

Beginnings and Endings

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I

It is often said of literary works that they supply the means to their own understanding, that they should within themselves give to the reader (should? or do they even without their own knowing?) a knowledge of the means to how they can be most fruitfully read. In this vein, to begin this essay I put forward this little gem of Nietzsche's.

Parable. – Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclic orbits are not the most profound. Whoever looks into himself as into a vast space and carries galaxies in himself, also knows how irregular all galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence. (*Gay*, 254)

II

“We have become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions” – a beginning to stand beside “Heads” in the pantheon of great opening lines. Like “Heads” it is not only the first words uttered but the very moment of beginning, the seed cast out into the dark, eager theater out of which all that follows will grow. The source of this line is the film *The Truman Show*. The scene is Christof, the creator and director of “The Truman Show,” speaking in interview to the viewing world of the show, and of the movie.

The line glistens with potentiality. Truman may not be an actor, but he is an unwitting participant in a world that is both television program and endless commercial, fixed on a 1950's sitcom-sterile set. As this is Truman's world it cannot but modify Truman's actions. Yet Christof, in the final moments of the film, will answer Truman's questions as to the un-reality of this world with “You were real. That's what made you so good to watch.” There is to be found here a means to a division between the real and the fake, between the phony and the not. Truman's world is pre-conceived, as was his life and the events that transpired therein. There may not be a script, but there is control. The dialogue may be ad-libbed, but the scenes are choreographed. Yet, underneath the artificial and contrived there is an aspect of Truman that is, nonetheless, real: it is this aspect that we first see of Truman, as he plays

before his bathroom mirror in a mountain climbing dialogue with himself. The division is established: his is a life limited to reacting to a coercive choreography, broken with moments of free play. We see a world exteriorly enforced, and a body breaking free before a mirror.

Bring in the audience and the polysemy expands, for to them what they are watching is not a person but a television show. The emotions are read by the contextual audience as television emotions, the motivations understood as television motivations. Even the free play is perceived as part of the television world. Witness the barmaids discussing the show's actions in language congruent with that which encircles soap operas. Contrary to Christof's declaration, the ultimate, keenest observation is that for this audience there are no non-phony emotions on television: or, phony, for the audience, is that which does not fit within the frame of the television. "The Truman Show" has obtained the highest level of mimeticism – a mimeticism that is not a mimicry, it is the real thing – and yet is still but television, still perceived as 'show.' The real ends up being not any different than the purely scripted, once it emits from the television screen. Truman may not be an actor within the borders of Seahaven, but he is nonetheless an actor within the borders of a television set. An apple had been held out to the world on day 1, and the world, as it is want to do, bit. And on top of all that there is the fact that what *you* are watching is not "The Truman Show" the television show but *The Truman Show* the movie. These *are* actors after all; this is, however much Christof denies it, "pyrotechnics and special effects."

Here is the opening scene in full:

We've become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions. We're tired of pyrotechnics and special effects. While the world he inhabits is in some respects counterfeit, there is nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards. It isn't always Shakespeare but it's genuine. It's a life.

Like "Heads" (and the litany of "Heads" which follow it) the lines open the work emphatically, an accosting of the audience with the very nature of that which is about to occur before their eyes. In the case of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* it is the occurring of an impossibility, the division between narrative and meta-narrative, the blatant pointing out of the difference between the fictive and the not. With *The Truman Show* one is presented with similar terms – if with a difference. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* presents the meta-narrative and expounds on it, plays with it. You watch and enjoy the play (and the movie) awash in the continuous reaffirmation of the fact that these are, after all, characters, and their words and deeds were scripted by a person not them.

In *The Truman Show* there is no re-affirmation. Information is presented

up front for the taking. Whether you take it or not is up to you.

What you see: Christof, director, creator, leaning toward, speaking to an audience, to *the* audience?, perhaps to you. He fills the whole screen, he is pleasingly attired, pleasingly, welcomingly positioned. You want to listen to him. For the briefest instant you are unavoidably outside (yet so brief perhaps even that instant is illusory), as he speaks his apology. What is happening: the old witch stands at the cottage window, apple in hand. “We have become bored with watching actors give us phony emotions.” The meaning is bright and red and so delicious and tempting: “Watch with me, with everyone, our show, ‘The Truman Show.’ It’s the story of a man. You’ll laugh, you’ll cry. It’s everything you could want. Doesn’t it look delicious? Take a bite.

“Everyone else will.”

* * *

Some few will not: it is a temptation after all, not a fiat. The weak and the willing and those who do not know better bite hard and swallow. Others, a few, do not succumb (or, recognize the choice and choose). There is a division here: a division in perception between those who see the witch’s disguise and those who don’t.

This division is discussed by José Ortega y Gasset in his essay “The Dehumanization of Art.” The Essay is a sociological study, an observation of art and its reception, with the focus centered on ‘modern art.’ His most immediate and broadest observation is:

Modern art [. . .] will always have the masses against it, It is essentially unpopular; moreover, it is antipopular. Any of its works automatically produces a curious effect on the general public. It divides the public into two groups: one very small, formed by those who are favorably inclined towards it; another very large – the hostile majority. (Let us ignore that ambiguous fauna – the snobs.) Thus the work of art acts like a social agent which segregates from the shapeless mass of the many two different castes of men. (5)

Becoming a bit more specific, he continues:

[I]n the case of the new art the split occurs in a deeper layer than that on which differences of personal taste reside. It is not that the majority does not *like* the art of the young and the minority likes it, but that the majority, the masses, do not *understand* it. (5-6)

Some things need immediately to be noted, to prevent misconceptions. First, ‘modern art’ is merely the slide currently under the microscope. When Ortega y Gasset writes of the characteristics of modern art, he is not delineating a

prescription for art: he is analyzing a test case available to him at the time, beginning with observations on art's reception and then turning back to analysis of its characteristics (37n.). Second, questions as to why the division exists, or why it seems to exist in the proportion of the many/the few need to be set aside for the reading of this essay: they are not what is pertinent to the moment. The task at hand is observation, and it is easily enough made. In recent times it was visible in a comparison of the receptions of the films *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Thin Red Line*. Though Ortega y Gasset uses the word "understand," the obstacles to understanding are not but complexity. Still, when you read Ortega y Gasset's analysis backwards a 'knowledge' is present with these 'understanders' of art. In metaphor, it is recognized in knowing the old woman get-up is a disguise. In practice, it is a recognition of what there is about the work of art in hand that is there to be understood. Ortega y Gasset divides this recognition between the *lived* and the *observed*, a division made evident by the non-representational forms of modern art. When the idea within the art object is non-representational, de-humanized, the observer is denied a realistic image to live and attention is forced upon the object itself. The majority does not understand modern art because they look solely for the lived element in any text, they are unable to examine a text as a text. The ability – and, perhaps, willingness – to observe is lacking.

Seeing requires distance. Each art operates a magic lantern that removes and transfigures its objects. On its screen they stand aloof, inmates of an inaccessible world, in an absolute distance. When this derealization is lacking, an awkward perplexity arises: we do not know whether to "live" the things or observe them. (28)

Ortega y Gasset defines this distance by separating the "things" from the ideas we connect to them.

The relation between our mind and things consists in that we think the things, that we form ideas about them. We possess of reality, strictly speaking, nothing but the ideas we have succeeded in forming about it. [. . .] By means of ideas we see the world, but in a natural attitude of the mind we do not see the ideas – the same as the eye in seeing does not see itself. In other words, thinking is the endeavor to capture reality by means of ideas; the spontaneous movement of the mind goes from concepts to the world.

But an absolute distance always separates the idea from the thing. The real thing always overflows the concept that is supposed to hold it. An object is more and other than what is implied in the idea about it. The idea remains a bare pattern, a sort of scaffold with which we try to get at reality.

[. . .]

If we now invert the natural direction of this process; if, turning our back on alleged reality, we take the ideas for what they are – mere subjective patterns – and make them live as such, lean and angular, but pure and transparent; in short, if we deliberately propose to “realize” our ideas – then we have dehumanized and, as it were, derealized them. [. . .]

A traditional painter painting a portrait claims to have got hold of the real person when, in truth and at best, he has set down on the canvas a schematic selection, arbitrarily decided on by his mind, from the innumerable traits that make a living person. What if the painter changed his mind and decided to paint not the real person but his own idea, his pattern, of the person? (37-8)

The many look through the text to the ‘reality’ presented within. How many times did I hear the exclamation “*Saving Private Ryan* is the best representation of WWII combat ever on film”? I have heard in various media the exact same statement said of *Tora, Tora, Tora* (made remarkable in that the film broke from contemporary practice and did not use actual WWII footage, but shot its own combat scenes) and the television show *Black Sheep Squadron* (which did use actual combat footage), as well as a number of other films including the epic *Saving Private Ryan* supposedly supplanted, *The Longest Day*. E. H. Gombrich writes

When the cinema introduced “3-D,” the distance between expectation and experience was such that many enjoyed the thrill of a perfect illusion. But the illusion wears off once the expectation is stepped up; we take it for granted and want more. (61-2)

The emptiness of such proclamations of “supreme realism” is revealed in the wearing off of the newness of the visual effect.

The point being made is twofold. First, as Ortega y Gasset observes, the text is not being viewed, only the world that the text conjures. When *The Thin Red Line* came out after *Saving Private Ryan*, people did not know what to do with it, with its irregular narration and shifting focalization. It is not representational; or, the representative aspect is upset by the non-representational aspects of the film’s structure. The viewing public could not step out of a theater showing *The Thin Red Line* and acclaim their having experienced WWII, so they step out confused. Second, and this is an extension of the first point, there is an inherent falsity in *any* statement of representation. The basic fact is that the film – any film, any photograph, any text – *does not*, and more to the point, *is incapable of* reproducing an event as experienced by the participants. As Ortega y Gasset explains: “A traditional

painter [. . .] *claims* to have got hold of the real person.” Not only is there an editing process involved in the transfer of image from world to idea but as well there is a contamination, a re-creation of information when the idea is made into the film (or painting or book) received by the viewer: the semiotic path is in no means a pure one. Any claims of best representation is nullified by the fact that much (if not most) of the information the viewer ‘lives’ is being supplied by the viewer themselves. The viewer of *Saving Private Ryan* was not so much stepping into daylight having ‘lived’ Normandy Beach as much as they had lived what they think Normandy Beach might have been like. Present-day viewers of *The Longest Day* (and much of the body of WWII films, especially those of the 40's and 50's) may have trouble understanding how John Wayne could be perceived as J. Q. Soldier, or how battles could thrill without the blood, pyrotechnics and other (often severely contrived) effects of *Saving Private Ryan* and the film in question ever be considered an accurate representation of war. The answer lies in the inversion: it is the viewer bringing the war to the film who makes the film representative, not the film bringing the war to the viewer.

Many other films, say, *The Bridge at Remagen*, fills in all the necessary holes and provides all the necessary prompts to create the same ‘lived’ experience as does the recent pretender to the pretend throne. For that matter, the battle scene in *Aliens* where the company of marines first enters the alien hive is as vicious and violent and thrilling and terrifying as the opening sequence of *Saving Private Ryan*. The difference is but costume and scenery. The *ideas* are the same. The experience as viewed is the same. If it were not so, horror, or science fiction, and other non-mundane narrative lines would fall wholly upon uncomprehending eyes.

My point here is to show that what is proclaimed as representation in *Saving Private Ryan*, etc., is not representation at all. That is, what we consider to be representation is not what representation really is: the effect of the film, the ‘lived’ experience of the film, is not solely evoked by the qualities of the film itself. The film is actually little more than a vehicle to the concepts of the world (or the World War) that the viewer carries into the theater.

Ortega y Gasset asks “What if the painter changed his mind and decided to paint not the real person but his own idea, his pattern of the person?” We can also ask: what if the viewer changed their mind and decided not to see the world outside of and believed referred to by the text but decided to see the text itself as its own structure of ideas and patterns? What if they decided, instead of ‘living’ a text, to ‘observe’ a text? As Ortega y Gasset observed, most people do not understand such a shift. And as there is no societal limiting of the right of production of texts to the few who do (the majority who can not observe are the producers of the far majority of texts), most texts will not be very capable, to any great degree, of supporting such observing.

Their success as texts depends, instead, on the reader's willingness and desire to live the text, and the texts' willingness, and desire, to be lived; the division exists in creation as well as viewing.

* * *

The final scene of *The Truman Show* operates in close relation to the opening scene. While Truman's end-of-the-movie escape is interspersed with shots of the audience gripped with excitement, it is false to conclude that they are observing rather than living. The final scene of the film is of two of these audience members, the garage attendants, whose emotional involvement in the show has led them to minor derelictions of duty. "The Truman Show," the television show, goes off the air, and the movie ends with this dialogue:

"You want another slice?"

"No, I'm OK."

"What else is on?"

"Yeah, let's see what else is on."

"Where's the TV guide?"

Though Christof speaks in the opening of phoney actors and phoney emotions, his audience can not discern the phoney from the true; and with that, the very concepts of the true and phoney fall asunder.

The witch's last act is to quietly ask, in a voice no bigger than a whisper: "Did you too bite the apple?"

* * *

Ortega y Gasset's use of "idea" reminds me of a passage of Gerard Genette's, where he is speaking on the narratological concept of the implied author.

[. . .] the narrative text (like any other text) produces a certain *idea* (taking everything into account, this term is preferable to "image," and it is high time to substitute it for image) *of the author* [. . .] (148)

The line of which I am reminded is the parenthetical (though context goes to understanding): "taking everything into account, this term is preferable to "image," and it is high time to substitute it for image." The point Genette makes is congruent to that made by Ortega y Gasset: the concept of image is untrue to a verbal text (and, ultimately, only limitedly true of even a visual text). To refer, in discussing verbal texts, to images is to do an injustice to the nature of the text by substituting the lived world for the observed structure of the text. Within a literary complex of signifiers, a referent is being substituted for a signification – and they are not in the least bit exchangeable (except,

perhaps, in such cases as mentions¹). That which is lived by the lauders of *Saving Private Ryan* is a referent, not a signification. It is carried to the text from outside: it is external information.

In the aesthetic object the interaction is reversed. Ortega y Gasset writes of the observed art object:

The idea, instead of functioning as the means to think an object with, is itself made the object and the aim of thinking.
(19)

With this, there is coming into shape a need to recognize *medium*. What is the medium of a text? What are its factors? There is the language aspect, whether it be the verbal language (English, French, etc.) of a written text or a ‘language’ of the visual arts (like the symbolism of medieval iconography). There is the physical aspect: in the written text it extends from the actual book cover to the color and texture of the page to the form of the words on the page. There is also sound: words have sound and sound effects, music is obviously sound. I think of those pictures where all the items found therein have a common initial letter or sound in their name. As well, aural puns are not excluded from visual objects. There are also elements which exist as arrangements of other aspects of medium: structure producing elements like the poetic line break and foreshadowing. Here is a semiotic element which is not part of language but constructed from language as it appears on the page. I would argue that the iambic pentameter couplet of *The Rape of the Lock* is part of the *medium* of the work: to say the medium is the English language is to look too quickly. Even, the story of a text (distinguishing story from plot) is in part or whole a constituent of the medium, which ties into the final aspect of the medium I will list: the meaning producing.

From the concept of medium is developed the concept of *ideas as structures created out of the medium of the object*. In many cases these are semiotic events, be it the bathtub in David’s *Death of Marat*, created out of color and paint; the ‘rape’ in the aforementioned text, created out of the tale told; or this sentence, created out of printed words and syntax. Or, the meaning which is signified by the sentence. Or, the relationship between the meaning of that sentence and the meanings of those preceding and following it, extending to the first sentence on the first page of this essay, and the last on the last.

My intent here is to expand the concept of idea away from an overly simplistic, relational organization of linear signifiers, as well as to reiterate the distance between the “idea made the object of thinking” and the establishment

¹ A mention is a semiotic event wherein a sign is directly connected through a pointing of some manner with an object. For example (and this is a basic example), as though I were to say to you “Hand me that cup” while pointing to a cup on my desk. See Eco, 163ff.

of referent as the purpose of a lived object and its reception. Concerning the latter, Ortega y Gasset writes:

Instead of delighting in the artistic object people delight in their own emotions, the work being only the cause and the alcohol of their pleasure. And such a *quid pro quo* is bound to happen whenever art is made to consist essentially in an exposition of “lived” realities. “Lived” realities are too overpowering not to evoke a sympathy which prevents us from perceiving them in their objective purity. (28)

and:

Art must not proceed by psychic contagion, for psychic contagion is an unconscious phenomenon, and art ought to be full clarity, high noon of the intellect. Tears and laughter are, aesthetically, frauds. The gesture of beauty never passes beyond smiles, melancholy [*sic*] or delighted. If it can do without them, better still. “*Toute maîtrise jette le froid*” (Mallarmé). (27)

Notice the contrast of energies between the phrases “proceed by contagion” and “be full clarity.” The former reveals a kinetics of a text, an action, an operation upon the audience. The latter hints instead of potentials in a text, of things to be discovered and activated, of the text being operated upon by the audience. Also, take care with the latter excerpt. The first sentence should not be fragmented lest one too easily fall into positions of distaste. The statements are not as broad brushing as they may be read them to be. Nor are they free from critique.² As well, it should be pointed out that the concept of the observed as “high noon of the intellect” can be coexistent with certain aspects of the lived: they are not mutually exclusive. For can not the lived aspects be themselves part of the structure of the art object? If a character tells another character a joke, and the second character laughs in earnest, thus setting off a chain of events, the joke ought to be funny to the reader as well or the initial, causal event fails for the reader, weakening the structure of the work. Likewise, if a mood of mournfulness is part of a setting’s interaction with a character, then the mood should exist for the reader: or perhaps it is better to say the mood should be *apparent* to the reader. There is a distinction to be made there. This funniness, this mournfulness may be ‘lived,’ but their being lived is not their sole or final purpose. They exist so that they may expand the structure of the text, so that the structure of the text may expand by interaction with them. When analyzing a text, question whether the concepts

² “Beauty” I question in use. For the definition of beauty creates either the relationship that all art must be beautiful, or the reverse tautology that beauty is defined by art. The two are not coexistent, and are readily confused.

of internality and externality are being revisited. Is the primary action of the emotive aspect outward, upon the audience, or inward, within the structure of the text? “Tears and laughter” are not – and I counter Ortega y Gasset here – anathema to the literary aesthetic object. Their utility, however, may be.

There is, perhaps, a sort of superiority to works that can “do without” emotions, because emotion can conceal a fistful of failures. The aesthetically incompetent can easily hide (before the gaze of the many) behind laughter, even more easily behind tears, as the more somber of emotional responses carry with it a severity, a measure of seriousness that somehow raises it above the lighter moods in import. Yet, they are both merely the emotional, and, as is easily seen by the pages of *Life* magazine or through the cat juggling scene in *The Idiot*, both are easily enough evoked. So is alcohol easily enough imbibed.

Yet this does not mean they are without value. Everyone enjoys a good laugh.³ And I doubt I will ever tire of adventure films. Though, I enjoy all the more adventure films that have some aesthetic qualities operating behind the adventure itself. There is a passage in Gotthold Lessing’s *Laocoön* that finds interaction here.

[T]his single moment, if it is to receive immutable permanence from art, must express nothing transitory. According to our notions, there are phenomena, which we conceive as being essentially sudden in their beginning and end and which can be what they are only for a brief moment. However, the prolongation of such phenomena in art, whether agreeable or otherwise, gives them such an unnatural appearance that they make a weaker impression the more often we look at them, until they finally fill us with disgust or horror. La Mettrie, who had himself portrayed in painting and engraving as a second Democritus, seems to be laughing only the first few times we look at him. Look at him more often and the philosopher turns into a fop. [. . .]

Among the ancient painters Timomachus seems to have been the one most fond of subjects that display extreme passion. His raving Ajax and infanticide Medea were famous paintings, but from the descriptions we have of them it is

³ There is an interesting aspect of structure that is related to laughter in another way: an aesthetic object causes pleasure which can itself cause laughter. I have seen logical arguments and mathematical operations that have such a grace, as it were, that as they unfold one is brought to smiles and even laughter. This again just to point out that the aesthetic is not by necessity sterile: though such a statement should be qualified: sterile to *everybody*.

clear that he thoroughly understood and was able to combine two things: that point or moment which the beholder not so much sees as adds in his imagination, and that appearance which does not seem so transitory as to become displeasing through its perpetuation in art. Timomachus did not represent Medea at the moment when she was actually murdering her children, but a few moments before, when a mother's love was still struggling with her vengefulness. We can foresee the outcome of the struggle; we tremble in anticipation of seeing Medea as simply cruel, and our imagination takes us far beyond what the painter could have shown us in this terrible moment. (20-1)

We are all familiar with books and films that in subsequent viewings were not as exciting (or horrifying, or whatever) as at first (or, exciting at all), texts wherein what was thrilling on the first viewing is comedic or even bathetic after seen a couple of times. The lived reality wears thin without a structure sustaining it. There is found in this concept a relation to genre fictions, where narrative events thin as the genre ages and as the lived response needs fewer and fewer prompts to be evoked. (Consider this not only from the text's but also from the reader's standpoint.)

There are a couple of other things to quickly point out about the Lessing excerpt. First, notice how the response to the Timomachus painting is described in active terms, not as a stable, singular response. Also, consider the differences that exist between a painted text as described and a written text: and the similarities as well. This I leave to you.

III

Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, like Ortega y Gasset's essay, also begins in observation, though from afar. Considering persons or groups who had staked a claim to an apocalyptic prophecy, Kermode wonders why, when the predicted date comes and goes and the expected apocalypse is unfulfilled, the people do not suffer an utter collapse of belief. Rather, the apocalyptic prophecy is adjusted, the errors accounted for, and a new apocalypse predicted.

I begin by discussing fictions of the End – about ways in which, under varying existential pressures, we have imagined the ends of the world. This, I take it, will provide clues to the way in which fictions, whose ends are consonant with origins, and in concord, however unexpected, with their precedents, satisfy our needs. So we begin with Apocalypse,

which ends, transforms, and is concordant. (5)

From apocalypses it is only a small step to a general statement. For this, Kermode utilizes Festinger's concept of consonance.⁴

Men in the midst may make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle. That is why the image of the end can never be *permanently* falsified. But they also, when awake and sane, feel the need to show a marked respect for things as they are; so that there is a recurring need for adjustments in the interest of reality as well as of control.

(17)

Here is the primary impetus of the apocalyptic: man is born into the midst. Events do not become ends: there is always a continuing after. Nor are events beginnings, there was always a leading to. But, to organize, to understand, to make sense of life in the midst, to create the comfort of meaning, man must fabricate a beginning and an end from out of the midst. To speak it in the most general terms, it is the *desire for structure*.

[I]t makes little difference – though it makes some – whether you believe the age of the world to be six thousand years or five million years, whether you think time will have a stop or that the world is eternal; there is still a need to speak humanly of a life's importance in relation to it – a need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end. (3-4)

Of course, the characteristics of the midst are ever changing, so the fabricated narratives, as with their beginnings and ends, must also continually change. In the sense of the situation described above the change is affected by reorganizing, re-targeting the old, no longer acceptable apocalypse and creating a new one, which will be maintained until either it is fulfilled or it fails. This method Kermode labels the naïve: the continual effort toward creating and, after disconfirmation, recreating numerical and “literal predictions.” There is, however a second approach to the creation of time-organizing fictions, that of clerkly skepticism: “There was something that might be called skepticism among the learned – a recognition that arithmetical predictions of the end are bound to be disconfirmed” (8-10). Here the division of the many and the few observed by Ortega y Gasset finds a new description: that of the naïve versus the clerkly.

Pause for a moment in this idea of a ‘desire for structure.’ One reading of this phrase could be the need for “a place for everything and everything in its

⁴ L. Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, NY, 1964 (Kermode's reference).

place,” as the saying goes. This is a very naïve structure, for it is a very defined structure – one too defined to fit in the fuzzy world of signifiers. When perceived through clerkly eyes, however, the phrase *desire for structure* shifts from the desire to create structure to the desire to *find* structure. The naïve apocalypse defines a beginning, an end, and between them the middle that emerges from the first and points to the latter. The clerkly recognizes the impossibility of the naïve construction. And it *is* a construction: an externally applied construct. Yet, the desire for structure still exists. Only in the clerkly recognition it is not expressed in rigid forms: the literal predictions and numeric calculations fall short of their understanding of the world. Change is accepted not in rewriting, but in never writing so fixedly to begin with.

Of course,

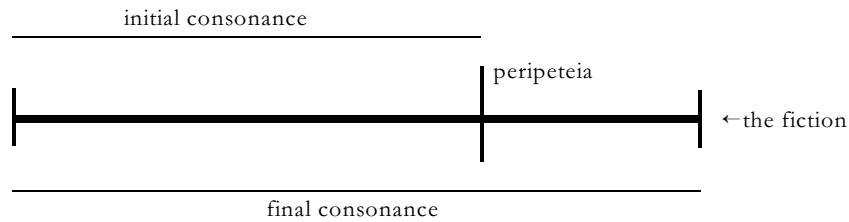
This has relevance to literary plots, images of the grand temporal consonance; and we may notice that there is the same co-existence of naïve acceptance and scepticism here as there is in apocalyptic. (17)

“Images of the grand temporal consonance” is a lovely phrase. Let us modify it somewhat to find a line with Genette: “*Ideas* of the grand temporal consonance.” (Though, can it not be said that the more naïve the text and/or reader, the more the reading is perceived, or wanted or willed to be perceived as images?) The disconfirmation of apocalypses, and the change necessitated in that disconfirmation, is seen in literary texts in peripeteia.

The story that proceeded very simply to its obviously predestined end would be nearer myth than novel or drama. Peripeteia [. . .] is present in every story of the least structural sophistication. Now peripeteia depends on our confidence of the end; it is a disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route. It has nothing whatever to do with any reluctance on our part to get there at all. So that in assimilating the peripeteia we are enacting that readjustment of expectations in regard to an end which is so notable a feature of naïve apocalyptic.

And we are doing rather more than that; we are, to look at the matter in another way, re-enacting the familiar dialogue between credulity and scepticism. The more daring the peripeteia, the more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality; and the more certainly we shall feel that the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the ordinary balance of our naïve expectations, is finding something out for us, something *real*. (18)

I'll pluck a couple phrases out. First, look at “the more daring the peripeteia.” How does this reveal “something *real*” in the sense of a clerkly observation? It might first help to diagram the relationship between peripeteia in a text and the consonance between beginning and end.



There is at the start of the fictive an initial consonance, and an initial apocalyptic narrative. The beginning points to an expected end, and everything in between follows out of and toward those two marks. When the peripeteia occurs, there is a reconfiguration: there is a *new* expected ending. Yet, there is still a consonance between the beginning and the end and everything that comes between it. The apocalyptic narrative is adapted to fit the old (if modified) beginning to the new ending. Thus, a more daring peripeteia, one that creates a wholly unexpected turn of events, upsets apocalyptic naïvete in that that part of the fictive before the peripeteia is consonant with two radically varying endings. There exists a radical polysemy in the text. The naïve reader will not perceive the polysemy: they will see the first consonance, and then, after the peripeteia, the second. The clerkly reader, however, sees both consonances concomitantly.

As well, the “daring” aspect of the greater clerkly texts is not to be limited to the moment of peripeteia. The elided text in the excerpt above is “which has been called the equivalent, in narrative, of irony in rhetoric.” The clerkly action of peripeteia is extended to every moment of the text: for just as there is no true beginning nor end in time nor peripeteias assignable to specific events in our lives, so can every event, every moment, in life or in text, be read as a potential peripeteia, a potential for irony, for polysemy, for fuzziness.

Am I saying clerkly readers will see both consonances the first time they pick up the book? No. I am a firm believer in the concept that the aesthetic literary work *must* be re-read in order to read it to any degree of enjoyment as a literary work.⁵ Relationships that point forward in the text need that coming

⁵ An actual material necessity ignored the ability of the mind to hold the whole during the reading, and act in itself descriptive of clerkly reading. The naïve reader lives primarily in the moment, and thus enjoys texts that are predictable, conventional, repeated. *See* n.7

section of text to be known so the relation is understood. (I am not referring to foreshadowing here.) Likewise with relationships that point backward. One example is of the mystery that, when being reread, suddenly shows quite plainly solutions to the mysteries that were near invisible before. “How could I have missed that!” you exclaim at every revealing. This is consonance in the mystery story: the state of ignorance of the solution unknown of the first reading coexists with the state of recognition that all those pointers that seem so obvious the second time around.⁶ (And excellent example of this is James Coburn’s puzzles in the film *The Last of Sheila*, the answers to which are all plainly revealed to the unwitting viewer in the first parts of the film.)⁷

Kermode is creating an opposition between “credulity” and “skepticism.” The parallel with Ortega y Gasset’s words “lived” and “observed” is easily made and resonant in the making. But, credulity and skepticism in what?

Kermode writes:

⁶ Kermode is operating under a temporal concept of the text, and he opposes it to Frank’s spatial form (52 ff). For me, both forms seem to hold validities that are too useful to be replaced, and I wonder if the ‘space-time’ of the physical model is too obvious a solution.

⁷ From Barthes’s *S/Z*:

[R]ereading is here suggested at the outset, for it alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere), multiplies it in its variety and its plurality: rereading draws the text out of its internal chronology (“this happens *before* or *after* that”) and recaptures a mythic time (without *before* or *after*); it contests the claim which would have us believe that the first reading is a primary, naïve, phenomenal reading which we will only, afterwards, have to “explicate,” to intellectualize (as if there were a beginning of reading, as if everything were not already read: there is no *first* reading, even if the text is concerned to give us that illusion by several operations of *suspense*, artifices more spectacular than persuasive); rereading is no longer consumption, but play (that play which is the return of the different). If then, a deliberate contradiction in terms, we *immediately* reread the text, it is in order to obtain, as though under the effect of a drug (that of recommencement, of difference), not the *real* text, but a plural text: the same and new.” (16)

Does the phrase “immediately reread” include the idea of rereading the *first* time the text is read? “There is no *first* reading.” Yes, to the degree it can be done: that is, an incomplete re-reading, or a re-reading slowly discovered. To do such a thing, willingness must be in the reader to read backwards, and to read again, in fragments if need be, out of order whenever required. But then is there an order in reading? or only an order in the text?

Broadly speaking, it is the popular story that sticks most closely to established conventions; novels the clerisy calls ‘major’ tend to vary them, and to vary them more and more as time goes by.⁸ (17)

The answer lies in something different – yet not something unseen – than what was found in Ortega y Gasset: “established conventions.” With Ortega y Gasset the division was found in the perception of the art object – in the ability to perceive the structure of the art object – and (by extension toward the artist) the creation of the structure of the art object with such differences of perception in mind. That is, living the superficial surface of the art object vs. observing the art object itself. Here, with Kermode, the division is being marked in how the art object is categorized and defined, how it is read (and written). A series of oppositions are starting to collect: lived vs. observed; external vs. internal; and now, naïve vs. clerkly, credulity vs. skepticism. Note that they are not units in opposition but the ends of spectrums not necessarily linear, yet still creating associations: credulity::external and skepticism::internal. Credulity in what? In the naïve apocalypse, giving form from without; in established conventions.

Once more, let’s turn to Kermode.

We cannot, of course, be denied an end; it is one of the great charms of books that they have to end. But unless we are extremely naïve, as some apocalyptic sects still are, we do not ask that they progress towards that end precisely as we have been given to believe. In fact, we should expect only the most trivial work to conform to pre-existent types.

(Stop right here for a moment. Do not be deceived that the “most trivial” signifies a *small* group of texts. The trivial are actually the large majority of texts.)

It is essential to the drift of all these talks that what I call the scepticism of the clerisy operates in the person of the reader as a demand for constantly changing, constantly more subtle, relationships between a fiction and the paradigms, and that this expectation enables a writer much inventive scope as he works to meet and transcend it. The presence of such paradigms in fictions may be necessary [. . .] but if the fictions satisfy the clerisy, the paradigms will be to a varying but always great extent attenuated or obscured. (23-4)

Conventions are external, obviously: they are referred to, duplicated, taken out of the common pool to be utilized. The clerkly “demand for constantly

⁸ That is, as time goes on, the new writings of the clerkly are more and more clerkly in character.

changing [. . .] relationships” works counter to conventionality, for there is no room for change in conventionality: if you alter the convention, it is no longer conventional. The credulous accept that which is handed to them; the skeptical seek their own way. From the perspective of the text written rather than the text read, the credulous text offers security in conventionality, attempts to conceal the fuzziness that reveals the fallibility of the naïve. The skeptical text offers ambiguities, complexities, plenty to observe but no easy answers, if any answers at all. “The reader is not offered easy satisfactions, but a challenge to creative co-operation” (19). Kermode speaks bluntly to this division in a summarizing statement I quote in full, as it will lead us forward:

We have vital interest in the structure of time, in the concords books arrange between beginning, middle, and end; and as the Chicago critics, with a quite different emphasis, would agree, we lose something by pretending we have not. Our geometries, in James’s word, are required to measure change, since it is on change, between remote or imaginary origins and ends, that our interests are fixed. In our perpetual crisis we have, at the proper seasons, under the pressure perhaps of our own end, dizzying perspectives upon the past and the future, in a freedom which is the freedom of a discordant reality. Such a vision of chaos or absurdity may be more than we can easily bear. Philip Larkin, though he speaks quietly, speaks of something terrible:

Truly, though our element is time,
 We are not suited to the long perspectives
 Open at each instant of our lives.
 They link us to our losses . . .⁹

Merely to give order to these perspectives is to provide consolation, as De Quincey’s opium did; and simple fictions are the opium of the people. But fictions too easy we call ‘escapist’; we want them not only to console but to make discoveries of the hard truth here and now, in the midst. [. . .] The books which seal off the long perspectives, which sever us from our losses, which represent the world of potency as a world of act, these are the books which, when the drug wears off, go on the dump with the other empty bottles. Those that continue to interest us move through time to an end, an end we must sense even if we cannot know it; they live in change, until, which is never, *as* and *is* are one. (178-9, italics Kermode’s)

⁹ From “Reference Back,” in *The Whitsun Weddings* (Kermode’s reference).

“Simple fictions are the opium of the people.” Opium and alcohol, the division comes around to the separation made by Ortega y Gasset: the many and the few. More so, it brings this division into the realm of the literary (though “simple fictions” as a phrase could also apply to other art mediums); and the whole of the existing body of written texts is brought into the same division. As well, the concept of literary aesthetics, of the literary art object, takes a more defined form: there is the structure of Ortega y Gasset, and the clerical consonance of Kermode. Yet there is an aspect in this conjoining that could use a closer look to ensure the meld of ideas is not irregular or disjointed.

Kermode’s clerical scepticism concerns meaning and the structures that create meaning. Ortega y Gasset’s observing of the text concerns structure, including (but not limited to) those structures that are involved with meaning production. There is a commonality, as is seen: but is their relationship limited to that commonality? or is there an interaction between the two ideas? To observe a text is to observe the text’s structure, and as meaning production is part of that structure a hierarchy seems apparent. Though, it is one that does not last: for the clerical also are observing, seeking structure in the matrix of potential meanings in which they live and read. A hierarchical relationship is denied: the stability of any such construct is created out of a momentary contextualization. The two ideas interact, interweave, integrate in the discussion of meaning: yet meaning is not the whole of the concern of Ortega y Gasset.

And neither is it, ultimately, in *The Sense of an Ending*. Kermode privileges meaning as a subject of his argument in the way Ortega y Gasset privileges modern art. When the two ideas of observing and scepticism are observed in full interaction, it is seen that structure, the ultimate concern of Ortega y Gasset, is also that of Kermode. As the clerical observe texts, they observe polysemies, the continual presence of peripeteia. They do not ‘live’ their fictions, for to do so would necessitate the collapse of polysemy into stable, externally proffered meanings: that is, stable, externally proffered structures.

* * *

Ortega y Gasset also has his own blunt statement, to accompany that of Kermode’s “simple fictions.”

A time must come in which society, from politics to art, reorganizes itself into two orders or ranks: the illustrious and the vulgar. That chaotic, shapeless, and undifferentiated state without discipline and social structure in which Europe has lived these hundred and fifty years cannot go on. Behind all contemporary life lurks the provoking and profound

injustice of the assumption that men are actually equal. Each move among men so obviously reveals the opposite that each move results in a painful clash. (7)

It is well worth bringing this into this matrix of ideas I am generating; but to follow up on it would initiate an expansion of that matrix into areas somewhat outside the domain of this essay. It is an unavoidable consequent of the clerkly: boundaries must be accepted, even if the text constantly seeks to, and succeeds in, overstepping them.

IV

Consider this observation, made by Paul Armstrong in *PMLA*:
 Even the most sophisticated theorists and the most practiced critics have stared blankly at a page, waiting for its configurations to suggest themselves. Beginning students may dream of one day becoming expert enough to comprehend a novel or a poem automatically – without the hesitancy, confusion, and uncertainty of experimenting with guesses – but the more experienced they become as interpreters, the more they realize that exegesis cannot escape trial and error. (342)

This experience of automatic comprehension occurs quite frequently with me: far too often for my preferences. The reason is simple: the more generic a fiction is the quicker such comprehension comes. This phenomena is a result of a seemingly (but not at all) paradoxical characteristic of genre fiction: it need not ever be read to comprehend it. The basis for its comprehension exists externally to the work, not between the covers. Poetry is not exempt: conventionality exists there as well.

The thing is, I generally don't finish works I comprehend instantly. Why? They are boring, of course. Why read a 300 page novel if I pretty much know what's going to happen, indeed, what is written in the whole of the book (within a small set of variations), after the first 30 pages? "For the artistry," a body might counter. Seemingly true; except for that there is a parallel characteristic to the one I offer above: the more generic a work is, the less artistic it generally is. The statement is imperfectly but revealingly commutative: the less artistic a work is the more generic it tends to be.

Another body may speak up: "That is not what Armstrong is talking about. He's talking about the ability to read works like Shakespeare and such." Which is *exactly* what I am talking about. Forbid it that I should ever read Shakespeare with instantaneous comprehension – for then that too will be

boring! But could it ever be such? To “dream of one day becoming expert enough” is Armstrong’s line – and it is a dream, according to him, not ill-aimed but foiled by the inescapability of “trial and error.” Apparently, for Armstrong, such a dream is the dream of all persons in literary studies, if one recognized to be impossible. Yet what assumptions are carried by such a statement?

Let’s begin with the most readily apparent: being schooled in the literary arts is a matter of being schooled in hermeneutics. A literary work, by this accounting, is there to be read to the purpose of discerning meaning. This assumption is discernible (often overtly) in the language of criticism centered on hermeneutics. The essay from which the above excerpt is taken is itself an attempt to mediate between the extremes of monist and relativist hermeneutics.

Neither position can account for the paradox that characterizes the actual practice of our discipline: we have legitimate disagreements about what literary works mean, but we are also able to say that some readings are wrong, not simply different. (341)

Look at the two phrases “what literary works mean” and “some readings are wrong.” The activity of ‘reading’ a literary work is stated as (and limited to) an activity of discerning the meaning of the work. Behind the question of conflicts of interpretation lies the premise that interpreting is the purpose of both the literary work and, as Armstrong states, “the actual practice of our discipline.”

Of course, there are corollaries that follow. First is the idea that the work is written with that specific activity in mind. With some texts, a geometry text for example, that is undeniably true. But is that intent universal in application? Also, the practice of searching for meanings implies that meanings can be found. While Armstrong considers the “rigidity of the monists” to be as “unacceptable” as “the nihilism of the radical relativists” (341), the implication of the hermeneutic exercise is still that a meaning, be it singular or (limitedly) multiple, is not only discernible and extractable but recordable and verifiable. If this were not the case, if it were accepted that there were a body of literary works whose meanings were undeniably *not so*, then this “practice of our discipline” must immediately be tossed as inappropriate to the texts at hand, and potentially inappropriate to all creative texts. Refusing the existence of such an obstinate set of works, where does such a practice of our discipline ultimately lead us? To a multi-volume set that organizes in dictionary-like format, listed by title, the accepted ‘readings,’ condensed, accompanied by recognized variants, much in the manner of chess-opening books, of every literary work. But if such a reference were available, were possible, why bother to read, or even write?

You may have guessed where this is going: Cleanth Brooks and the heresy of paraphrase.

But the reader may well ask: is it not possible to frame a proposition, a statement, which will adequately represent the total meaning of the poem; that is, is it not possible to elaborate a summarizing proposition which will “say,” briefly and in the form of a proposition, what the poem “says” as a poem, a proposition which will say it fully and will say it exactly, no more and no less? Could not the poet, if he had chosen, have framed such a proposition? Cannot we as readers and critics frame such a proposition?

The answer must be that the poet himself obviously did not – else he would not have had to write his poem. (205-6)

Brooks operates under the same assumption as does Armstrong: the literary exercise is exegetical in nature. The poet writes their poem to transmit a meaning presumably not transferrable any other way. In the above excerpt the heresy is revealed in the necessity of the poem being in the form created to encapsulate and to transmit that meaning. The hermeneutically abstracted “proposition” Brooks dislikes is not set counter to the poem itself, but against the poem’s meaning, “what the poem ‘says’ as a poem.” Look at another excerpt:

Indeed it is just because I am suspicious of such necessarily abstract paraphrases that I think our initial question, “What does the poem communicate?” is badly asked. It is not that the poem communicates nothing. Precisely the contrary. The poem communicates so much and communicates it so richly and with such delicate qualifications that the thing communicated is mauled and distorted if we attempt to convey it by any vehicle less subtle than that of the poem itself. (72-3)

Here, the “thing communicated,” presumably meaning, is of primary importance. The poem is reduced merely to a “vehicle” created to communicate that meaning. The same assumptions and corollaries fall into place: meaning is the purpose of reading; meaning is also the purpose of writing. The poem was written because the poet had some meaning they desired to express, and by the strange logic implied in Brooks’s semantics, that meaning could only be expressed as a poem – even, as a *specific* poem. A bizarre chicken and egg scenario arises: how can the meaning pre-exist the poem if the poem did not exist in the poet’s mind as the signifier of meaning? Did Shakespeare walk about

“Hey! I’ve got an idea for a sonnet!”

“Good job, Will. What’s it about?”

“Well, what I’m trying to convey is shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: rough winds do shake [etc.]”

“Well, Will! That’s the poem right there!”

“Of course it is, you git. How else could it be said? Did somebody happen to write that down?”

“But meaning develops through and with the act of writing,” the advocate might reply. To say such is to remove intent from the work: if meaning does not pre-exist the work then no intent to a meaning can be said to pre-exist the work. If meaning develops with the work then the writer is playing with meaning not only as a writer but as a reader, examining that which lays before them and creating in interaction with that which is already created. Meaning is no longer primary, the poem itself is primary. And we end up with the situation in which both intent and hermeneutic necessity is out the window.

It seems that the simple yet mystical concept of the *donnée* operates sufficiently enough toward disrupting this primacy of meaning. It happens that some idea, some small experience, some item perceived, some event or existent, strikes the mind. Out of that often quite small tidbit grows a poem, a story, a novel, some literary work. The fact that the originating element is *not* some ‘meaning’ desired to be conveyed questions the position of any meaning that exists in the final product as the primary purpose of reading that work. Meaning may have developed – and most likely will in one form or another – as the structure of the work developed. But if the work did not originate in the intent to convey a specific meaning (if through subtle means), why focus all energies of reading on the resulting meaning as though its existence was the purpose for the creation and public existence of the work?

Brooks also states:

The truth is that the apparent irrelevancies which metrical pattern and metaphor introduce do become relevant when we realize that they function in a good poem to modify, qualify, and develop the total attitude which we are to take in coming to terms with the total situation. (208-9)

Literariness, the reason, one presumes, *Essay on Man* is found in the literature section of the bookstore and not in the philosophy section, is set here merely as the cognitive prep-work in anticipation of a communication of meaning.

“But *Essay on Man*,” a body says, “was most definitely conceived to convey a meaning.” I would not deny this. Just as I would not deny the emphatic response to the above description of *donnée* by a person who insists that that is not at all how they write. But, as the saying goes, it only takes one black

flamingo.¹⁰ If *Essay on Man* is meant to be read hermeneutically, does that necessitate that *all* texts are to be read in such a way? As well, if a text *can* be read hermeneutically, does that necessitate that the hermeneutic exercise is the primary, appropriate response to the text, that it must be so read? And, if a text can be read hermeneutically, does it mean it *should* be?

When the artist perceives the moment of beauty, when they are struck by an aesthetic occurrence, when they glance across the room and see the shallow folds of a thick, pink sweater and a hand forgotten at its neck and WHAM a possible aesthetic object or the first thoughts there to coalesces before their eyes, their desire is to share the vision, to recreate it through their chosen medium. No one questions this drive in painters or sculptors. Why then in the literary arts? Literariness, is the result of that drive in the linguistic medium. If a poet sits beside a painter before a scene and recreates in script what the painter also recreates in brush-strokes, why is the painting experienced and the poem exegetically analyzed? Has anyone ever quoted a painting or sculpture as the *coup de grâce* of a debate? as the artistically enunciated piece of wisdom whose truth is doubly emphatic for the source and author thereof?

“As the painter says, *The Rape of the Sabine Women*.”

“Damn you, Pickersdale! Always with the perfect painting at your lips.”

“Merely a parlor trick. I take no credit.”

“I do freely admit it, you are an astoundingly well-viewed person.”

Which is not to say literary works should not be quotable. They are, most definitely. But from where comes the jump from quotability to truth as *raison d'être*?

V

An end line:

I have seen things you people wouldn't believe.

It is the first sentence of the last utterance of Roy in *Blade Runner*.¹¹ Words spoken to the title character, Deckard, who until moments before was seeking Roy's life; now saved from a fall off a building and most certain death by the

¹⁰ And I assure you, that is most definitely a brief description of the *donnée* as it works in this mind.

¹¹ Lines from the director's cut of *Blade Runner* transcribed from the DVD, verified on the IMDB (<http://us.imdb.com/>) and the Offworld *Blade Runner* site (<http://kzsu.stanford.edu/uwi/br/off-world.html>).

replicant whose execution was Deckard's paying job. This last speech is also the departing words of Roy to Deckard, who is also, as we, and he, have realized, a replicant. It is also the last words of an aesthete to his last and true disciple (if one new-made and new-discovered, especially from Deckard's point of view). It is an echo of an earlier line spoken to Chu, who knows only eyes: "If only you could see what I have seen with your eyes." There, they are words to the unsavable, to one who can not understand, and yet, if only, might have understood.

But Deckard is not Chu. And the understanding that has been slowly coming upon Deckard through the movie is brought to full cognition through the combat with Roy, an engagement that ends with the hunter becoming the hunted and the hunted becoming first hunter and then savior, an engagement that is the teachings of the master aesthete, Roy. "Now you know what it is to live in fear," he says as Deckard clings to life far above the city streets. "That's what it is to be a slave."

It is a line with at least two meanings, which one being read depending upon the listener: one naïve, wherein the binary of slave/master is comprehended in terms of the naïve, in terms of good and evil; one clerkly, wherein slavery is equated with the naïve. This line is spoken to the man hanging on to the edge of the precipice, the man defeated, yet on the edge of freedom. It is only after he slips, and is grasped – a moment which is limited, degraded, by epiphanic descriptions – that Deckard is capable of seeing, of understanding that which he was, and that which he is. It is the last superhuman act of Roy the replicant; an act delayed as Roy awaited the slip – it would not be enough to merely help Deckard up; it would not be worthy of a last act. It is the culminating accusation of Roy the aesthete against Deckard the replicant, Deckard who as blade runner has been a slave to society. The film (in the director's cut) ends soon after Roy's bestowing upon Deckard his final wisdom, his final desires: "I have seen things you people wouldn't believe." In that ending the origami figure of the unicorn that is set in the path of the fleeing Deckard and Rachel gives dual signification: that society will continually hunt the two renegades; and, antinomically, in the voice of one member of that society, Gaff, he who has created the clerkly figurines of paper and gum wrappers, that the renegades are nonetheless recognized by this one body as being free, and in his own act of liberation he has turned his back on them.

Do not confuse the biological with the psychological. It is not that Roy is replicant that makes him the grand aesthete. Leon also is replicant, but he is naïve. Remember Roy's biting question of Leon: "Did you get your precious photos?" It is an accusation which can also be made of Deckard, who also has directed his drives toward a life defined through photographs, through

stabilities,¹² toward the naïve impetus to create a narrative – a beginning, an ending, and a known middle – through images. Leon follows Roy sensing what Roy possesses, what Roy can offer, but is unable to grasp it himself. To be replicant, to be not human, is to have potential, the immediate potential of being born outside. And it is this potential that makes them outlaws of society, banned from the state under penalty of death. Roy, who continuously realizes and embraces that potential, is in every act disruptive of society, destructive to its conventions. Roy is a walking point of destabilization, a living peripeteia. He must be destroyed or he will destroy. There is no other possible outcome.

There is a parallel moment in *The Truman Show*: Truman's vocalized moment of liberation. It occurs when Truman comes to the realization of his predicament, to the realization of the power of spontaneity, the potential of disruption; when the will to freedom is full in him and he drives in a circle of potentiality with a panicky Meryl sitting beside him in the car. It is then that he leans over and says: "The rolling stone gets the worm! The early bird gathers no moss!" Freedom in the disruption of convention, in the disruption of meaning – meaning as I had redefined it in association with interpretation. From that moment he is no longer slave, is broken free of the naïve. And Meryl, who *can not* understand, is fully marked (in case you missed all the moments previous) as one of the many, as one of the world – the naïve narrative – of "The Truman Show."

This is the whole of Roy's final utterance.

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on
fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in
the dark near Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be
lost in time like tears in rain. Time to die.

Here, the transference of desire from master to disciple. Here, the artistic moment encapsulated. Here, the aesthetic endeavor and drive in but a few lines. Here, in his last offerings, in his final gift to Deckard, is also the accusing, the charging, the rebuking, the damning, of the naïve: "Can you understand these things? Can you understand if not what I see then *that* I see?"

¹² And are not personal photographs one of the ultimate forms of naïve narrative?: pictures whose meanings are not found within the photographs but exist utterly outside, as memories, which can not ultimately but be manufactured as memories of which the photographs are but reminders? memories, which have no true, inherent stability, but change with every passing moment of time; which are even themselves narratives. And how more with portraits of persons rather than places or events? They are lesser forms of tokens, of keepsakes. For keepsakes do not perpetuate an illusion of duplication, of iconism. There is a strange truth within the fears of the Maoris: a photograph replaces, is a substitute for the souls of persons; and in being a fixed substitute, diminishes that very soul, effacing it with a permanent, stable, narrative skin.

There are moments wherein I would scream ‘Look! Look at that! Can you not see the brilliance, the intensity, the beauty, the newness, the strangeness?’ I have seen things you people wouldn’t *believe*. How dare you say my words have meaning. *I have seen things*. Damn you who would interpret them. I give them to you because I must, because their brilliance will be lost if I do not try. Can you not understand this one thing?” These are the eruptions of the desire of the grand aesthete, of he who, appropriately, has killed Tyrell, his creator, his god, in a willing-in-action prefaced with a like willing-in-words:

Roy: It's not an easy thing to meet your maker.

Tyrell: And what can he do for you?

Roy: Can the maker repair what he makes?

Tyrell: Would you like to be modified?

Roy: Had in mind something a little more radical.

Tyrell: What's the problem?

Roy: Death.

Tyrell: I'm afraid that's a little out of my...

Roy: I want more life, fucker.

The primal drive is revealed, but the aesthetic drive is also metaphorized, translated from the psychical to the biological.

It is an interesting shift that in the original, released cut, with the overlaid narration, an overlaid explaining, Deckard claims not to fully understand. But in the director’s cut, where the narrative is absent, is removed, is itself exiled, where explanations are not offered to the passive, the understanding seems much greater, for there is no action left for Deckard but to leave, as he is now outcast, as he is now clerkly. He understands, and he no longer belongs. And in leaving, the drive which impelled Roy is now revealed in Deckard, recognized by Deckard, through the closing of the film, the small unicorn, and the flashback voice-over of Gaff: “It’s too bad she won’t live. But then again, who does?”

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