁴ Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent. Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 9-10.

⁸⁵ Wilde, *Horizons of Assent*, 34.

⁸⁶ Cooper, *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry*, 48.

of the different tones which are tensed then braided. Thus, *The Marriage* does not only mean the Devil's and the Angel's spiritual union but also the marriage of satire and irony in a prophetic/apocalyptic ending-beginning.

According to Wittreich, the work's final irony

[l]ies in the fact that what is true from the human perspective is not true from a demonic one, just as what the Devil says in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* may be true from the perspective of history, but it is not true from the perspective of eternity that the prophet enjoys. The irony [...] [of] Blake's Devil lies in the fact that Blake [is] in possession of a larger consciousness and thus aware of subtleties that his devil does not perceive [...].⁸⁷

I agree with Wittreich's calling Blake a "supreme ironist" but 'the irony lies in the fact' that while in the final irony he sees "the formation of the prophetic character" I would rather *see* the illustrator and the engraver's perspective here. I think, Blake's supreme irony is expressed in the annihilation of the tones in the fiery ending and also in the illustrations where the artist represents his anironic vision of prophecy. The illustrator's "spiritual eye" is truly meant to be "the eye through which the rest of the world might see"⁸⁸ and in this sense ironically the cover-page is rather an uncovering, *apocalyptic* page.

In his essay on the apocalyptic tone, Derrida refers to a flower of rhetoric, the eucalyptus, which, as the ironic flower of revelation, after flowering remains closed, "well hidden [cf. the Greek word, *eu-kaluptos*] under the avowed desire for revelation."⁸⁹ In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, besides the puzzling multitonality, the author's 'true' voice remains concealed – like the Derridean apocalyptic flower of rhetoric, the eucalyptus. Moreover, the eucalyptus is also remarkable for its cleansing and healing oil, which can be associated with the corroding acid of Blake's irony. In his writing Blake 'argues' against all restraints, limitations and bondage, and he is capable of loosening the strict tension of the *tonos*, due to the elasticity of his ironic tonality. In spite of my first satirical remark on Professor Keynes's explanation, I should accept that instead of 'the devil' this 'he' is "all that was needed." In the conception, context and tonality of *The Marriage*, the 'pronoun' – with the Greek *anto-nymia* embracing its own opposite denomination – and, what's more, its hiatus/gap, is definitely enough. As He in his mask/incognito says in the "Proverbs of Hell": it is "more than enough," or "too much" (MHH 152).⁹⁰ The ironically apocalyptic

⁸⁷ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 215.

⁸⁸ Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse*, 218.

⁸⁹ Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," 149.

⁹⁰ Interestingly *enough*, Derrida opens his *Parergon* with *satis*, 'enough', recalling the tone of the Blakean Devil in his "Proverbs": "Opening with the *satis*, the *enough* (inside and outside,

work marks not the ending but the beginning of Blake's prophetic career where heaven and hell, angels and devils do not exist – there is *no reason* for their existence.

above and below, to left and right), satire, farce on the edge of excess" (in *The Truth in Painting*, 17). I wonder what Derrida could have said about this strange parallel with Blake's *The Marriage*.

THE BESTIAL FIGURES OF THE SOCRATIC IRONY

*Just as philosophy begins with doubt,
so also a life that may be called human begins with irony.
(Kierkegaard)*

My doctoral thesis titled *On the Concept of Irony — With (Continual) Reference to Kierkegaard*, discusses different theories of irony. As the title itself (ironically) indicates, my thesis is greatly inspired by Søren Kierkegaard's doctoral treatise, *The Concept of Irony, With Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841), which is the most thorough theoretical work ever written on the concept. The Kierkegaardian irony-conception (and irony) is being formed in the discussion of the Socratic ironical method and the early German Romantic irony (Schlegels, Solger, Tieck) so as to 'display' a specific irony of life-work. On the one hand, in the elements of this formation, we can read about the Kierkegaardian evaluation of the Hegelian irony-criticism and its effects upon the philosophical argument. On the other hand, in the rhetoric of the treatise Kierkegaard tries to display irony itself, allowing it to speak for once.¹

In Kierkegaard's reading, Socrates with his questioning of 'true beliefs' and claims of ignorance becomes the first real individual, as his ironic method due to its "infinite, absolute negativity" made his (negative) freedom possible. In the first part of the dissertation, which is about the Socratic irony, the author gives the genealogy of the concept. Taking into account that the term, irony, is a 'negative concept,' if one tries to interpret the ironic philosophical position, he takes a great risk. To undertake the role of helping its coming into light/existence – either as its 'midwife' or father – one risks assisting with a miscarriage or a stillbirth. In this case it is not really consoling that the infant could have been a child of love, and its conception was conceived/conceptualised by an amorous observer. As Kierkegaard says, "the observer ought to be an amorist" and the observed phenomena are always of the feminine gender.²

¹ Kierkegaard writes about it in his collected papers and journal (*Pap. III B 2*). Cf. "Selected Entries from Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers Pertaining to *The Concept of Irony*," in *The Concept of Irony – With Continual Reference to Socrates*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 441.

² Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony – With Continual Reference to Socrates*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 9 (XIII 105). Further references are made to the English edition of *Kierkegaard's Writings* and after the page numbers the marginal references are also given in brackets.

After the quite painful metaphors of delivery, the reader is asked to imagine other figures offered to visualise the complex problem of irony. To make it visible the author refers to an imaginary figure of Scandinavian fairy tales:

If we now say that irony constituted the substance of his [viz. Socrates's] existence [...], and if we further postulate that irony is a negative concept, it is easy to see how difficult it becomes to fix the picture of him – indeed, it seems impossible or at least as difficult as to picture a nisse with the cap that makes him invisible.³

In the next chapters the reader is given other more (or less) playful and puzzling figures/tropes embedded in the philosophical discussion, which are supposed to stand for the work of irony. In the peculiar rhetoric of the text these figures result in a “way of cutting [into], perforating” the philosophical argumentation unveiling the true topic.⁴ While Kierkegaard examines the famous Socrates-interpretations (in Xenophon's, Plato's, Aristophanes' and Hegel's works), he is presenting his own understanding of the Socratic irony emphasising its deconstructive negativity. Analysing the Kierkegaardian criticism of the Socratic irony we can find its rhetoric ‘monstrous’ since all of the rhetorical figures are associated with the ‘demoniac’ figure of Socrates. Therefore, it is not by chance that he appears in a ‘bestiary’ – as Derrida says in a footnote in *Plato's Pharmacy*.⁵

But in the Kierkegaardian dissertation, the ironic-demoniac displays more than its ‘animalistic’ features; as if the figure similarly to the Greek god, Proteus, were given the ability of infinite changing. Therefore, instead of the word, bestiary, I suggest using *bestiality*, because this one would rather cover and show the torturing and brutal forms of the Socratic irony. Nevertheless, Derrida also refers to other appearances of Socrates; namely, his figure can also be understood as a *pharmakeus* – a magician or sorcerer. These remarks gave me the idea of collecting and interpreting the brutal and bestial images in Kierkegaard's ‘pseudo-philosophical’ text – relying on the ironic agility of the

³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 12 (XIII 108). According to the explanatory note in the English edition: “In Scandinavia, an elflike household creature, benevolent if treated properly, vexatious otherwise, and, according to some traditions, invisible when wearing his pointed red stocking cap” (468). I often wonder if somebody is made invisible wearing such a magical piece of clothing (in some other tales, it is a mantle), when the item itself can be seen or does it have the magical power over itself as well. That is, if someone uses irony, the ironical cap, can it be seen revealing/displaying the hidden (meaning or intention)?

⁴ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 8-10.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 119.

Socratic negative position. Now, right at the beginning, I can assert that the shocking and sometimes shockingly plastic figures are used to express the lack of positivity and the agonising an-nihil-ation. During my analysis we should keep in mind that these rhetorical figures are embedded in the philosophical treatise – as if cutting into its body, they were brutalising it.

The bestial figures are gathered around the relations of Socrates' ironic non-position to death and desire. Kierkegaard analyses two of the early Platonic dialogues, that is, the so-called Socratic dialogues, *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, claiming that the figure of irony connects the two works by dealing with such strikingly different topics. Though the former is characterised by the desire for life and the latter for death, Socrates with his irony can present and view both of them negatively:

[...] it is the irony that in *Symposium* made love the substance of life but then took it back again with the other hand by interpreting love negatively as longing, the irony that here [in the *Phaedo*] views life as retrospective, always wanting to go back into nebulosity from which the soul emerged or, more correctly, into a formless, infinite transparency.⁶

However, the main topic of the two dialogues is desire: in *Symposium* it is the desire to possess (carnal desire), in *Phaedo* the desire to lose (death-wish). The two kinds of longings are strongly related as both of them are aimed at getting something missing, non-existent and unknown. But their connection is shown in an ironic totality, for “both qualifications are equally negative, since both longings are ignorant of the what into which the one wishes to hurl itself and into which the other wishes to be volatilized by dying into.”⁷

As this ironic totality is given by Socrates' non-position in his life (and death), it is the right time to pay attention to his ‘negative’ longings. We should accept that he definitely has a death-wish – of course, in the intellectual sense. To the philosopher, death means contemplation and complete detachment from everyday reality, that is, it presents the desire to die and to be dead: “the philosopher wishes to forsake actuality, yet, as far as possible to be dead already while still alive [...t]his, then, is the tragic self-contradiction of the subjective position.”⁸ Although in his cataleptic and omphalopsychic staring (cf. omphalocentrism, É.A.) the philosopher seems to exist “in-and-for-himself,” thinking about nothingness and even enjoying it, he still needs actuality. Kierkegaard offers two analogies to express Socrates' unique position hovering between the

⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 64 (XIII 158).

⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 72, footnote (XIII 165). I should draw the reader's attention to the expression ‘to be volatilized’ that clearly refers to annihilating work of irony.

⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 75 (XIII 168).

actual world and the world of abstract ideas. One of the figures is borrowed from Aristophanes, because in his comedy, *The Clouds*, the philosopher is placed in a basket suspended in the air. The other – for us now a telling one – is a reference to Mohammed’s coffin, “which, according to legend, floats between two magnets – the one attracting and the other repelling.”⁹ Socrates’ ironic non-position made him a ‘living-dead’ free individual, who was – and could be – only negatively free in his negative subjectivity.

Practically, in his everyday questioning (in his dialogues) Socrates ‘posits’ himself negating the others’ opinions and true beliefs. Besides claiming that he does not know anything, he accepts and knows about his non-knowledge, his ignorance, which gives him a superposition floating above the others. He does not only undertake his annihilation as a mission, but he also enjoys transmitting his ironic knowledge. What is more, his dialogue-partners find him aristocratic and his freedom seducing:

In this way he admittedly freed the single individual from every presupposition, freed him as he himself was free; but the freedom he personally enjoyed in ironic satisfaction the others could not enjoy, and thus it developed in them a longing and a yearning.¹⁰

In Kierkegaard’s thesis Socrates is shown as a “consummate eroticist” or an “amorist of the highest order” with all the seductive gifts of rhetoric and intellect. He is a seducer who with his puzzling questions awakens longings in the youths but does not – and cannot – satisfy them.

Although the philosopher seems to be indifferent to the young men’s unfolding intellect, from the mask of this indifference they can feel “the piercing sidelong glance that instantly pierced their souls like a dagger.”¹¹ The ironist suffers and makes the others suffer by torturing them with his questions without giving answers. In his discourses, Socrates seduces and imprisons his pupils by using his irony as a mysterious aphrodisiac or poison (see Derrida’s *pharmakon*). One of his lovers, Alcibiades, complains that Socrates seems to be the lover, and later becomes the beloved. This remark reveals not only the ironist’s ability to change his masks while hiding his irony, but also shows that he likes extremes and sudden turns upside down.

Speaking about Socrates’ seducing personality, Alcibiades says that his master resembles a carved image of Silenus, the aged satyr. Just like in the case

⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 48, footnote (XIII 143). Later the coffin is again referred to: “The ironist, to be sure, is lighter than the world, but on the other hand he still belongs to the world; like Mohammed’s coffin, he is suspended between two magnets” (152, XIII 237).

¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 176 (XIII 258).

¹¹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 190 (XIII 272).

of the openable small figure, Socrates' ugly outlook *hides* his inner divinity, but very seldom does he open up. In Kierkegaard's text this *hidden* divinity is expressed with the Greek 'κατά κρύψιν,' which is usually used to refer to Christ's divinity in Lutheran theology; here the divine fullness is concealed by a satyr-mask.¹² Later the word appears again in the phrase, "cryptic nothing" referring to the emptiness of Socrates' ignorant-ironic awareness, which his best pupil, "Plato trie[s] to fill up [...] by giving him the idea" – his ideas.¹³ In the word, cryptic, not only is it hidden, but also its sepulchral meanings are embedded, since the word embodies the hidden lifeless quality of the Socratic irony. The crypt as an underground tomb with its own secrecy marks the stillness of silence. In a passage Socrates is said to be like a dash in world history –

For the observer, Socrates' life is like a magnificent pause in the course of history: we do not hear him at all; a profound stillness prevails – until it is broken by the noisy attempts of the many and very different schools of followers to trace their origin in this hidden and cryptic source.¹⁴

To cover the above mentioned complexity of the Socratic irony together with its brutal, erotic and mysterious images, Kierkegaard offers a brilliant figure: the living-dead, an aristocratic and seducing *vampire*. The first blood-sucking remark is given in the description of the ironic method, where the Socratic questioning tries to annihilate and hollow the ideas of the given answers. As Kierkegaard explains, in the ironic way "one can ask without any interest in the answer except *to suck out* the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind."¹⁵ While in his living-dead existence the vampire feeds himself by sucking the blood of his victims, the ironist, being another parasite in his unsubstantial hovering non-position, asks devastating

¹² Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 50 (XIII 145).

¹³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 153 (XIII 238).

¹⁴ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 198 (XIII 279). Besides the crypt and the coffin, there is a third 'death-image' in the text – a puzzle-picture of Napoleon's grave that presents the working of Socrates' irony: "Two tall trees shade the grave. There is nothing else to see in the work, and the unsophisticated observer sees nothing else. Between the two trees there is an empty space; as the eye follows the outline, suddenly Napoleon himself emerges from this nothing, and now it is impossible to have him disappear again. [...] So also with Socrates' rejoinders. One hears his words in the same way one sees the trees; his words mean what they say, just as trees are trees. There is not one single syllable that gives a hint of any other interpretation, just as there is not one single line that suggests Napoleon, and yet this empty space, this *nothing*, is what *hides* that which is most important" (19, XIII 115. Italics are mine. É.A.). See more on it in Stephen Prickett, *Narrative, Religion and Science – Fundamentalism versus Irony, 1700-1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41-44 and in Bøggild, "An Inquiry into a Couple of Examples in Kierkegaard and Paul de Man," 256-258.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 36 (XIII 132). Italics are mine. É.A.

questions. Socrates' questions, such as, for example, what good is or what justice is, cannot be answered, because he claims that he is ignorant. That is to say, that in the course of the master's philosophical (ironic) inquiry, the listener is bereft of his everyday beliefs, but not given clear answers and left hollow, sucked out, in aporetic living-dead despair.

What is more, this blood-sucking in the master-pupil dialogues means/gives perverted pleasure to the participants, and in the dissertation we can read about the suffering of Socrates' amorous victims. Kierkegaard – with pleasure – analyses the most detailed and most figurative part of *Symposium* showing Alcibiades' feelings in his love for his master. This part luxuriates in brutal pictures; for instance, the (negative) love-relation starts as if the young man were bitten by a snake, while its development is compared to a mortal disease. In Kierkegaard's reading, the ironist does not only torture the lover while deluding him with his fascinating speech, but he also imprisons the lover in the inextricable bonds of this ironic passion. That is, Socrates, the ironist, is said to behave and act like an intellectual vampire, "who has sucked the blood of the lover [cf. the student] and while doing so has fanned him cool, lulled him to sleep, and tormented him with troubled dreams."¹⁶ We read about torture, pain and agony – this seems to be the most infamous and warped section of the treatise, where the author's figurative fantasy 'deforms' the philosophical frames of the doctoral dissertation. I think, it is worth quoting the closing paragraph of this warping:

The question could now be raised: Why this whole exposition?
My reply: The intention is twofold. In the first place, to show that even in Alcibiades' view of Socrates irony is his essential aspect; in the second place, to suggest that the love-relation that has developed between Socrates and Alcibiades and what we can learn from it about the nature of love are negative.¹⁷

Seemingly, the usage of philosophical argument makes it possible to suppress the seductive images, but it is momentary. Being a figure of speech and a trope, irony likes turning upside-down and inside-out, and the images of the Socratic torture-chamber are frequently 'flashed' in the philosophical text to shade the love of the negative. Irony traps the victims or the readers again and again playing its jokes on them (or us). Discussing Aristophanes' Socrates-interpretation in *The Clouds*, Kierkegaard refers to an episode when the student is bereft not only of his everyday beliefs, but also of his mantle, which can be

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 49 (XIII 144).

¹⁷ Ibid. And it is also stated here: "the love described here is that of irony, but irony is the negative in love; it is love's incitement" (51, XIII 146).

understood as an attempt at the victim's skinning.¹⁸ In another paragraph the Socratic method is said to work like a "dialectical vacuum pump" under which "he placed the individuals [...], pumped away the atmospheric air they were accustomed to breathing, and left them standing there. For them, everything was now lost, except to the extent that they were able to breathe *ethereal air*."¹⁹ Besides presenting the suffocating effect of irony, this analogy expresses its mechanism: the ironist is believed to be able to show something above reality, above our atmosphere, but we can easily asphyxiate till the promise of the ether with the perfect ideas is fulfilled.

There are less drastic demonstrations of the ironical method in which the individual feels dizzy as though he had stumbled into an abyss/whirlwind and was continuously falling. The loss of the ground stands for the puzzling activity of Socrates' questioning:

And then, when all the bonds of their prejudices were loosened, when all their intellectual sclerosis was softened, when his questions had straightened everything out and made the transformation possible, then the relation culminated in the meaningful moment, in the brief silvery gleam that instantly illuminated the word of their consciousness, when he turned everything upside down for them at once, as quickly as a glance of the eye and for as long as a blink of the eye, when everything is changed for them.²⁰

The reader could think that some positivity has crept into the description of the living-dead ironic method, for it is worth considering what happens after this 'gleaming moment'. After the flash, darkness is more visible; that is, the evoking of the abstract ideas is followed by value-loss of the known world. But that is all Socrates can give and – ironically – with this divine glance he enchains the student, who willingly takes the role of his devoted victim and gets victimised by (his) irony.

With his irony, Socrates does not want to posit anything, instead like a gadfly (as he calls himself in *Apology* 31 a) he tries to stir up others, while the ironist himself cannot escape his whirlwind that finally carries him away. In *Meno*, he claims that one of the bestial figures used to present his activity is the poisonous sea fish, the sting ray (cf. the Greek *narke*) which "makes other numb in the process of numbing."²¹ In this remark he accepts that he has a fatal illness, because irony as Kierkegaard says "is an endemic disease that only a few

¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 140, footnote (XIII 225).

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 178 (XIII 260). Italics are mine. É.A.

²⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 190 (XIII 272).

²¹ Plato, *Meno* 79e-80d.

individuals catch and from which fewer recover.”²² What is more, his illness is infectious and he regards its transmittance as a divine mission (cf. transmission), and the figures referring to this mission again emphasise its ironic content. Socrates’ mission is “a divine madness” and he is shown as a vengeful angel raising his sword (his irony) over the Athenians (XIII 291). In these metaphors he is shown as a godlike figure: the judge and the punisher in one, something like an ironic-nemesis (XIII 256).

Then in the chapter discussing Socrates’ trial, the ironic-nemesis is again presented as a vampire: this time as the vampire of the state. The philosopher claims that he does not know the state as so far he has only met individuals. But according to his accusers, in his conversations Socrates steals the young citizens one by one from the actuality of the state, weakening the respect towards the laws and the parents: “it is obvious that [...] from the viewpoint of the state his offensive had to be considered most dangerous, as an attempt *to suck its blood* and reduce it to a shadow.”²³ This figure of speech displays that the vampire-parasite ‘lives on’ sucking the blood of the living and he also ‘reproduces’ other vampires with his poisonous bite. However, the shadow of the state haunts in two other pictures. In *Protagoras* discussing the definition of virtue, Socrates asserts the existence of one virtue, not of different ones. Kierkegaard compares the Socratic idea on the unity of virtue to “a tyrant who does not have the courage to rule over the actual world but first murders all his subjects in order to be able to rule proudly and with perfect security over the silent kingdom of pale shadows.”²⁴ This series of monstrous figures is ended by Charon, Hades’ ferryman, since like him Socrates transmits the individuals from the world of actual empiria to the other world of the abstract nothing:

Just as Charon took people across from the fullness of life to the shadowy land of the underworld, just as he, lest his frail boat be overloaded, had the travelers divest themselves of all the manifold qualifications of concrete life, of titles, honors, purple robes, pompous words, sorrows, anxieties, etc., until only the sheer human being remained, so Socrates also shipped individuals from reality to ideality; and the ideal infinity as the infinite negativity was the nothing into which he had the entire multiplicity of reality disappear.²⁵

On the whole, irony is a ‘show-off’: at once a picture faker and an image-worship. The common features of these (ironic) figures are emptiness, hollowness and

²² Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 77-78 (XIII 170).

²³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 178 (XIII 261). Italics are mine. É.A.

²⁴ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 58 (XIII 153).

²⁵ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 236 (XIII 312).

annihilation, as Socrates/Kierkegaard cannot *show* anything else in his philosophising. However, in the philosophical treatise the figures dis-member the text as if they tried to demon-strate something hidden. Irony as a “prodigious daemon” (XIII 211) hovers over the thesis and the shaded sections together with the argumentative parts give the ‘true’ theory of irony. Kierkegaard – with his telling name meaning ‘churtyard’ – displays the ground on which the Socratic irony can manifest itself: “the ironic nothing is the dead silence in which irony walks again and haunts.”²⁶ The vampire becomes the figure of irony, the ironic figure *par excellence*, while blood sucking stands for the ironic/vampiric method. In my paper I ‘vamp-ironise’ the Kierkegaardian text, just like he with pleasure ‘took the blood’ of other authors’, Plato’s or Hegel’s textual bodies – and now all of them are the ghosts of (my) irony. The reader who is susceptible to irony is also invited to ‘the banquet of vampires’ and descending through the “secret trap-door”²⁷ he can freely join the phantoms of the text.

The rhetorical (de Manian) “trope is not a derived, marginal, or aberrant form of language but [...] the figurative structure [...] characterizes language as such.”²⁸ Irony as the trope of the rhetorical tropes – similarly to Nosferatu, the master of the living-dead – together with its philosophical or theoretical implications has been eternally haunting ever since. Irony displays not only the impossibility of understanding the world around us, but also all of our fears caused by the unknown with its strangeness. (And strangely, what is more, I claim this strangeness or foreignism in English, not in my mother tongue.) I can say that the rhetorical figures stand between the truth of life experience and the human mind; on the one hand, they seem to give the feeling of our control over language, on the other hand, they become its fearful phantoms. As we know from de Man, “rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberrations.”²⁹ Thus, irony is the figure of the rhetorical figures, showing that there is something threatening and terrible in ‘our’ rhetoric; we should admit that rhetoric is *literally* a linguistic monster.

²⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, 258 (XIII 332).

²⁷ “and [...] the ironic infinite elasticity, the secret trap-door through which one suddenly plunges down – [...] into irony’s infinite nothing” (26, XIII 122).

²⁸ de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 105.

²⁹ Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 10.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorján, István. "An Interview with J. Hillis Miller." *The AnaChronisT* (2002): 297-302.
- Ahearn, Edward J. *Visionary Fictions – Apocalyptic Writing from Blake to the Modern Age*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Apuleius. *The Golden Ass*. Trans. by Robert Graves. Penguin Books, 1950.
- Aristophanes. *The Clouds*. In *Aristophanes*, I-III. Trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979-1982.
- Baker, John. "Grammar and Rhetoric in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal': Heidegger, de Man, Deconstruction." *Studies in Romanticism*. 1997/1. 103-123.
- Barkan, Leonard. *The Gods Made Flesh. Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1986.
- Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*. Trans. by Richard Miller. London: Basil Blackwell, 1995.
- Behler, Ernst. "The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism." In *Romantic Irony*. Ed. by Frederick Garber. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988. 43-81.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Bentley, G. E. *Blake Records*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Bible, The Holy*. King James Version. Glasgow: Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1971.
- Blake, William. *Complete Writings*. Ed. by Geoffrey Keynes. London: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Bloom, Harold. *Blake's Apocalypse – A Study in Poetic Argument*. New York: Doubleday, 1963.
- Blunt, Anthony. "The First Illuminated Books." *Blake – A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. by Northrop Frye. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966. 127-141.
- Bøggild, Jacob. "An Inquiry into a Couple of Examples in Kierkegaard and Paul de Man." *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook 1997*. Ed. by N. J. Cappelörn and H. Deuser. Berlin – NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1997. 253-269.
- Brooks, Cleanth. "Irony as a Principle of Structure." *Critical Theory since Plato*. Ed. by H. Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971. 1041-1048.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well-Wrought Urn*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947.

- Brown, Sarah Annes. *The Metamorphosis of Ovid*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1999.
- Bullitt, John M. *Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire – A Study of Satiric Technique*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.
- Chase, Cynthia. "Giving a Face to a Name: De Man's Figures." *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. 82-113.
- Chevalier, Jean and Alain Gheerbrant. *Dictionary of Symbols*. Trans. by John Buchanan-Brown. Penguin Books, 1996.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Irony. The New Critical Idiom*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions. I. The Collected Works*. Ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. Routledge & Kegan Paul: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Cooper, Andrew M. *Doubt and Identity in Romantic Poetry*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Cox-Rearick, Janet (ed.). *Giulio Romano – Master Designer*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Critchley, Simon. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1993.
- Crowther, Paul. *The Kantian Sublime – From Morality to Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Curran, Leo C. "Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." *Arethusa* 5 (1972): 71-91.
- Damon, S. Foster. *A Blake Dictionary*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988.
- Damrosch, Leopold Jr. *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- de Man, Paul. *Aesthetic Ideology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.
- de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- de Man, Paul. *The Resistance to Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.
- de Man, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- de Man, Paul. In *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism. The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers*. Ed. by E. S. Burt, K. Newmark and A. Warminski. Baltimore – London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

- Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Memoires for Paul de Man*. Trans. by C. Lindsay, J. Culler and E. Cadava. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Memoirs of the Blind*. Trans. by M. B. Naas and P.-A. Brault. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Derrida, Jacques. "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy." Trans. by John Leavey, Jr. *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*. Ed. by Peter Fenves. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999. 117-171.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Psyché. Invention de l'autre." *Psyché*. Paris: Galilée, 1987. 11-61.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Psyche: Inventions of the Other." Trans. by Catherine Porter. *Reading de Man Reading*. Ed. by Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 25-65.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Parergon. The Truth in Painting*. Trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978. 15-147.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Typewriter Ribbon: Limited Ink (2)." Jacques Derrida. *Without Alibi*. Trans. by Peggy Kamuf. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002. 71- 160.
- Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the text of Philosophy." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. 207-271.
- Eaves Morris. *William Blake's Theory of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Eilenberg, Susan. "The Haunted Language of the Lucy Poems." *Strange Power of Speech*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Engell, James. *The Creative Imagination (Enlightenment to Romanticism)*. Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Erdman, David V. *Blake – Prophet Against Empire*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.
- Escher, M. C. *Eye*. In *Grafikák és rajzok*. Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1992.
- Fantham, Elaine. *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Frye, Northrop. *Fearful Symmetry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Galinsky, G. Karl. *Ovid's Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Gilchrist, Alexander. *Life of William Blake Pictor Ignotus*. Ed. by Richard Holmes. London: Harper Perennial, 2005.

- Grant, John E. "Two Flowers in the Garden of Experience." *William Blake – Essays for S. Foster Damon*. Ed. by Alvin H. Rosenfeld. Providence: Brown University Press, 1969. 333-367.
- Griffin, Dustin. *Satire. A Critical Reintroduction*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994.
- Gross, Kenneth. *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Guilhamet, Leon. *Satire and the Transformation of Genre*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.
- Hamacher, Werner. "Lectio. De Mans Imperativ." *Entferntes Verstehen. Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1998.
- Hamacher, Werner. "LECTIO: de Man's Imperative." Trans. by Susan Bernstein. *Reading de Man Reading*. Ed. by Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 171- 201.
- Hardie, Philip. *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987.
- Hertz, Neil. *The End of the Line – Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Hirsch, E. D. *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Huntington, Williams. *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Johnson, Mary Lynn. "Emblem and Symbol in Blake." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1974): 151-70.
- Kajanto, Iiro. *Ovid's Conception of Fate*. Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1961.
- Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgement*. Trans. by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1978.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, Werkausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. Text der Ausgabe 1790, (A) mit Beifügung sämmtlicher Abweichungen der Ausgaben 1793 (B) und 1799 (C). Ed. Karl Kehrbach, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., 18--?.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der Ästhetischen Urtheilskraft. Werke in sechs Bänden, Band 4*. Köln: Könnemann, 1995.
- Keith, William J. "The Complexities of Blake's 'Sunflower': An Archetypal Speculation." *Blake — A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. by Northrop Frye. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966. 56-64.

- Keynes, Geoffrey. Introduction and Commentary to William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Paris: Oxford University Press & The Trianon Press, 1975.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Irony – With Continual Reference to Socrates*. Ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Repetition*. In *Kierkegaard's Writings*. Trans. by H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Kronick, Joseph G. "Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida." *MLN*, Vol. 115, No. 5, *Comparative Literature Issue*, (Dec. 2000), 997-1018. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3251174>> [accessed: 08.05.2008]
- Leavis, F. R. "The Irony of Swift." *Swift – A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. by Ernest Tuveson. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964. 15-29.
- Lentricchia, Frank. *After the New Criticism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980.
- Loesberg, Jonathan. *Aestheticism and Deconstruction: Pater, Derrida, and de Man*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Loesberg, Jonathan. "From Victorian Consciousness to an Ethics of Reading: The Criticism of J. Hillis Miller." In *Victorian Studies* 37 (1993): 99-121.
- Lukács György. *A regény elmélete*. In: *A heidelbergi művészetfilozófia és esztétika. A regény elmélete*. Budapest: Magvető, 1975.
- Lynn, Enterline. *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Martindale, Charles (ed.). *Ovid Renewed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Martyn, David. *Sublime Failures – The Ethics of Kant and Sade*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003.
- Miller, Jane M. "Some Versions of Pygmalion." *Ovid Renewed*. Ed. by Martindale Charles. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 205-214.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. *The Ethics of Reading (Kant, de Man, Trollope, James, and Benjamin)*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. "Response to Jonathan Loesberg." *Victorian Studies* 37 (1993): 123-128.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. "The Search for Grounds in Literary Study." *Rhetoric and Form: Deconstruction at Yale*. Ed. by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. 19-36.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. *Theory Now and Then*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. *Version of Pygmalion*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990.

- Miller, Joseph Hillis. *Victorian Subjects*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *Blake's Composite Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. "Visible Language: Blake's Wond'rous Art of Writing." Ed. by Morris Eaves and Michael Fischer. *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986. 46-86.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. by Mary M. Innes. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, The Penguin Classics, 1955, repr. 1961.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. by Allen Mandelbaum. New York and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1993.
- Paley, Morton D. *Apocalypse and Millenium in English Romantic Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- Plato. *The Collected Dialogues*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Prickett, Stephen. *Narrative, Religion and Science – Fundamentalism versus Irony, 1700-1999*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Pyle, Forest. *The Ideology of Imagination – Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Rawson, Claude. *Satire and Sentiment (1660 – 1830)*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Relihan, Joel C. *Ancient Menippean Satire*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Renza, Louis A. "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography." *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Ed. by James Olney. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1980. 268-295.
- Riffaterre, Michael. "Undecidability as Hermeneutic Constraint." *Literary Theory Today*. Ed. by P. Collier and H. Geyer-Ryan. New York: Cornell University Press, 1990. 109-124.
- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rose, H. J. *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1959.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Confessions*. Trans. by J. M. Cohen. Penguin Books, 1967.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Narcisse ou l'Amant de lui-même. Oeuvres Complètes*, II. Paris: Gallimard, 1961. 959-1018.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Narcissus, or, the Lover of Himself. The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 10. Ed. and trans. by Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth and Christopher Kelly. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2004. 125-160.

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Pygmalion. The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 10. Ed. and trans. by Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth and Christopher Kelly. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2004. 230-236.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Pygmalion. Oeuvres Complètes*, II. Paris: Gallimard, 1961. 1224-1231.
- Scholes, Robert. *Protocols of Reading*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Schutter, Dirk De. "Words Like Stones." *(Dis)continuities: Essays on Paul de Man*. Ed. by Luc Herman, Kris Humbeeck and Geert Lernout. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989. 99-110.
- Segal, Charles Paul. *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses – A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1969.
- Siebers, Tobin. *The Ethics of Criticism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Sim, Stuart. *Irony and Crisis. A Critical History of Postmodern Culture*. London: Icon, 2002.
- Solodow, Joseph B. *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Spears, Monroe K. "Cleanth Brooks and the Responsibilities of Criticism." *The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work*. Ed. by Lewis P. Simpson. Louisiana State University Press, 1976. 230-252.
- Spengemann, William C. *The Forms of Autobiography (Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre)*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Starobinski, Jean. "The Style of Autobiography." Trans. by Seymour Chatman. *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Ed. by James Olney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. 73-83.
- Sturrock, John. *The Language of Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Summerfield, Henry. *A Guide to the Books of William Blake for Innocent and Experienced Readers*. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998.
- Swift, Jonathan. *A Tale of a Tub and other Satires*. London: Guernsey Press, 1987.
- Tannenbaum, Leslie. *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Tate, Allen. *Essays of Four Decades*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Thompson, E. P. *Witness Against the Beast – William Blake and the Moral Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Tolley, Michael J. "Blake's Songs of Spring." In *William Blake. Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*. Ed. by Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973. 96-128.

- Traugott, John. "A Tale of a Tub." *The Character of Swift's Satire – A Revised Focus*. Ed. by Rawson, Claude. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983. 83-126.
- Weber, Shierry M. "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*." *Comparative Literature*. Dec., 1968: 900-918.
- Weiskel, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Wellek, René. "Cleanth Brooks, Critic of Critics." *The Possibilities of Order: Cleanth Brooks and His Work*, edited by Lewis P. Simpson. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976. 196-229.
- Wilde, Alan. *Horizons of Assent. Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Wimsatt, William K. and Cleanth Brooks. *Literary Criticism – A Short History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- Wimsatt, William K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954.
- Wittreich, Joseph Anthony, Jr. *Angel of Apocalypse – Blake's Idea of Milton*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975.
- William Wordsworth. *The Poetical Works*. Ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.
- Wordsworth, William. *The Prose Works. Volume II*. Ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

Earlier versions of chapters, or parts of chapters, have appeared as follows:

- "The Ethics of Reading – a Postmodern Theory?" *Pedagogika*, Vilnius Pedagogical University, Vilnius, 2004, Nb. 71. 12-17. (ISSN 1392-0340)
- "The Rhetor(eth)ical Reading of the Material and Romantic Sublime." *HUSSE Papers 2005. Proceedings of the Seventh Biennial Conference*, ed. Jenő Bárdos, Veszprém, 2006: 27-35.
- "The Ironical Allegory of Remembrance and Oblivion (In Memory of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida)." *The AnaChronisT* 11 (2005): 233-252.
- "Vamp-irony: the Bestiality of the Socratic Irony". *Monsters and the Monstrous. At the Interface Series, Volume 4*, ed. Paul Yoder and Peter Mario Kreuter, Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2004, 191-202 (ISBN 1-9047-10-21-2)
- "The 'Thing' Betwixt and Between – Irony and Allegory in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal' ." *HUSSE Papers 2003*, Debrecen, 2004: 7-15.
- "Blake's Anironic Satire in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*." *Lingua Viva*, České Budějovice: Universitatis Bohemiae Meridionalis, 2006/3, 9-18. (ISSN 1801-1489)
- "'Labour of Love' – Ovidian Flower-Figures in William Blake's *Songs*" in *Eger Journal of English Studies*, Vol. VIII, Antal Éva and Csaba Czeglédi (ed.), Eger: EKf Líceum Kiadó, 2008, 23-40 (HU ISSN 1786-5638)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Now, on the last page, I would like to thank my teachers, friends and also teacher-friends – Gergely Angyalosi, Enikő Daróczi, Gabriella Daróczi, Marianna Juhász, Enikő Harmati, Béla Szabó, Mihály Vajda, and Albert Vermes – for their encouragement and attention given to me in the last 10 years.

I also thank the colleagues and friends at Kingston University, London, who helped me finish this book in Spring 2008. I am grateful to Meg Jensen, the Director of the Centre for Life Narratives for inviting me and to Matthew Birchwood and Professor Rafey Habib for the fruitful discussions we had in Kingston. I am also very grateful to Siobhan Campbell and Bridget Kenningham for their help with the completion of the book. I am obliged to say my special thanks to the Balassi Institute and the Hungarian Scholarship Board (Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság) as my 3-month research in London was funded by a Hungarian State Eötvös Scholarship granted by the Board in 2008.

And finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my parents, my brother and my husband, Vasilios, for their support, patience, and love. Without their inspiration I could not have become a good reader.

In these essays, Eva Antal undertakes a thorough investigation of the rhetoric and ethics of reading. Drawing on the insights of deconstructive critics such as Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller, as well as their critiques of their New Critical predecessors, she offers a fascinating account of the ways in which irony constitutes the core of rhetoric as well as of the process of reading itself and of textual understanding. Highlighting the manner in which our (allegorical) reading practice is informed by notions such as “ethicity” or “ethics-in-difference,” where ethical imperatives are linguistic and differential in their very nature, she explores how narrative is integral to our ethical understanding. She indicates subtly how rhetoric, understood in this ironic manner, might valuably inform our pedagogy, and how it might be analyzed in a variety of texts, which she reads extremely closely, ranging from Swift’s satires to the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth.

Dr. M.A.R. Habib, Professor of English, Rutgers University