

# In the Beginning was the Verb

By Julian Scutts

A review of theories concerning, and attitudes to, the Word in poetry

Is the Word or the Image the Basic Entity in Poetry? In this study special reference is made to the function of verbs, in particular "to wander", in poetic texts.

I: REFLECTIONS ON THE STATUS OF THE WORD IN THE Period OF GOETHE AND THE ROMANTICS

Geschrieben steht:"Im Anfang war das Wort!"

Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?

Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmäßig schätzen,

Goethe: Faust, Der Tragödie Erster Teil "Studierzimmer I", 1224-6

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It is written: "In the beginning was the Word!"

Here I falter! Who can help me continue?

That highly I can never consider the Word to be,

Goethe: Faust, The Tragedy, Part I "The Study I", 12

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Into the height of Love's rare Universe,  
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.  
Weak verses, go kneel at your Sovereign's feet,  
And say,- "We are the masters of your slave,  
What wouldest thou then with us and ours and thine?"  
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,  
All singing loud "Love's very pain is sweet,  
But its reward is in the world divine  
Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave."  
Percy Bysshe Shelley: Epipsychidion, 588-597

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Though usually thought of as an atheist or agnostic, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his answer to Peacock's pronouncement on the death of poetry (one of the first of many), averred the sanctity and prophetic nature of the art in *A Defence of Poetry*. The declining prestige of poetry and a commensurate and related decline in regard to religious and Biblical authority amounted to a dethronement of "the Word". In this connection it is surely significant that, when pondering how to translate logos into the language of his day, Goethe's Faust rejected the "Word" ("das Wort") in favour of "the Deed" ("die Tat") as an adequate rendition of "Logos" in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. This change of word reflected the zeitgeist of Goethe's, not Faust's, epoch. "The Word" seems to have absorbed the mustiness of libraries and the aridity of a recluse's study, and lost its sense of an originating power; "the Deed" implies action and motion, which in Goethe's age were being treated as virtues in themselves (Faust set the condition for the forfeiture of his soul in his becoming resigned to a bed of idleness).

Faust contrasts "Word" and "Deed" as irreconcilable antitheses. These do not appear absolutely irreconcilable in a possible inference from the Latin words rendering the passage that exercised Faust's skills as a translator: "in principio erat verbum". The "verb" is both a word and often an indicator of a deed. Kenneth Burke recognises parallels between theology and the domain of language, when stating in *The Rhetoric of Religion* 1:

"What we say about words in the empirical realm will bear a notable likeness to what is said about God in theology."

The transition from the belief in direct inspiration to a modern perception of the originality of the poetic genius entailed a deep sense of trauma. In their dilemma, Goethe and later the Romantics tapped the power inherent in verbs of motion, the most notable of these being "to wander" and "wandern", the bases of the common derivative "Wanderer". Not only are these verbs indicators of action and movement: they are incomparably rich in allegorical associations.

John Frederick Nims notes a connection between descriptions of motion and allegories when stating in *Western Wind 2*, A handbook for students of poetry:

"A mountain may be a symbol of salvation, a traveller may be a symbol of a human being in his life. But if the traveller takes as much as one step toward the mountain, it seems that the traveller and the mountain become allegorical figures, because a story has begun."

Paradoxically, John Frederick Nims reiterates a common prejudice among critics that the allegory is an outmoded and contrived form of figurative language. Nims effectively confutes his own argument in attesting that the very use of a verb of motion produces a story, an allegory, irrespective of the author's conscious purpose. We may extrapolate from the words I have just cited that the use of a verb of motion engages some faculty of the mind subject to the influence of an unconscious element of the mind.

There is further evidence of some connection between the theological issues surrounding the term *logos* and modern literary studies. The expression *logocentric* is a significant item in the modern critic's list of basic terms. A *logocentric* approach to the study of poetic texts emerges in the following discussion of theories put forward by Jurij Tynjanov. Together with Roman Jakobson, Tynjanov was a member of the group of critics and linguists known as the Russian Formalists. This movement arose in the early 1920s before its suppression by Stalin. Trotsky alleged that the Formalists had succumbed to "the superstition of the word". When repudiating the Formalists, Trotsky echoed the lines (quoted above) in Goethe's *Faust* in the statement:

"The Formalists show a fast-ripening religiousness. They are followers of St. John. They believe that "In the beginning was the Word". But we believe that in the beginning was the deed. The word followed as its phonetic shadow."<sup>3</sup>

The *logocentricity* manifested by Tynjanov and other Formalists does not fully square with mainstream criticism in the West, which perceives the essential basic elements of poetry as "images" or quasi-musical effects. It was probably the Romantics who set the trend for interpreting characteristics of poetry in terms of analogies with the non-verbal arts of painting, sculpture and music, perhaps because "the word" as such had apparently lost its ancient vitality and authority. Shelley, though a doughty defender of poetry, agonised about the heaviness of words when composing the lines in *Epipsychidion* cited at the beginning of this chapter.

## II: "THE WORD" IN LANGUAGE THEORY

In the domain of literary criticism, as formerly in that of ecclesiastical controversy, "the word" and "the image" pose contrasts arousing intense debate as to which of them has precedence over the other. Though it is hardly possible to conceive of a poem without words, literary critics - and even poets themselves - have at times made unfavourable references to words and language, such as in the case we now consider.

In the heyday of the Imagist movement, Ezra Pound records his opinion that words are merely flat representations of concepts, whereas images are capable of expressing an unlimited number of effects and nuances of significance. In an article on "Vorticism" he argues that words resemble numerals in having a fixed value, while images have an "algebraic" quality in their ability to express an unlimited range of effects and significance. 4 Logically any argument or proposition equating the essence of poetry with "the image" - fundamentally a metaphor based on references to things apprehended by the sense of sight - implies that words have little more than an identifying or descriptive role in poetry. Analogies between poetry and music may also, taken too literally, induce a negative evaluation of words. Certainly, no high esteem of words, poetic tradition the verbal dexterity usually attributed to poets is recorded in one article presenting the view that the best poetry is "musical" in character.

In his article "The Musical Development of Symbols: Whitman"<sup>5</sup>, Calvin S. Brown proposes that "symbols" produce the "musical" effects characteristic of the greatest poetic achievements, for which Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" poses a pre-eminent example.

Brown evaluates words as little more than the means of labelling symbols and considers their normal connection with external reality to be irrelevant in poetry. Thus, according to Brown, the poem's references and allusions to Abraham Lincoln, whose death instigated the writing of the poem, serve only to reinforce the General idea of "a great man" as an element in that poem's structure and development. A plain man or woman could be forgiven for finding such an assertion difficult to accept.

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The trend towards evaluating poetry chiefly in terms of analogies between it and the visual or musical arts was firmly established in the Romantic period. Since then a terminology derived from such analogies has become so commonplace as to constitute a technical vocabulary the routine use of which tends to discourage new approaches to literary criticism. In the concluding chapter of *Romantic Image* Frank Kermode expresses regret at the habitually unreflecting use of the terms "image" and "symbol", which, in this critic's view, are commonly assumed to provide objective definitions and concepts although they in fact convey value judgements rooted in "supernaturalist" beliefs and attitudes.<sup>6</sup> Kermode notes as a positive development a new interest in language theory evinced by influential critics, which was "anti-supernaturalist" in effect. Kermode's opinion about the objectivity of language theory is consonant with the simple fact that words are readily identifiable, locatable, countable and generally accessible to methods of statistical analysis. In the case of images and symbols, on the other hand, opinions differ as to what provides the basic data to be investigated.

Critics of the internal school assume that words are arbitrary signs offering little insight into the processes of poetic creativity. Having dissociated the essential forms and patterns of poetry from those of language, they argue that poets shape images, symbols, musical effects, etc. with recourse to the pliant and neutral medium of language. Critics with a thorough grounding in language theory will be unable to accept that language is a transparent and neutral medium. To use a term favoured by William Empson, language is too "ambivalent" to serve an essentially referential function.<sup>7</sup> The noted linguist Philip Wheelwright has gone so far as to question the ultimate justification for using the words "symbol" and "image" in the area of textual criticism, pointing out that these refer to some - but by no means all - aspects of poetic language. One could go further to argue that a tendency to identify "symbols" and "images" in poetry as the most significant and vital aspects of the art leads to a bias in the criticism of poetry favouring the appreciation of substantives

and the effects they produce at the expense of a commensurate appreciation of verbs and their effects, though verbs, particularly those describing motion, deeply influence and inform the coherence of the poems. This myopia reflects and reinforces a widespread prejudice against the narrative and allegorical elements in poetry, so often dismissed as "trivial" or "artificial".

Linguists who stress the density, ambivalence and complexity of poetic language adopt a position diametrically opposed to Ezra Pound's contention that words, unlike images, are incapable of conveying a rich variety of effects and "algebraic" variations. Is there a possibility of mediating between the entrenched imagist and language-based positions? It is timely to reconsider a basic premise on which modern linguistics is founded.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of language, there are two distinct yet mutually inseparable aspects of language, namely "la langue" and "la parole". The former denotes language as a general system, while the latter defines it as the articulation of language in speech or writing. Two scholars belonging to the Russian Formalist school of criticism, Roman Jakobson and Jurij Tynjanov, point out in a jointly written paper that de Saussure's distinction between "la langue" and "la parole" provided the proper basis for linguistic studies of literary texts. <sup>8</sup> Without specifying which school of criticism they had in mind, they note that those who failed to take account of this distinction have produced distorted and one-sided results. In an article appearing as "The Meaning of the Word in Verse"<sup>9</sup> in English translation, Tynjanov seeks to demonstrate the relevance of de Saussure's distinction between "la langue" and "la parole" in the practice of textual criticism. His reference to "the word" seems to have an almost biblical ring suggesting the notion of "the Word", for both "the word" and "the Word", in language or theology, represent something universal condensed into one of its minuscule parts, whether this universal entity be understood as language, the Scriptures, or even the Creator. To make the essential nature of "the word in verse" better understood, Tynjanov uses two metaphors: It is like a vessel which, however various its contents, always remains the same. It is also like a chameleon in being able to change colour according to whatever environment poses its context. I summarise what I see as Tynjanov's main postulations in the succeeding five paragraphs:

1. The word has both a general and highly specific aspect, reflecting a duality in language itself (cf. Saussure's distinction between "la langue" and "la parole").

2. In respect to its general aspect, the word comprehends all occurrences of words sharing the same appearance and evincing recognisably similar meanings. According to Tynjanov, words fulfilling these criteria partake in the same "lexical unity".

3. In one sense the occurrence of a word may be understood as a particular and uniquely "coloured" manifestation of the word in the general sense defined above. It owes its unique quality to its position in the text of which it is a part.

4. At the primary level of language - that level at which one readily determines a word's sense as inferable from its (verbal) context - a word is usually accorded one predominant meaning - its secondary feature. If a word is felt to convey more than the meaning the context requires, a reader or listener is forcibly aware of a contrast between the "word in a specific context" and "the word outside any context" - in Tynjanov's parlance - between the word's secondary feature and its basic feature, which allows one to feel or discern the unity underlying the word's secondary features. <sup>10</sup> A usage of a word that entails an awareness of this contrast tends to be deprecated as a lapse of style, in non-literary prose at least. If, however, none of the usual meanings of the word accords with the word's primary context, the word absorbs meaning

from its context, often acquiring an expletive or strongly emotional tone. If the suppressed meaning of the word poses the opposite of meanings implied by the context, an oscillating feature is likely to arise. 11 This is the case when words which convey insults the normal use of language are to be understood as terms of endearment .

5. So far we have considered the word without special reference of words in poetry. Words in poetry are particularly striking in their ability to awaken in a reader's or listener's mind an awareness that a word exists both on the "synchronic" and "diachronic" plane. The same word belongs to the contemporary world of the poet and necessarily reflects his or her surrounding world. The resultant new meaning of the word must in some measure "displace" earlier meanings and associations of the word preserved by literary tradition. 12 It occludes or overlays these meanings without totally eradicating them. We shall consider the effects of this apparent confusion later.

How far is it possible to harmonise Tynjanov's theories concerning the "word in verse" with rival views upholding the primacy of "the image" or "musical structure" of poetry? In what way, for example, does Tynjanov's insistence on the indissolubility of word and verbal context find parallels in apparently similar assertions made by "contextualists" with leanings to New Criticism? Few could fault Roman Jakobson's strict regard for internal qualities of a poetic work evident in his Essay on Baudelaire's "Le Chat". However, the Russian Formalists could not accept that the internal features of a poem existed in absolute isolation from realities to which the poem referred, whether they are events in a poet's life or some historical fact. We have already noted linguistically based objections to the proposition that the effect of words is totally predictable or compliant to design.

As Tynjanov's essay persuasively demonstrates, "the word" is both uniquely defined by its position in a work, and yet partakes in what appears to be the almost mystic unity of the universal word in the language. Thus we might conclude "the word", properly understood, unites the "algebraic" quality of Pound's "image" and the "musical" quality of Calvin Brown's "symbol".

On the basis of arguments that have been discussed so far in this chapter, I hope to crystallise a basic approach to the "logocentric" method of textual analysis to be applied to poems considered in the following chapters of this study. Many of the issues that concern linguistic and literary theory need not always be elucidated through technical phraseology. Let us consider why we normally read a newspaper article once or twice, while we may return to a well-loved poem any number of times and never exhaust its reserves of meanings and evocations. Is the difference in our attitude to a newspaper article and a poem solely attributable to the intrinsic qualities of an article or poem? From a linguist's point of view a piece of journalistic writing - or even a section in a technical handbook - poses an immensely complex phenomenon. We tend to evaluate texts in accordance with expectations reflecting our understanding of the purpose of a given text, even if this be only to inform us on the right time to sow potatoes. The more technical or factual the perceived objective of a text, the greater the expectancy on the reader's part that words have a precise and unambiguous meaning. The reader normally understands words in the light of their context determined not only by reference to the text in its entirety but also through a recognition of recurrent patterns and conventional juxtapositions. We do not need to consult a wide context to know that "a train of thought" and "the next train to Liverpool" are different kinds of train. When reading poetry we do not suspend our usual mode of understanding language. When confronted by some abstruse work by Dylan Thomas or James Joyce, we inevitably first record a disparity between the text being read and the language we normally use.

If a poem does not superficially deviate from common usage, we understand words in much the same way as we do when reading a non-literary text. Of course, if we understood poetry only at such a level, we would read through (and discard) a poem as though it were a report in a daily newspaper.

It emerges from Tynjanov's discussions that words in poetry possess an inexhaustible range of meanings. With each new reading of a poem, new meanings rise to the surface of a reader's consciousness. Here we may speak of a process of progressive revelation, a fact ultimately grounded in the dual nature of the "the word" with its specific and universal aspects.

The textual approach I envisage has a four-fold aspect. The four aspects to be considered in this case I outline as follows:

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#### The Primary Level

Â At this level we determine the particular meaning of a word that is most obviously consistent with its immediate verbal environment. Tynjanov could not consider "lexical coloration" or "oscillation" without reference to the primary level of language.

#### The Structural Level

As Tynjanov has pointed out, no word exists outside some context. The question remains: what is the context of a word in a poetic work? A word here is not evaluated purely in terms of semantics, as it might in a non-fictional context. We have also to consider its "structural" implications in relation to its position in the text and what Calvin S. Brown sees as its "musical" effects (through a Repetition of recognisably similar elements, symbols, etc.).

#### The Unconscious Level

In psychological tests doctors use the technique of verbal response, assuming that a word has a unique private meaning in any individual's subconscious mind. As this significance is inextricable from a most complex density of mental associations underlying articulated thought, a single word response, bypassing the purely rational processes of logic, provides a basis for analysing the deepest patterns in verbal association. In her monograph *Browning's Poetry of Reticence*,<sup>13</sup> Barbara Melchiori bases her assessments of Robert Browning's poetry on the hypothesis that any individual word found in a poem may conceal vast depths of meaning apprehended only by the unconscious mind. If this is the case, a focus on the primary sense of a word must inevitably produce a concealment or - Tynjanov's "displacement" - of this word's significance at other levels. However, as "verbal clues", individual words (considered in the light of their position in a text) will increasingly reveal to careful and intuitive reflection their wealth of symbolism and implication.

## The Level of the Collective Unconscious

If we attempt to narrow down the terms of discussion to the works of one author and treat these as evidence concerning that author's personality or private psychological make-up, we may well end up by attempting to offer belated couch treatment at the expense of a balanced and objective assessment of the intertextual aspect of literary criticism. As T.S. Eliot suggests in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", 14 there is something in poetic tradition which seems to transcend the individual mind of any particular poet. Lacking the option of explaining the unity of tradition as evidence of the activity of a "Muse" or divine influence, we shall probably have to posit the Jungian "collective unconscious" or something very much like it.

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In the following section we shall consider the allegorical range of signification of "wandering" in the light of the Christian and rabbinical traditions of allegorical interpretation and modern reflections on textual interpretation based on psychological theories.

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### III: WANDERING IN RELATION TO ALLEGORICAL MOTIFS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Common to the arguments of Aquinas and some modern linguists is the perception of a basic "literal" or "primary" level of meaning in contradistinction to which other levels of meaning, such as those which are termed "allegorical" or "suppressed", are to be identified. Aquinas referred to the four senses belonging to passages in the Scriptures, using the terms "literal", "allegorical", "moral" and "anagogic". In *The Banquet (Il Convivio)* and in his letter to Can Grande della Scala, 15 Dante took the biblical account of the flight of the Israelites from Egypt as an example of an allegory in its pristine form, using it to illustrate the four senses established by Aquinas. Accordingly, the biblical story refers at the literal level to the historical migration of the Israelites at the time of Moses; at the "allegorical" level to God's plan of salvation as described in the New Testament; at the "moral" level to the conversion of the soul (and by implication to the biography of a believer's life and experience); at the "anagogic" level to the parting of the soul and body at death.

The medieval categories of textual interpretation have not completely lost currency in modern criticism. Northrop Frye has used the term "anagogic" to designate one of the archetypes on which he bases his theory of myths that correspond to the seasons in the annual cycle. I now suggest other ways in which the medieval systems of interpretation could be relevant to literary criticism with reference to three well-known works in English literature. In these works the main protagonist is a "wanderer" in some sense. In the context of these works it will be interesting to note the implications of



words derived from the verb "to wander". As Tynjanov has shown, words, like texts, reveal obvious and less obvious levels of significance. It is sometimes possible to correlate the senses of a word with the levels of meaning of the text in which it is situated. The first case we consider provides an example or interpretation at an "allegorical" level.

1. The "wanderings" of Jesus in the Judean wilderness as described by Milton in *Paradise Regained* recall the wanderings of Israel, which, according to Dante, anticipate (at the "allegorical level" according to the narrower definition of this term) God's plan of salvation achieved by Christ's death and suffering. The very occurrence of the verb "to wander" in the body of the text recalls not only the wanderings of Israel and Elijah but also significant occurrences of the verb "to wander" in *Paradise Lost*. Adam and Eve leave Paradise "with wand'ring feet" according to the resounding final lines of this Epic. "Wandering" here is highly ambivalent in its implications. On the one hand, the fate of wandering is one meted out to sinners like Cain. On the other, Adam and Eve leave the domain of primal innocence to enter the path of human history which will lead them and their descendants to redemption.

2. The *Pilgrim's Progress* tells of events which the narrator ascribes to a dream and thus recalls biblical precedents in dreams sent by God to reveal truth directly and without the aid of normal physical perception. Though the journey depicted in the story is unreal in one sense, it is shot through with evocations of the places and people Bunyan encountered during his life. The journey recalls at another level the basic paradigm of all pilgrim journeys within the Judeo-Christian tradition - the wanderings of Israel that lead to the Promised Land. At one juncture in the story Christian approaches Mount Sinai and fears that the summit of this mountain will fall down upon him. This allusion apart, the story of Christian's journey manifests what Dante defined as "the moral" sense of the story of Israel's flight from Egypt. At this level the story, with or without the conscious consent of the writer, acquires a biographical and progressive quality, as the very title of the book indicates. We shall note in subsequent discussions that debates about the "progressive" or "non- progressive" implications of literary treatments of "wandering" in its various aspects concern basic questions about the relationship between art and life. The *Pilgrim's Progress* is commonly held to be the first novel in English literature. Bunyan's other works remain more obvious expressions of his didactic aims as a Puritan writer, perhaps because they are based on static metaphors like *The Holy City*. The underlying metaphor of a pilgrim journey bought out a dynamic and developmental potential revealed only in *The Pilgrim's Progress* among Bunyan's literary works. The fact that the allegory of the pilgrim's journey carries within itself a shaping or developmental potential denied to static symbols emerges when we contrast other works written by the same author. Byron's *Don Juan* evinces a repetitive and circuitous pattern of episodes, whereas *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* presents a unity analogous to the path of life leading to the transition between time and eternity.

3. As the "editor" of the second version of *Robinson Crusoe* (1720) Crusoe remarks (I place in bold print words that appear especially significant to me):

the story, although allegorical, is also historical! In a word, the *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* are one whole scheme of a real life of eight and twenty years, spent in the most wandering desolate and afflicting circumstances that ever man went through.

Three words in this citation are of particular interest from the point of view taken in this study. As "history", Crusoe's story describes in plausibly realistic terms the experience of a man who was forced to survive almost thirty years of isolation from European civilisation. The "allegorical" character of the story is not made explicit. The word "wandering" acquires a negative tone by its juxtaposition with "desolate" and "afflicting". The negative connotations of the word suggest disorientation and a punishment for sin or folly. The uncertainties surrounding these references to "allegory" and "wandering" may be clarified if we inspect occurrences of the verb "to wander" in the story itself. In the opening paragraphs of *Robinson Crusoe* the verbs "to ramble" and "to wander" are associated with "thought" and "inclination" in a manner that is fully consistent with common usage. The third paragraph opens with the words: "Being the third son of the family and not bred to a trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts". The fourth paragraph contains a sentence in which Crusoe states that he had no reason other than "a mere wandering inclination" for leaving his native country. Although any verb of motion may acquire a metaphorical meaning in whatever form of language,

some have become linked by usage with such notions as digression, deviation, transgression and so on. "To ramble" does not conventionally imply a moral judgement. When referring to thought or speech, it suggests that one or the other of these is logically disconnected or lacking in purposeful direction. The connotative range of "to wander" finds no parallel in other verbs of motion such as "to ramble", "to stray", "to digress", "to transgress", "to roam", etc. The juxtaposition of "wandering inclination" and "leaving my father's house" obviously recalls the strong biblical associations of the word "to wander" with the wilderness journey of the Israelites, the parable of the prodigal son and other well-known motifs. A reference to "father's house" recurs in the story, pointing to the central significance of the figure of the Prodigal Son. In one way this is strange, as Crusoe returns to England long after his parents' death. If we take Crusoe's father to be a figure representing the patriarchal order of established society rather than Crusoe's progenitor, the reason for Crusoe's being likened to the Prodigal Son becomes understandable. Cut off from the civilisation of his native land, Crusoe must establish a new social order based - let us say - on the "Protestant work ethic". Certainly the novel's social and political implications were immediately grasped by the reading public in England and on the continent of Europe, and those writers who were prompted by Defoe's novel to write their own Robinsonades dwelt more on the idea of establishing a new civilisation than on that of Crusoe's isolation and loneliness and on the theme of isolated individual endeavour. Crusoe's sense of guilt and fear aroused by his crossing what he felt to be a forbidden threshold might also be understood as the indirect expression of feelings known to Defoe himself, for we may imagine that it was not without great trepidation that the author, approaching the age of sixty, ventured for the first time into the realm of pure novelistic fiction.

Defoe anticipated a later generation of poets that included Goethe and the Romantics in exploiting images and allegories of biblical and religious origin in order to contend with issues of an essentially psychological or aesthetic nature. Byron and Shelley made Ahasuerus and Cain symbols for "thought" and self-consciousness. In the figure of Goethe's Faust, Cain and the Prodigal Son finally merge under the influence of Goethe's concern with aesthetics rather than orthodox religion. Named "Wanderer" in the margin of the written text, Faust enters eternity. In the apotheosis of the returning Wanderer, we discern the "anagogic" aspect of the story of the wanderings of Israel and all that has been subsequently derived from it. Modern criticism is divided on the question of whether literary evocations of wanderers such as Cain, the pilgrim and the prodigal son have retained - or lost - their original connection with religious truth or any external reality. Harold Bloom maintains that "the interiorization of quest Romance"<sup>17</sup>, a process that took place during the Romantic period in his view, resulted in poetry becoming an autonomous domain with no vital connection with "external" factors

The controversy surrounding the Wanderer as represented in Romantic poetry is the main subject for discussion in the following chapter. Certain critics would be horrified at any suggestion that they indulged in any form of "wandering", yet if we apply a logocentric criterion to their writings - if we inspect the implications of their choice of words - an interesting picture will emerge.

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## ANNOTATIONS

1. Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (University of California, 1970).

2. John Frederick Nims, *Western Wind / an Introduction to Poetry* (New York, 1983).

3. Leon Trotsky, "The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism" in *Literature and Revolution* (Russian version published in 1924), tr. Rose Strumsky (Ann Arbor: 1960).

4. Ezra Pound, "Vorticism", in *Fortnightly Review* (Sept. 1914). The following citation from this article is cited in *Imagist Poetry*, Peter Jones (Penguin Books, 1972). The symbolists dealt in association, that is in a sort of allusion, almost allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word, they made it a form of metonymy. One can be grossly 'symbolic', for example, by using the term 'cross' to mean 'trial'. The symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7. The imagist's images have a variable significance like the signs a, b, and c in algebra. [...] the author must use his image because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics.

5. Calvin S. Brown, "The Musical Development of Symbols: Whitman", in *Music and Literature*, Athens [U.S.], 1948).

6. Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image*, (London, 1957). The following citation gives the passage beginning the Conclusion (Chapter IX):

I have to admit that the last chapter gave no real notion of the variety and subtlety of modern criticism, nor of the impact upon it of precisely that interest the earlier Symbolists lacked, a systematic application to language-theory. The effect of this has certainly been to 'de-mythologize' Symbolism, to reconcile its image with the more empirical and utilitarian theories of language (as Richard's flux of interpenetrating elements in the language itself, rather than the intuitive order of Bergson and Hulme). The effort is to dispense with that supernaturalism that habitually, in one form or another, accompanies Symbolist theory - Boehme and the correspondences, magic and mediumship, the sacramentalism of some Roman Catholic Aestheticians, like David Jones. It can now be admitted that words are not pictures, that words behave differently from things - although it might be argued that we now study the secret lives of words as if they were dreams, and restore to our theories of communication the essential Romantic image, reducing our analogical universe to the language we speak. Nevertheless, the new attention to language has been anti-supernaturalist in effect. It has also involved discriminations and definitions of the word 'symbol' itself, which I have not gone into.

7. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, (London, 1930).

8. Jurij Tynjanov and Roman Jakobson, "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language" in *Readings in Russian Poetics / Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. by Ladislav Matejka and Krystina Pomorska (Michigan Slavic Publications, Ann Arbor, 1978), p.79-80.

9. Jurij Tynjanov, "The Meaning of the Word in Verse", in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, pp. 136-145.

10. Tynjanov elucidates what he means by this contrast by discussing the various meanings of the Russian word *zemlja* [earth, soil, land, ground]. The following citation from his essay "The Meaning of the Word in Verse" (*Readings in Russian Poetics*, pp.136,137) clarifies his position. The relevant observations begin with a list of examples revealing the word's basic range of meanings:

1. Zemlja and Mars; heaven and zemlja (tellus).
2. Bury an object in the zemlja; black zemlja (humus).
3. It fell to the zemlja (Boden).
4. Native zemlja (Land).

In this instance there is no doubt that we have different meanings of one "word" in different kinds of usage. And yet, if we say of Martian that he fell onto the ground of Mars - "he fell to the zemlja" - it is awkward, even though it is obvious that zemlja in the phrase "he fell to the zemlja" is far from meaning the zemlja in the other examples. It would also be awkward to say of the soil on Mars "grey zemlja".

11. To illustrate this point Tynjanov writes ( Readings in Russian Poetics, pp. 142, 143):

It may also happen, however, that the oscillating number of words may be used without regard to their meanings. But they have the auxiliary function of "filling up" the intonal pattern with verbal material (cf. swearing or cursing intonations using arbitrary words) features ..... It follows that expressivity of speech need not be rendered only through word meanings. Words may have an importance beyond their meanings. They may act as speech elements which bear some expressive function.

12. In this connection Tynjanov remarks ( Readings in Russian Poetics), p. 144:

The appeal to tradition is important, but does not exhaust the problem. The poetic vocabulary is not created exclusively by the continuation of a certain lexical tradition, but also by contrasting itself to itself (the vocabulary of Nekrasov and Majakovkij). "Literary language" evolves, and its development cannot be understood as a planned development of tradition, but rather as colossal displacements of traditions (a considerable role is played in this respect by partial reestablishment of older strata).

13. Barbara Melchiori, Browning's Poetry of Reticence (London,1968), p.1.

14. T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in The Sacred Wood - (first published November 4th 1920). The following citation is taken from the beginning of the essay's fourth paragraph:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists; you cannot evaluate him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.

15. "Il Convivio" was written sometime between 1304 and 1308; The Letter to Can Grande della Scala was written about 1318. One scholar has cast doubt on Dante's authorship. The following citation is a part of P:H: Wicksteed's Translation of the Later Works of Dante (London,1904):

To elucidate, then, what we have to say, be it known that the sense of a word is not simple, but on the contrary it may be polysemous, that is to say, "of more senses than one"; for it is one sense which we get through the letter and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies; and the first is called literal, but the second allegorical or mystic. And this mode of treatment, for its better manifestation, may be considered in this verse: "When Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judea became his sanctification, Israel his power." For if we respect the letter alone the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt at the time of Moses is presented to us; if the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the grief and misery of sin to the state of grace is presented to us; if the anagogical, the departure of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory is presented to us. And although these mystic senses have each their special denominations, they may all in general be called allegorical, since they differ from the literal and the historical; for allegory is derived from *allegon*, in Greek, which means the same as the Latin *alienum* or *diversum*.

16. So Christian turned out of his way to go to Mr. Legality's house for help, but behold, when he was now hard by the Hill, it seemed so high, and also that the side of it was next the way side, did hang so much over, that Christian was afraid to venture further, lest the Hill should fall on his head.

17. In his introductory essay "The Internalization of Quest-Romance" in *Romanticism and Consciousness / Essays in Criticism* (New York, 1970), Harold Bloom calls the phase of development preceding full internalization the "Promethean" stage of Romanticism when the poets identified themselves as poets with an immature aspect of their personalities incorporating a rebellious attitude to social injustice and repression. Full internalization was achieved by Wordsworth and Blake when the catharsis that attended their strivings in poetry afforded a clear perception of the false selfhood in all that prevented or delayed a perfect state of harmony in all the mind's questing and emotional energies; this Bloom likens to Freud's picture of a "marriage" of the libido and the object of its love.

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