

Diagrammatic Distortion: Semiotics and Simulation in Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*

Author: Andries Hiskes

Student number: S1453718

Thesis submitted for the degree of: Master of Arts

Thesis supervised by: Prof. Dr. Frans-Willem Korsten

Second reader: Dr. Yasco Horsman

Leiden University

August 2015

*I despise and execrate pride and the indecent delights of that extinguishing
irony which disjoins the precision of our thought.*

—Lautréamont, *Poésies*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	4
FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
CHAPTER 1: READING AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF RED AS A TEXT OF PERSECUTION	12
CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION AND METALINGUAL MYTHOLOGY	29
CHAPTER 3: MYTHOLOGY AS AN ABSTRACT MACHINE	45
CONCLUSIONS	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	75

Abstract

Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* (1998) is a text that traverses the boundaries between postmodernism and mythology. As such, it investigates and builds further upon its own mythological foundations, rooted in the poem *Geryoneis* by the ancient Greek poet Stesichoros. The aim of this study is to explore, through a close-reading of Carson's text, how we can move from thinking about mythology solely in terms of representation towards thinking of mythology in terms of simulation. This argument will be made by taking a semiotic approach. This approach not only makes a diachronic study of mythological language possible, but also makes it possible for us to think about how signs traverse (spatially) between different sign systems. The study starts by using René Girard's approach of reading myths as texts of persecution in order to uncover *Autobiography of Red*'s underlying ideological codes. Linda Hutcheon's theories concerning historiographic metafiction and parody are then used in order to explore how Carson, in using syllogistics, investigates the origins of the supposed blinding of Stesichoros by Helen of Troy. The study then moves on to a diachronic study of the sign systems in the text using Roland Barthes' theory concerning myth as well as his metalingual system. The final chapter of this study starts out by conceptualizing a notion of textual space, following Barthes' distinction between 'work' and 'Text' and Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's philosophy of smooth and striated space. After having conceptualized textual space, a diagrammatic and simulative function of mythology is theorized.

Keywords: *Autobiography of Red*, mythology, semiotics, postmodernism, post-structuralism, textual space, simulation

Foreword & Acknowledgements

This thesis is written as completion for the master Media Studies at Leiden University, where I studied in the track Comparative Literature and Literary Theory. I have experienced my two years at Leiden University as tremendously educative, stimulating, inspirational, and, above all, exhilarating. The nature of the field of literary theory is such that it does not only endow one with valuable knowledge and skills, but rather that one has gained both an enduring critical attitude and a disposition of curiosity towards all facets of one's life.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Information & Media Studies department of The Hague University of Applied Sciences for their enduring understanding and support. During the hectic times that were the past two years, many issues were solved without my knowledge but assuredly to my advantage. I would like to thank my fellow students at Leiden University for their fruitful and productive discussions: I couldn't imagine a group of students more immersed in their field of study. I would like to thank my own students for putting up with me during the times that I was either literally or figuratively unreachable, and for their continuous inspiration and critical attitude towards their own education. I would like to thank my family and friends for being continuously forgiving for the times that I was unavailable (even when I was physically present!) and being understanding. Most of all, I would like to thank prof. dr. Frans-Willem Korsten. His lessons in academic precision and humility have proven to be invaluable during the writing of this thesis, and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so in the future.

Andries Hiskes

Gouda, 2015

Introduction

When I set out to write this thesis, I was originally interested in investigating the nature of mythology. I wanted to explore how mythology was produced (and whether we could speak of the ‘production of mythology’ in the first place), and what made something ‘mythological’. Of course, I am not the first person (nor the last) to pose these questions. In his extensive study *The Poetics of Myth* (1998) the Russian literary scholar Eleazar Meletinsky traces the development of mythology in order to uncover its specific characteristics. Meletinsky states that mythological thought originated in the inability of primitive peoples to differentiate themselves from the natural world, and as such projected human qualities onto natural objects, which gave these objects a social dimension (152). This social dimension allows for a space where metaphysical questions concerning, for example, birth, death, destiny, could be asked. Because of this aspect, Meletinsky argues that myth is “in fact profoundly social by nature, even sociocentric, because its scale of value is determined by the interests of the social group, whether this be by lineage tribe, city, or state. The fantastic imagery of mythology fully reflects the characteristics of the surrounding world because every important natural and social phenomenon must be rooted in myth” (157). Mythology is, then, an important site through which the social order of a particular culture can be explained, something that would make mythology mimetic. As a particular culture gains these insights into its own normative workings and procedures through mythology, it in turn reinforces these processes. One such way, Meletinsky explains, is “by enacting myth in rituals that are continually repeated” (156). This continual repetition of enactment begs the question how myth and the world that needs it are related to one another. Meletinsky traces the manner in which mythological meaning was produced in how it was studied: Aristotle, particularly in his *Poetics*, interpreted myth as fable, whereas the later Greeks, such as the Stoics and Epicureans, started to interpret myth as allegory, albeit it with consequences for the ‘real’ world. For example, Meletinsky explains how the Epicureans believed that myth as allegory for natural ‘facts’ was read this way so that priestly and ruling classes could use mythology for their

own ends (3). This shows us the strong tie mythology has within the community or society it operates: mythology has always carried within it ideological codes which, when interpreted and put in practice, subsequently can have practical and political implications. By the time of the Renaissance, the domination of allegorical interpretation continued, although there was an increasing emphasis on its moral messages. During the Enlightenment myth was deemed the product of ignorance and delusion (logically so, given the dominating ideologies of that period), and cast in a negative light. It wouldn't be until the Romantic period that myth would regain appreciation once again, though there was a shift from allegorical readings towards appreciating it for its aesthetic qualities and symbolic potential.

The influential modernist work *The Golden Bough* (1890) by anthropologist James George Frazer saw a return to a renewed focus on the ritualistic functions of myth, as well as perspectives on the idea of the scapegoat, a concept French philosopher René Girard would come to explore extensively in his work (in fact the latter's approach to this concept is used in this study). In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, first published in 1944, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno would criticize the Enlightenment's active rejection of mythology as one of the principal contributions to the rise of fascism and totalitarianism, since it never succeeded in this rejection: "Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth. It seeks to escape the trial of fate and retribution by itself exacting retribution on that trial. In myths, everything that happens must atone for the fact of having happened." (2002: 8). Through the denial of the power of mythology, elements of mythology could therefore be appropriated in service of the rise of national-socialism in Germany. Horkheimer and Adorno do not only tell us something concerning what they deem Enlightenment's failed project however, but also something concerning the nature of mythology itself. Mythology needs to be rooted within a history in order to *be mythical*. The historicity of mythology was of great interest to the French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes,

who studied contemporary myths in his *Mythologies*, first published in 1957. Barthes' main concern in this study was to expose how reigning discourses and representations concerning a particular topic influence our experience of that topic. One such example used by Barthes is an investigation into the role that red wine plays in France. Perceived as a way of smoothing social situations and the preferred drink of the proletariat, as well having a history of its own through its link to the Eucharist (wine serving as an icon for Christ's blood), Barthes exposes how, comparatively, little attention is paid to the effects wine has on the people's health. The last section of *Mythologies* is dedicated to developing a semiotic approach in uncovering what semiotic systems mythology is founded upon, through what Barthes would deem a 'metalanguage'.

But mythological time or its origins cannot be empirically traced and pointed out. As Meletinsky states: "In mytho-logic, everything that occurs 'before' is the first cause, the reason for everything that comes 'after' ... The mythical past, however, is not only a remote epoch, but is the time of primordial creation, the proto-time (*Ur-zeit*), the time of origin - are all valid descriptions - that existed before empirical time. In fact, myth marks the sacred time of origin and not the empirical time as special" (159). The reason why mythology marks this 'sacred' time as special is because it needs to in order to attain and keep its mythological status. My study focuses on another mythological dynamic: As I will argue, mythology requires to work with incomplete images or fragments of an object, because it is precisely the gaps in the object which refuse and deny us a holistic appreciation of the myth. This is why myths, even when documented, retain their unstable historicity through their own mythological status. A written documentation of a myth might have its origins in bygone oral accounts, or other stories, texts or rituals that are now lost to us.

It is this insight that directed my curiosity towards postmodernism. Since postmodern texts are known (to the point of notoriety) to investigate their own ontological status as text, I was particularly interested in a postmodern text that would in some way address mythology. Anne Carson's novel-in-verse *Autobiography of Red* (1998) (from here on abbreviated as AOR) is

such a text. Carson's text is popularly referred to as a 'reworking' or 'retelling' of another text, the poem *Geryoneis* ('song of Geryon') by the ancient Greek poet Stesichoros (c. 640 – 555 BC), widely assumed to be one of, if not the first, lyric poets in the West. Stesichoros' poem survives today only in the form of papyri fragments, and as such a complete version of the text does not exist anymore, although classicist scholars such as Paul Curtis have attempted to render the fragments in their original order. In brief, Stesichoros' poem recounts how the Greek hero Herakles fulfills his tenth labour as commanded to him by king Eurystheus. Herakles had to execute these labours in order to purify himself after being driven to madness by Hera and slaying his children (and, in some accounts, his wife Megara as well). The tenth labour given to him was to set sail for Erythia (known as 'the red island') in order to slay the giant Geryon. After killing Geryon's watchdog, Orthus, with a blow from his club, Herakles pierced Geryon's head with an arrow: "the arrow went straight into the crown of his head, and his armour and his gory limbs were stained with blood; and Geryon tilted his neck like a poppy when spoiling its gentle body suddenly drops its petals..." (2011: 84).

Carson's interest in this story is not difficult to explain. While Herakles' motivation to obtain the cattle is clear, Geryon, although a monster, seems to be almost victimized: brutally slaughtered by Herakles without any instigation on his own account. In Carson's text, Geryon has become a homosexual teenage boy (but still a monster as well), living in an unspecified part of North America. Herakles has become a drifter who seduces the young and impressionable Geryon, only to break his heart at the peak of infatuation and desert him. Geryon sets out to create a photographic autobiography in order to better understand himself and the workings of the world around him.

While this summary appears to be relatively simple to comprehend, the situation is more difficult than first impressions may let on. Apart from the AOR narrative, Carson also includes her own 'fragments of Stesichoros', or what, at first glance, appear to be translations of the *Geryoneis*. Carson, an acclaimed classicist and translator of ancient Greek works (including the

poetry of Sappho), instead offers us a twisted interpretation, where Orthus is presented to us as a 'little red dog'. Given Carson's work in translation, it would be easy for the reader to confuse Carson's work here as a translation of a work that in itself could be parodic, whereas of course this is her own parodic interpretation. Even more complicated is the fact that Stesichoros was supposedly blinded by Helen of Troy, a mythological figure, for detailing her sexual misconduct in his poetry. Stesichoros supposedly rectified the situation by writing "No it is not the true story. No you never went on the benched ships. No you never came to the towers of Troy" (1998: 17), which caused Helen to restore his sight. Of course, while it is impossible for a mythological figure to have blinded a 'factual' historical figure, this account so greatly interested Carson that she attempts to investigate it, And I shall look closer at her method of investigation in chapter 2. But this is also the moment where we see why this work becomes important in a postmodern context. Stesichoros' blinding is only presented to us in his own work and that of other poets, and no factual or historical documentation concerning his going blind (what caused it, or whether he did at all) survives. As such, to return to Meletinsky, we have a prime example of "primordial" time: an historical event that is so far removed from our current epoch and its documentation so sparse that it has itself reached mythological status.

Another postmodern issue presented here is that we have signs (Herakles and Geryon) that have travelled between two different texts. As such, these signs take with them the history of the text where they were first represented in, while at the same time now being placed in a new story. Since the *Geryoneis* is already fragmentary, it becomes problematic to determine what the different signs within the text are supposed to signify, as the history they refer to is an incomplete one. What could perhaps be determined to be exemplary of postmodern texts, there is consequently instilled within the reader a hermeneutic tendency (that could topple over into paranoia) to continuously wonder whether he or she understood 'the meaning' of the text, but given the fact that the referent is itself a collection of remaining fragments, this is made impossible. Instead, by taking a semiotic approach, I explore the way these sign systems are

constructed (in so far as they are still ‘constructed’), how they signify and what this signifying itself means. Through an understanding of these systems and how they signify, we may gain more understanding of the way mythology functions, and what ideological consequences this has.

In the first chapter, I shall follow Girard’s readings of myths as texts of persecution. For Girard, mythology is mimetic in that myths represent crises or critical situations in a given period of time for a given community or society, and through reading myth in this way, we can uncover ideological discourses. Accordingly, I will approach AOR as such a text in order to uncover its underlying ideological codes. In chapter 2, I will first deal with Carson’s dialectic investigation into the blinding of Stesichoros. Employing Linda Hutcheon’s theory concerning historiographic metafiction, parody, and postmodernism, I shall elaborate how this parody works and further problematizes the ontological status of the text. Following that, I shall use Barthes’ theory concerning myth and metalanguage in order to show how, diachronically, the signs and concepts within AOR refer back to the signs and concepts used in the *Geryoneis*, and how the fact that the *Geryoneis* is itself an incomplete text causes AOR to produce more mythology. In the third and final chapter, after having studied the voyaging of these signs and concepts in a temporal/diachronic dimension, I shall attempt to conceive how these signs and concepts have travelled in a *spatial* sense, using Barthes’ concepts of the notion of the ‘work’ and the ‘Text’. Through this distinction, I shall then attempt to conceptualize ‘textual space’, using Barthes’ definition of Text to examine how this is related to Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy concerning smooth and striated space. Finally, after having conceptualized such a notion of space and having distinguished what, in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terms, regime of signs is operational within the text, I shall propose that, while it is possible to escape a regime of mythology, it is *impossible* to escape mythology itself, which will allow me to argue that mythology has a diagrammatic function: capable of what Deleuze and Guattari deem an ‘absolute deterritorialization’.

Chapter 1 - Reading *Autobiography of Red* as a text of persecution

I

In his readings of myths, René Girard distinguishes several ‘stereotypes’ (that is, stereotypical qualities present in a text) for what he referred to as ‘texts of persecution’. He describes these stereotypes as “a generalized loss of differences” (the first stereotype), crimes that “eliminate differences” (the second stereotype), and whether the identified authors of these crimes possess the marks that suggest a victim, the paradoxical marks of the absence of difference (the third stereotype). The fourth stereotype is “violence itself” (1986: 24). Girard maintains that not all of these qualities need to be present in the text for it to be dubbed a text of persecution; three or even two of the four stereotypes would suffice.

In looking at which of these stereotypes *Autobiography of Red* (AOR) possesses, I want to start out with discussing the third stereotype as it relates directly to the protagonist of AOR, Geryon. In his reading of the Oedipus myth, Girard states that a mythological character “manages to combine the marginality of the outsider with the marginality of the insider” (1986: 25). Geryon, described as simultaneously a boy and a red-winged monster, possesses these paradoxical marks. In Girard’s theory, any character which bears the combination of such paradoxical marks in a mythological text is bound to attract disaster. AOR falls in line with Girard’s theory: the “crimes” that are committed in the story are all related to intimacy and sexuality. When Geryon and his (unnamed) brother need to start sharing a room and a bunk bed, Geryon’s brother is masturbating:

His brother was pulling on his stick as he did most nights before sleep.

Why do you pull on your stick?

Geryon asked. *None of your business let’s see yours*, said his brother.

No.

Bet you don't have one. Geryon checked. *Yes I do.*

You're so ugly I bet it fell off.

Geryon remained silent. He knew the difference between facts and brother hatred.

Show me yours

and I'll give you something good, said Geryon's brother.

No.

Give you one of my cat's-eyes.

No you won't.

I will.

Don't believe you.

Promise.

Now Geryon very much wanted a cat's-eye. He never could win a cat's eye when he

knelt on cold knees

on the basement floor to shoot marbles with his brother and his brother's friends.

A cat's-eye

is outranked only by a steelie. And so they developed an economy of sex for cat's-eyes.

Pulling the stick makes my brother happy, thought Geryon. *Don't tell Mom,* said his brother.

Voyaging into the rotten ruby of the night became a contest of freedom and bad logic.

Come on Geryon.

No.

You owe me.

No.

I hate you. I don't care. I'll tell Mom. Tell Mom what?

How nobody likes you at school.

Geryon paused. Facts are bigger in the dark. Sometimes then he would descend to the other bunk

and let his brother do what he liked or else hang in between with his face pressed into the edge of his own mattress,

cold toes balancing on the bed below. After it was over his brother's voice got very kind. (27-28)

Incest is a form of (sexual) violence which Girard perceives as exemplary for a text of persecution. Geryon's brother repeatedly tries to persuade Geryon into sexual activity, either through insult, threat or reward. If we look at the dialogue between Geryon and his brother, there is a telling quality in the negotiations that take place. The textual friction here is caused by the form as much as the content: Geryon refers to the penis as a *stick*, and the trading of sexual favors for a cat's-eye gives the violence the form of a childish game or prank. Girard writes about this: "In certain, especially Greek, mythologies these crimes are often not treated as crimes; they are seen as mere pranks; they are excused and made light of but they are nevertheless present and, at least in letter if not in spirit, they correspond perfectly to our stereotype" (1986: 31). The prank or game form of the discussion between the two brothers highlights another aspect. Though the age gap is never precisely mentioned, Geryon's brother is the older of the two. Thus, the crime committed here may not just be incestuous in nature, but pedophilic as well. For Girard, the incentive for Geryon's brother to manipulate Geryon into these sexual practices is his duality of form *and* of being. This is because the duality of boy and monster are formal characteristics, but it is the boundary between form and being which is transgressed. This

happens as formal deformity is linked to moral deformity, which Richard Golsan describes as follows:

There is an important distinction to be drawn between the physical and the moral defects of mythical monsters, a distinction which the myths themselves often obscure. According to Girard, the physical defects or deformities correspond to real human characteristics: they have their origins in reality, in the original acts of persecution from which the myths themselves arise. The moral defects, however, are fictions attributed to the victim by the persecutors to justify the persecution and ultimately exonerate themselves. (64)

Golsan's comments are relevant because Geryon does not appear to necessarily possess any moral *defects*. Instead, having a physical 'defect' is equated to a moral 'defect'; that of being different and consequently excluded from the norm. In Girard's theory, myths are ultimately documents which in one way or another always refer to a historical real. In that context, the moral defects may be grounded on history as much as the physical ones; Girard does not take into account that physical defects can be tied/seen *as* a moral one (rather than being two separate qualities). Girard does, however, recognize the different elements which make up monstrosity:

In the mythological monster the "physical" and the "moral" are inseparable. The two are so perfectly combined that any attempt to separate them seems doomed to failure. Yet, if I am right, there is a distinction to be made. Physical deformity must correspond to a real human characteristic, a real infirmity. Oedipus's wounds or Vulcan's limp are not necessarily less real in their origins than the characteristics of medieval witches. Moral monstrosity, by contrast, actualizes the tendency of all persecutors to project the monstrous results of some calamity or public or private misfortune onto some poor unfortunate who, by being infirm or a foreigner, suggests a certain affinity to the monstrous. My analysis may seem strange, for the monstrous character is generally

perceived as being the final proof of the absolutely fictitious and imaginary character of mythology. Yet in the monster we recognize the false certainty and the true possibility that I have been discussing. (1986: 34)

Though Girard's theory befits Geryon in the sense that the physical and the moral are inseparable, it is different in that the physical deformity is used by Geryon's brother as the moral deformity, as Geryon's 'ugliness' is the reason why nobody likes him. This does, in a roundabout way, further supports Girard's argument regarding the relationship between the mythological and the historical, as there isn't any specific calamity projected onto the victim in our case. It is the monstrous deformity itself which is the incentive for violence.

The underlying assumption in Girardian theory is that the correlation between a moral and physical deformity is in fact a causal relationship. In AOR, we can see a sign of this relation manifested through the manipulation of Geryon's brother (*'Bet you don't have one. / Geryon checked. Yes I do. / You're so ugly I bet it fell off.'*). To Girard, the fact that this duality takes place (an older brother manipulating his younger brother into performing sexual acts) is what makes it refer to a (non-specific) historical reality - that of incestuous violence.

As Geryon grows into adolescence he meets a young drifter named Herakles. They fall in love with each other, and, while never explicitly mentioned, this signifies Geryon as being homosexual. Though this is never explicitly problematized in the book, the correlation between the moral and physical deformity now starts to take shape. In regards to this shifting of elements (boy, monster, sexuality), Girard says the following:

Monsters are surely the result of a fragmentation of perception and of a decomposition followed by a recombination that does not take natural specificity into account. A monster is an unstable hallucination that, in retrospect, crystallizes into stable forms, owing to the fact that it is remembered in a world that has regained stability. (1986: 33)

In reading this passage it is important to acknowledge that this “fragmentation of perception” can be read in different ways. On the one hand it could be read as a recombination (ergo, also a representation) of different historical realities into a myth, and, since it does not have to take “natural specificity” into account, can consequently give way to the monstrous form. On the other hand it may refer to a fragmentation of perception *within* the myth itself, or finally a combination of both. The final sentence emphasizes Girard’s point that, when ‘the world’ has regained its stability, it can reflect on the monster. But this final remark, too, is problematic, as the ‘world’ to which Girard refers can be read in different ways as well: the world in which the myth takes place (a fictional world), or the historical reality to which the myth refers to (which is, ultimately, the “real” world). The mythical world provides us with an “unstable hallucination” of the monster because it is a *textual* world, which is a finite (and in this sense, stable) world (since it is a text which has a beginning and an ending), yet is also holistic in nature (as a semantic field). The “real” world, on the other hand, is not finite, and neither is its terminology. This is where the semiotic dynamic between these two worlds comes into play. Let us consider the following passage:

Herakles lies like a piece of torn silk in the heat of the blue saying,
Geryon please. The break in his voice
 made Geryon think for some reason of going into a barn
 first thing in the morning
 when sunlight strikes a bale of raw hay still wet from the night.
Put your mouth on it Geryon please.
 Geryon did. It tasted sweet enough. I am learning a lot this year in my life,
 thought Geryon. It tasted very young. (54)

It is suggestive to read the “it” here as either the penis or some other body part of Herakles (rather than a part of Geryon’s own body or something different altogether). But the fact that

“it” is an *it* (rather than the penis or other specified body part) is exactly what makes it an “unstable” sign and leads to the fragmentation of perception. Its signifier (“it”) belongs to one world (the mythological), but it is the signified (the implied sexual act) which refers to the historically real, i.e., homosexuality. This signified is in turn linked to another signifier, that of the monstrous *form* that Geryon embodies. Thus, we get a recombined sign (the homosexual monster) whose signifier and signified are composed in two other signs (the homosexual act *and* the monster).

The fact that we are inclined to read the “it” as indicative of a sexual act is what makes us rhetorically aware. As I posited earlier, the main issue in Girard’s theory is that correlation does not automatically imply causation, but that this assumption does have rhetoric consequences, which is precisely the issue AOR plays with. It would not be without merit to argue that Girard’s consistent use of the term ‘deformity’ subliminally reinforces the ideology it intends to expose; we could also use the term ‘characteristic’ to address the same quality we want to point out. Yet Girard’s use of the term is not without motivation. Myths are par excellence what Barthes dubs *textes scriptible*: the type of text which overflows with codes (hermeneutic, historical, semiotic) and as such challenges the reader in his or her position as subject. In this challenge we cannot but take position to what happens in the mythological text; which is to make its implicit suggestions (that these qualities are treated as deformities) explicit, yet by making them explicit we inevitably contribute to the ideology by defining its own terminology in this way. The result of this move on the reader’s part, in having to position himself as subject in relation to the text, is an issue of problematizing the relation between connotation and denotation. For what does the sign “it” denote? It is solely a referent to another sign within the limits of the semantic field of the text that the reader operates, yet simultaneously within the endless context of the connotations of the codes known to him *outside* this text, which coerces the reader to “write into” the text. The reader’s agency as a result cannot anymore be depoliticized, and he cannot remain positionless. Yet through making the reader aware of his position, or rather, that he has to take position at all,

reveals to him the plurality of positions we can take, the plurality of reading the “it”, as I’ve given several examples above, each having their own consequences in relation to myth. In the next chapters, I will build further on this concept through the Barthesian idea of a metalanguage.

II

The examples I gave in the first part showed different manifestations of violence following Girard’s theory, exposing Geryon’s role as scapegoat. For Girard, the scapegoat does not become one by accident, but as a result of what Girard calls mimetic or triangular desire. Girard’s concept assumes that there is a subject (who will ultimately become the scapegoat) who desires an object. The subject is opposed by a model-rival, who desires the same object. This explains the triangular form of the concept. The desire is mimetic because the subject is only reinforced in his desire for the object because the rival desires it as well. To Girard we are as such ‘interindividuals’; we are the model for the other through which we are (via mediation) constituted in the world, but at the same time we constitute others in our own role as model-rival to them. This creates a kind of feedback loop, where the one subject becomes the model-rival for his rival and vice versa, creating mimetic rivalry, and this in turn gives way to violence: “Violence is not originary; it is a by-product of mimetic rivalry. Violence is mimetic rivalry itself becoming violent as the antagonists who desire the same object keep thwarting each other and desiring the same object all the more. Violence is supremely mimetic” (1996: 12-13).

While I do not contest the statements made above, Girard’s concept is based on the following presupposition: “If the appropriative gesture of an individual named A is rooted in the imitation of an individual named B, it means that A and B must reach together for one and the same object” (1996: 9). But how can we be certain both individuals reach for the same object? What if the mimetic element is in the behavior itself rather than the object reached? Let us again look at the example I gave on pages 12-14. We can deduce several desired objects: the cat’s eye, sex, intimacy, happiness, and the keeping of certain secrets. But not all of these objects are

desired by both brothers. Geryon partially submits to his brother's coercion because it makes his brother happy. In turn, Geryon's brother seems to have Geryon's happiness, at least to some extent (paired perhaps with his own guilt) as object:

After it was over his brother's voice
got very kind.

You're nice Geryon I'll take you swimming tomorrow okay? (28)

These objects, however, have a substitutional function. For Girard, we strive to capture our rival's being, lead by the illusion that the other's being would enhance our own: "Our deepest desire is not for things or objects, but to *be*" (1996: 290). This reaches its apotheosis when the subject cannot distinguish himself from his model-rival: "The experience of the double occurs when the model-obstacle as overpowering other is so internalized that the subject does not experience of self and the model-mediator. The subject is thus 'possessed' by the other" (1996: 290). It is through substituting objects that the feedback loop mentioned by Girard is put into practice. This substituting is complicated further. Geryon's desire to please his brother (through sexual intimacy) serves what is seemingly Geryon's own desire: that of being liked and accepted. Geryon's later relationship with Herakles in many ways mirrors his relationship with his brother, because the desire is transferred to a different model. As is shown in the example earlier, Geryon here too is coerced into sex. All the while, Geryon's other main aim seems to be to create his autobiography (first through writing, later on through photography). This shows us how the model is triangular in another way, through something akin to a *mise-en-abyme*. The desires of Geryon's brother and Herakles *in their being described* are part of a larger triangular figure, where the angles are occupied by Geryon, his rival, and ultimately his autobiography. My reading here suggests that Geryon desires are part of the other triangular figure (Geryon as model-rival-object of the rival's desire) in order to fit this into his own triangular figure, straying away from a more

traditional mythological form of the triangular figure: Geryon needs the desire of his rivals in order to ultimately fulfil his own desires (of being able to create an autobiography).

This plateauing structure of the triangular figures exposes a complexity that stands in contrast with Girard's analysis, as when he states:

The subject would like to think of himself as the victim of an atrocious injustice but in his anguish he wonders whether perhaps he does not deserve his apparent condemnation.

Rivalry therefore only aggravates mediation; it increases the mediator's prestige and strengthens the bond which links the object to this mediator by forcing him to affirm openly his right or desire of possession. (1996: 42)

As I've stated at the beginning of this second part, the role of subject and rival is a matter of perspective. While we can transpose Girard's first statement directly towards Geryon's position as subject, it is the latter half of the statement which is problematized. Geryon's objects of desire, acceptance and his authoring his autobiography, deal not so much with a possession of this object but a desire to *be possessed*:

Hello? Geryon? Hi it's me. You sound funny were you asleep?

Herakles' voice went bouncing through Geryon on hot gold springs.

Oh. No. No I wasn't.

So how are things? What are you up to? Oh - Geryon sat down hard on the rug.

fire was closing off his lungs -

not much. You? Oh the usual you know this and that and did some good painting

last night with Hart. Heart?

I guess you didn't meet Hart when you were here he came over from

the mainland last Saturday

or was it Friday no Saturday Hart is a boxer says he might train me to be

his corner man. Really.

A good corner man can make the difference Hart says.

Does he.

Muhammad Ali had a corner man named Mr. Kopps they used to hunch down

there on the rope and write poems

together in between rounds. Poems. But that's not why I called Geryon

the reason I called is to tell you

about my dream I had a dream of you last night. Did you. Yes you were this

old Indian guy standing on the back porch

and there was a pail of water there on the step with a drowned bird in it -

big yellow bird really huge you know

floating with its wings out and you leaned over and said, Come on now

get out of here - and you took it

by one wing and just flung it right up into the air WHOOSH it came alive

and then it was gone.

Yellow? said Geryon and he was thinking Yellow! Yellow! Even in my dreams he doesn't know me at all! Yellow!

What'd you say Geryon?

Nothing.

It's a freedom dream Geryon.

Yes.

Freedom is what I want for you Geryon we're true friends you know that's why

I want you to be free.

Don't want to be free want to be with you. Beaten but alert Geryon organized all his inside force to suppress this remark. (73-74)

Herakles' mentioning of another man and his metaphorical dream are seemingly used here to distance himself from Geryon, but rather it is a rhetorical device used to achieve the exact opposite: through distancing himself from Geryon, Geryon desires to be with Herakles even more. But Herakles' rhetoric ultimately suggests he too desires to be possessed: the dream is merely a method used in order for him to remain desired. This relationship demonstrates the mimetic effect that takes place. Girard writes on this:

Once his basic needs are satisfied (indeed, sometimes even before), man is subject to intense desires, though he may not know precisely for what. The reason is that he desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being. If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being. (1979: 146)

In this analysis we can see that the model's *being* can be the object itself in the sense that he offers the possibility of offering an "even greater plenitude of being". This supports my hypothesis of the plateauing of the triangular figures: Herakles' and Geryon's desire of each other is only an object of desire which can facilitate another, unnamed object. Though it might seem contradictory that Herakles seeks to distance himself from Geryon, this fits into what Girard calls the 'double bind': "If desire is allowed to follow its own bent, its mimetic nature will almost always lead it into a double bind. The unchanneled mimetic impulse hurls itself blindly against the obstacle of a conflicting desire. It invites its own rebuffs, and these rebuffs will in turn strengthen the mimetic inclination" (1979: 148). The double bind offers an explanation for Herakles' distancing himself from Geryon. Though thinly veiled in wanting Geryon to be free, it is rather his own desire to be free which conflicts with his own desire to *be* desired. These two desires are

reconciled through recounting his dream to Geryon. Veiled in good intentions, Herakles finds a way to create his desired distance while leaving Geryon wanting to be with Herakles all the more.

Geryon's doubt and longing tie into Girard's statement of the subject wondering whether he deserves his apparent condemnation, though I do not wish to suggest here that the scapegoating Geryon is subjected to, is in its essence thinly veiled self-induced victimization. Geryon's desires however, are not without traces of narcissism, as shown in the pages following Herakles leaving Geryon:

Years passed

as his eyes ran water and a thousand ideas jumped his brain - *If the world*

ends now I am free and

If the world ends now no one will see my autobiography - finally it bumped. (70)

We can tie this to Girard's notion of (Stendhal's) *vaniteux*:

The Romantic *vaniteux* always wants to convince himself that his desire is written into the nature of things, or which amounts to the same thing, that is the emanation of a serene subjectivity, the creation *ex nihilo* of a quasi-divine ego. Desire is no longer rooted in the object perhaps, but is rooted in the subject; it is certainly not rooted in the Other. The objective and subjective fallacies are one and the same; both originate in the image which we all have of our own desires. (1996: 43)

Girard's statement is insightful when tied to Geryon's desire to create an autobiography. If the *vaniteux* (Geryon) convinces himself that his desire is written into the nature of things (for example, Herakles), he seeks in turn to capture the *experience* of this thing in his autobiography. This again supports my theory of the plateauing of the triangular figures, related to what Girard names the image of our desire: Geryon's desire to be possessed instead of being free in turn serves his desire to create his autobiography. However, Girard's use of the term image here

seems to me erroneous in that it might invoke the suggestion that the image is immanent (rooted in the subject) and the actual desire transcendental. I would argue instead that both desires (i.e. both the desire itself and its image) are immanent but that it is *the relationship* between them which is transcendental. The text illustrates Geryon's awareness of both of his desires, but what is out of reach for him is knowing how these different desires relate to one another.

III

So far I have discussed both Girard's theory on violence and on mimetic desire, but how are they related to one another? In Geryon's relationships with Herakles and with his brother we have seen mimetic desire in practice. Geryon's desire to be possessed by Herakles is contrasted by Herakles' desire to be free (and for Geryon to be free) is in turn contrasted with his mimicking Geryon's desire to *be* desired. This results in two different desires converging on the same object, which creates conflict, which in turn leads to violence. Mimetic desire fuels an endless loop in the subject to both be imitated and at the same time offering resistance to being imitated, for too much imitation threatens the appropriation of the object by the model of the subject. This resistance by the subject only instigates violence further: "Violent opposition, then, is the signifier of ultimate desire, of divine self-sufficiency, of that 'beautiful totality' whose beauty depends on its being inaccessible and impenetrable" (1979: 148). This idea of a 'beautiful totality' further supports my proposed theory given at the end of the previous part, as both the image of desire and desire itself are part of that totality, and given that they are 'inaccessible and impenetrable' underscores the transcendental nature of the relationship between the image and the desire itself. Furthermore, this correlates strongly with the idea that an 'even greater plenitude of being' is to be found in the model-rival since this is the image of the desire which keeps on propelling the loop of mimetic desire.

Such a loop may suggest that the violence, like mimetic desire itself, is spread out evenly. As is demonstrated in AOR, this is not the case. Geryon is the scapegoat due to his dualistic

nature of being both monster and boy. Yet, the same can be said about Herakles or Geryon's brother; their monstrosity simply manifests itself in a way other than the physical. Girard's dubs this phenomenon the 'monstrous double':

In the collective experience of the *monstrous double* the differences are not eliminated, but muddled and confused. All the doubles are interchangeable, although their basic similarity is never formally acknowledged. They thus occupy the equivocal middle ground between difference and unity that is indispensable to the process of sacrificial substitution - to the polarization of violence onto a single victim who substitutes for all the others. (1979: 161)

The concept of the monstrous double allows for the violence to be focused and directed, then. This is why, in AOR, even though the desire is mimetic between the different characters, the violence caused by this desire is directed towards Geryon, since he is the one whose monstrous qualities are explicitly exposed (textually, in his monstrous form), while those of both Herakles and his brother are not. As a result, Geryon becomes the scapegoat, an outcast, who is abandoned. To Girard, it is stereotypical of the mythological text to emphasize the monstrous qualities of its protagonist, while downplaying the monstrous qualities of its antagonists. In this sense AOR falls in line with Girard's theory of myth; Herakles' and Geryon's brother's actions are never condemned as monstrous, whereas for Geryon himself the monstrous is caught in his very form, inescapable, designating him as the perfect scapegoat.

This provokes the question whether the differences here not too clear, for is Geryon's formal monstrosity not of a whole different category than that of his antagonists? Girard writes: "The nature of the relationship between monster and double, stubbornly denied by the antagonists, is ultimately imposed on them in the course of the shifting of differences - but it is imposed in the *form of a hallucination*" (1979: 160). This begs the question: what kind of hallucination is at play in AOR? Geryon's monstrosity is of the type that Edwards and Graulund deem grotesque: "figures that are a combination of the human and non-human" (2013: 36). This

combination can then be “interpreted as unnatural and, as such, a potential sign for inner corruption” (2013: 36-37). Consequently, Geryon’s (formal) monstrosity is the excuse used for making him a scapegoat. The instability of this hallucination is then caused because Geryon’s grotesquery is defined through his monstrous form, while the monstrous aspects of his antagonists/doubles aren’t. If Geryon’s monstrosity, or his dualistic nature beyond that, belongs to the realm of the fantastic, his brother’s and Herakles’ monstrosity refer to the historical real (incest and pedophilia) and literary tropes (the romantic drifter and vagabond), respectively.

Girard’s approach in his readings of myth should be understood in terms of functioning in the service of literary sociology. For Girard, myths themselves are mimetic in a similar way as understood by Meletinsky: mythology is a way in which a people, through creating a collection of fictional stories can both express and understand the world around them. Girard does not deviate much, as in his readings the myths were a product of their specific time and as such can give us insight into the way a society or community operated in a specific period. This led Girard to developing an approach towards myths in such a way that an analysis of mythology was to be used to uncover factual historical realities and ideological discourse that were embedded in the mythological fictions. In this analysis, however, Girard does not take into account how – if we use mythology as a means to represent, explain and understand our own world – mythology may do more than inform that world alone. Our understanding and interpretation of mythology consequently alters the way we perceive and act in that world, which in turn alters the way we perceive and approach mythology (since it is part of that world). Mythology, then, may have more than a mimetic function alone. The function of my close-reading of AOR in this chapter is not to explain or theorize a sociological function of this particular text, but rather Girard’s approach allows me to analyze *why* Geryon fits the criteria of being designated as a scapegoat. This analysis is of value because, as we shall see in chapter 3, Deleuze and Guattari deem the scapegoat the figure par excellence which is able to traverse between regimes of signs.

In the following chapter we shall explore the way Carson investigates (while parodying the very investigation) the mythological past out of which AOR was born. This will complicate the relationship between history and mythology further, which will be explored through the theory of metalanguage by Barthes.

Chapter 2 - Historiographic metafiction and metalingual mythology

I

In the first chapter we have seen that in the theory of René Girard mythology always refers to a 'historical real'. He summarized this idea in an almost Barthesian statement: "There is no term in any language that is not accompanied by mythological inflections" (1977: 154). This creates a complex relationship between the language of the historical real and that of mythology, as Girard's statement inflects that the language of the first is drenched in the connotations of the language of the second. If we are to investigate how and in what manner the past existed, we have to consequently scrutinize the (mythological) language that represents that past, tying Girard's statement to Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction:

The past really did exist. The question is *how* can we know that past today and *what* can we know of it? The overt metafictionality of novels like *Shame* or *Star Turn* acknowledges their own constructing, ordering, and selecting processes, but these are always shown to be historically determined acts. It puts into question, at the same time as it exploits, the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction. (1988: 92)

The historical realities that were referenced to in the first chapter were those realities (incest, pedophilia) hidden by a mythological form and unveiled through Girard's theory.

There are, however, aspects to the texts accompanying the AOR narrative which are quintessentially historical in nature and have not yet been discussed. The work starts not with the narrative of AOR but with two texts entitled *Red meat: what difference did Stesichoros make?* and *Red meat: fragments of Stesichoros*. The first of these texts presents itself as a critical reflection on Stesichoros:

When Gertrude Stein had to sum up Picasso she said, "This one was working." So say of Stesichorus, "This one was making adjectives." What is an adjective? Nouns name the world. Verbs activate names. Adjectives come from somewhere else ... To Helen of Troy for example, was attached an adjectival tradition of whoredom already old by the time Homer used it. When Stesichoros unlatched her epithet from Helen there flowed out such a light as may have blinded him for a moment. This is a big question, the question of the blinding of Stesichoros by Helen (see Appendixes A, B), although generally regarded as unanswerable. (4-5)

In the appendices Carson refers to dialectic is used as a method to discover in what way Helen could have blinded Stesichoros: "1. Either Stesichoros was a blind man or he was not. 2. If Stesichoros was a blind man either his blindness was a temporary condition or it was permanent" (18). The principal question here should be how a mythological figure was able to blind a historical figure. But this question is ignored, and instead Carson has opted to put into question the way whether this event *could* have happened (challenging its historical ground, but not its impossibility), while simultaneously parodying the very method by which we question the accuracy and proof of the historical nature of such an event: critical inquiry and (in appendix C) dialectic. It is this aspect to the text which makes it both parody and historiographical metafiction, since it uses an academic method (dialectic) to answer a question which cannot be definitively answered. Hutcheon defines parody as "a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity" (1985: xii). Taking Hutcheon's definition, we must examine closely what is being repeated here, as 'form of repetition' is something different from a 'repetition of form'. Later on, however, Hutcheon narrows down her definition: "Of course, parody is clearly a formal phenomenon - a bitextual synthesis or a dialogic relation between texts - but without the consciousness (and then interpretation) of that discursive doubling by the perceiver, how could parody actually be said to exist, much less 'work' (1985:

xiii)?” Hutcheon’s statement here seems lacking in specificity. If parody is, indeed, a formal phenomenon, then her commentary is applicable to any other form of trope or topos - a reader will always need some kind of background knowledge in order to recognize a trope. If the element of *repetition of form* is specifically a hallmark of parody, then this is a defining element in the bitextual synthesis or dialogic relation between texts concerning parody. However, here too we need to consider whether parody, particularly *postmodern* parody, is in fact bitextual in nature. Let us turn to Hutcheon’s own definition concerning what she calls postmodernist:

This is the confrontation that I shall be calling postmodernist: where documentary historical actuality meets formalist self-reflexivity and parody. At this conjuncture, a study of representation becomes, not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and in the past. (2002: 7)

Here Hutcheon offers us another way out of the necessity of the bitextual relationship in parody, in the plurality of “narratives and images”. Hutcheon’s definition of parody implicitly relies on the idea of an original (since a repetition of form implies that there is an original to repeat) - an idea which is problematized both by postmodernism and mythology. The problematization manifests itself in different ways, but what these have in common is their focus on the historicity of the original. In the second and third sections of this chapter, I will delve deeper into the issue between historicity and mythology, but for now I’ll focus on the issue of the historicity in relation to the idea of the original in postmodern theory, since this is also exploited in AOR.

When we look at *Red meat: what difference did Stesichoros make?* one of the things that makes it differ from other parodies in that it doesn’t parody an original in a ‘traditional’ sense, but is a repetition of form in its most *literal* sense: by parodying the rhetoric form of dialectic, specifically Aristotelian syllogistics. Yet, if we are to ask what original we can refer to, to see how it is different and parodic, we encounter a serious issue. In a ‘traditional’ parody, the bitextual nature

of the relationship reveals to us the differences between the texts after conducting research, allowing us to point out and mark the differences between the two texts, and as such the research shows what specific rhetorical devices in the second text are parodic in nature. In this sense Carson's text seemingly falls in line with Hutcheon's paradox of the postmodern: "I would add that, in the postmodernist writing of history and literature, it does so [contesting the 'grounds' of the text] by first installing and then critically confronting both that grounding process and those grounds themselves" (1988: 92).

In appendix C (entitled 'Clearing up the question of Stesichoros' blinding by Helen'), Carson employs the dialectical method in order to clear up this question. The first five statements are as follows:

1. Either Stesichoros was a blind man or he was not.
2. If Stesichoros was a blind man either his blindness was a temporary condition or it was permanent.
3. If Stesichoros' blindness was a temporary condition this condition either had a contingent cause or it had none.
4. If this condition had a contingent that cause was Helen or the cause was not Helen.
5. If the cause was Helen Helen had her reasons or she had none. (18)

As we see in this example, both grounding and confrontation are happening at the same time. This is because any enquiry into the historicity of this event presupposes that the event *did* happen, but contests it by investigating *how* it could have happened. This is also the element of the text that problematizes its own ontological status - whether this is a serious critical text, a parody on a critical text, or both of those simultaneously.

Carson's use of syllogisms (deriving *b* from *a* only where *b* is a logical consequence of *a*) thus far is solid. By using this method however, Carson subverts the question whether Helen *could* have blinded Stesichoros at all. This is where Hutcheon's postmodern paradox begins, and is

sequential in nature; Carson's ground here is the validity of the syllogistic method as a ground for reasoning. It is exploited when she starts to use the method to answer nonsensical questions, and through this exploitation parodies the dialectic. The exploitation exposed, Carson dialectic unravels into absurdity:

6. If Helen had her reasons the reasons arose out of some remark Stesichoros made or they did not.
7. If Helen's reasons arose out of some remark Stesichoros made either it was a strong remark about Helen's sexual misconduct (not to say its unsavory aftermath the Fall of Troy) or it was not.
8. If it was a strong remark about Helen's sexual misconduct (not to say its unsavory aftermath the Fall of Troy) either this remark was a lie or it was not.
9. If it was not a lie we are now in reverse and by continuing to reason in this way are likely to arrive back at the beginning of the question of the blinding of Stesichoros or we are not.
10. If we are now in reverse and by continuing to reason in this way are likely to arrive back at the beginning of the question of the blinding of Stesichoros either we will go along without incident or we will meet Stesichoros on our way back.
11. If we meet Stesichoros on our way back either we will keep quiet or we will look him in the eye and ask him what he thinks of Helen.
12. If we look Stesichoros in the eye and ask him what he thinks of Helen he will tell the truth or he will lie.
13. If Stesichoros lies either we will know at once that he is lying or we will be fooled because now that we are in reverse the whole landscape looks inside out.

Margaret Rose, in her formalist and historical study of parody, *Parody: ancient, modern and post-modern* (1993), states that the effects of parody on the reader are "(1) Shock or surprise, and

humour, from conflict with expectations about the texts parodied. (2) Change in the views of the reader of the parodied text” (38). Rose’s effects can certainly be found in the absurdist effect Carson’s analysis has. Parody’s comical effects, however, present it as seemingly innocent, limiting it to being entertaining. Hutcheon takes a radically different stance: “Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations – its images and stories – are anything but neutral, however ‘aestheticized’ they may appear to be in their parodic self-reflexivity” (2002: 3). In Hutcheon’s theory Rose’s formalist/comical effects are limited, as she finds that to be the residue of “eighteenth century notions of wit and ridicule” (2002: 90). To Hutcheon, postmodern parody is that parody which “does not disregard the context of the past representations it cites, but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from that past today - by time and by the subsequent history of those representations” (2002: 90) and that it “is a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the representations of history” (2002: 91). This simultaneous confirmation and subversion happens in that Carson posits herself in a similar position as Stesichoros, that is, in the position of the author/poet whose writing inevitably problematizes the past. This is the case for Stesichoros because his writing traverses the boundaries between myth and reality, making the two overlap. Since all accounts of the blinding of Stesichoros are captured in the work of other poets (Suidas, Isokrates) - any serious attempt at answering this question is consequentially rendered doubtful from the start. Carson’s writing problematizes the past because her relationship to Stesichoros has some semblance with Stesichoros’ relationship with Helen. Whereas Stesichoros was supposedly able to directly address Helen, similarly Carson directly addresses Stesichoros, and, through parody, appears to take his traversing of boundaries between the historical real and mythology seriously, as was shown by her use of Aristotelian syllogistics to investigate the past.

But as these syllogistics unraveled into absurdity, they ended up only complicating the possibility to gain knowledge of this past even further. Coming back to Hutcheon’s primary

question regarding historiographic metafiction (*how* can we know that past today and *what* can we know of it?) Carson elucidates the inevitable impossibility of this question, but adds another dimension to it: *where* can we know it? As only fragments of Stesichoros' own writing *and* writing concerning him going blind remain, we are forced to look at other texts which deal with this event. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the following (lost) fragments of Stesichoros's *Palinode* are recounted (through Socrates):

So, my friend, I need to be purified. There is an ancient purification for those who have erred in *muthologia*, one which Homer did not perceive, but Stesichorus did. For when he was robbed of his eyes because of his slander of Helen, he was not ignorant like Homer, but since he was *mousikos* he knew the cause, and created immediately:

'This is not a true story,

You did not embark in the broad-benched ships,

You did not reach the citadel of Troy.' (2006: 48)

Stesichoros, upon being blinded, created a new verse in order for Helen to give him back his sight. What Carson then does is forcing us to ask how we can deal with what we may call the 'heterotopic quality' of mythology, as that space where different levels of myth (the *Geryoneis* of Stesichoros and her own AOR narrative) as well as the underlying language of the historical real can overlap and the lines between these three become blurred, the resolution concerning which terminology belongs to what level of language ultimately being suspended. In the third chapter I shall delve into this issue further.

II

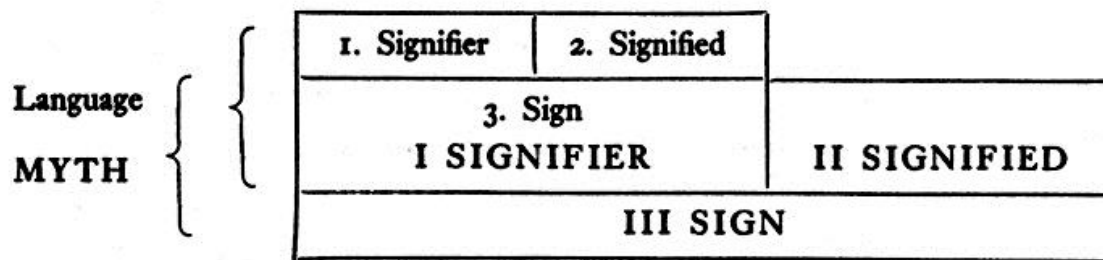
Carson's second preliminary text is entitled *Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros*. These fragments however, are not scholarly attempts at a serious translation, but rather a reworking *based* on the fragments, which Geryon partially uses in the main AOR narrative. We can compare Carson's

reworking of a fragment with Curtis' attempt at a precise translation of the same fragment.

Curtis' translation is as follows: "the arrow went straight into the crown of his head, and his armour and his gory limbs were stained with blood; and Geryon tilted his neck like a poppy when spoiling its gentle body suddenly drops its petals..." (2011: 84). Whereas Carson's reworking of the fragment is: "Arrow means kill It parted Geryon's skull like a comb Made The boy neck lean At an odd slow angle sideways as when a Poppy shames itself in a whip of Nude breeze" (13).

This comparison shows how easy it would be for confusion to arise whether Carson's fragments are an attempt at serious translation if we did not have another translation to compare it to, as several elements (the arrow in his head, the tilting of the neck) are present in both texts. The comparison also reveals to us the differences between the two and how Carson is already reworking Stesichoros' fragments in order to better fit her own work: in Curtis' translation there is no mention of Geryon being a boy, but in Carson's work there is, which, as a rhetoric device, smooths the transition of the fragments into the AOR narrative. In doing this, the original fragments are reworked in a metalingual system, i.e.: a system where different layers of language are chronologically 'stacked' and inform the language beneath it. In the case of AOR, these are the original (remaining) fragments, the reworking of the fragments, and the usage of these fragments in the AOR narrative. As such AOR has turned into a semiological system, as defined by Roland Barthes in *Myth Today* (originally published in 1957), a text that was published as part of *Mythologies* (2009): "This is the case with mythology: it is a part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-form" (135). This concept of myth as idea-in-form is important to Barthes because to him "Semiology is a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content" (134). Moreover "one cannot speak about structures in terms of forms, and vice versa. It may well be that on the plane of 'life', there is but a totality where structures and forms cannot be separated" (134). To study the way the different levels of myth and the language of the historical real are related, I shall analyze them as a metalingual system, because, as Barthes writes: "the more a

system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism. To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns one away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it” (134). As such, a subversive strategy that simultaneously resists and elucidates how mythology is produced may arise. Mythology, as a type of language, is always based on a historical foundation: “for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things” (132). As such, the subversive strategy in my case is trans-historical: if its origins are based on the historicity of Stesichoros’ fragments, we can use the representational model of a metalingual system as designed by Barthes in order to explore how the different layers of myth relate to each other in the case of AOR:



(Source: *Mythologies*, 138)

In order to avoid confusion in terminology, in the layer of myth in the model, Barthes dubs the signifier the *form* and the signified the *concept*. “Unlike the form, the concept is in no way abstract: it is filled with a situation. Through the concept, it is a whole new history which is implanted in the myth” (142). It is imperative that we acknowledge that in this specific case, the level of language is *already mythological*, as that level is the *Geryoneis*. That is to say, we take the form and concept of the first myth and transpose it into a new one.

Yet through the transposition of the myth-as-sign to another myth, Carson resists parts of the concept of Stesichoros’ *Geryoneis* myth as she creates her own. This is possible, because as Barthes states: “In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made

of yielding, shapeless associations. One must firmly stress this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence, it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function” (143). As such, it is through the nebulous and fragmentary nature of the concept of Stesichoros’ myth that Carson is able to create her own. As the model shows, concept and form are ultimately part of the sign in the layer of myth (in this layer, Barthes dubs the sign the *signification*). Consequently, when the concept is changed, the form is changed as well. Carson appropriates names and locations from Stesichoros’ myth, but the signifieds of these names and locations has changed since they are appropriated in a new myth, incorporating elements of the signifieds from the old sign (Geryon as monster) with new ones (Geryon as teenage homosexual), which are themselves also signifying. As we have seen in chapter 1, this diffusion and appropriation of signs also takes place on the level of narrative and morality. In Stesichoros’ account, Geryon is slain because Herakles has to obtain the cattle from Geryon in order to fulfill his tenth labor as commanded by Eurystheus.

The parallel between Stesichoros’ account and Carson’s appropriation is that Geryon is the scapegoat in both stories. In both stories Geryon’s form is monstrous, which is used as the incentive to instigate violence in order for Herakles to take what he wants (in the *Geryoneis* this is Geryon’s cattle, in AOR it is to be desired by Geryon). In Carson’s myth, Geryon does not want to defend his cattle (or even *has* cattle), but rather falls in love with Herakles. Thus in the metalingual form we have a transitional form. The entire sign of Geryon as scapegoat through his monstrosity, with a non-transitional new concept, as the incentive for mimetic violence, has shifted from the cattle to desire. It is these transitional forms that seemingly allow us to decipher meaning in the myth. But myth is always a double system. As we have seen, on the level of mythology Barthes calls it *form*, but as the final term of the linguistic level Barthes calls it *meaning*. But as we can see in the model, the form has its own signified on the level of myth, the *concept*. The meaning presents the form, but the form outdistances the meaning. This is because

when it has arrived, the meaning also acts as point of departure for a new signification, consequently presenting the form. Barthes explains this through the following metaphor:

If I am in a car and I look at the scenery through the window, I can at will focus on the scenery or on the window-pane. At one moment I grasp the presence of the glass and the distance of the landscape; at another, on the contrary, the transparency of the glass and the depth of the landscape; but the result of this alternation is constant: the glass is at once present and empty to me, and the landscape unreal and full. The same thing occurs in the mythical signifier: its form is empty but present, its meaning absent but full. (147)

Barthes' metaphor reveals that the issue of deciphering meaning in the myth is a question of focus: through focusing on one form-meaning relation we will inevitably neglect another. But this reveals to us a particular quality of the nature of myth. Because of its double system nature, the metalingual model as a form of representation cannot but be distorting: "However paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear. There is no latency of the concept in relation to the form: there is no need of an unconscious in order to explain myth" (154). Barthes use of the term latency here is meant to reveal that, in a temporal dimension, both the form and the concept present themselves at the same time (being part of a single sign), but the concept is able to outdistance the form in that the concept is nebulous, hazy and unstable. The form however, is spatial; that is to say, related to place and proximity (for example, in narrativity).

It is because of its nebulous nature that the concept is able to distort meaning. "The meaning is *already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" (140-141). Barthes' metaphor revealed that we are only able to perceive only a part of the meaning each time we focus. This suggests a sequence, an order in which we focus on the meaning in the myth:

To keep a spatial metaphor, the approximative character of which I have already stressed, I shall say that the signification of the myth is constituted by a sort of constantly moving turnstile which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form, a language object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness. This alternation is, so to speak, gathered up in the concept, which uses it like an ambiguous signifier, at once intellectual and imaginary, arbitrary and natural. (146-147)

It is here that we touch upon the politics of myth, and of reading myth. In my reading of the novel as a text of persecution in the first chapter, I demonstrated that on the level of language, we are confronted with ambiguous signs that reveal a double system: its underlying conceptual codes (incest and pedophilea) referred to what Girard dubbed the historical real, presented in the form of mythological language. Myth is depoliticized speech, but that does not render it a-political; on the contrary, it is a form covering its political and ideological codes. The ambiguity of the signs in a double system reveals mythology's political potential. Through the nebulousness of the concept, its entire meaning can never fully stabilize. Close-reading becomes then a form of deconstruction of the myth. However, this deconstruction can take place only when we attempt to read the entire whole of the signifier (that is, the myth as a complete sign): "Finally, if I focus on the mythical signifier as on an inextricable whole made of meaning and form, I receive an ambiguous signification: I respond to the constituting mechanism of myth, to its own dynamics, I become a reader of myths" (153). This emphasis on the whole sign here can be related to Barthes' metaphor of the turnstile, where every aspect of the myth has to be read in order to be able to construct the myth as complete signifier. But this is rendered impossible because of its ambiguous signification due to its nature as a double system and the alternating, sequential nature of the turnstile: when we focus on one aspect, we cannot simultaneously focus on another, let alone the mythical signifier as a whole. Myth as whole signifier confronts the reader of myths with the politics of his/her reading. Since the reading of the mythical signifier is a sequential

process, this automatically makes it a *selective* process as well. In my reading of AOR as a text of persecution, I automatically ignore and neglect reading the myth-as-signifier in other ways. This neglect unveils the myth as a prime example of a *text scriptible* as it challenges the subject position of the reader and forces him to acknowledge the explosion of codes he/she is confronted with in the text; a manifestation of *jouissance*.

It is through the deconstructive act of close-reading that we can shed light on the myth, and make the transition from semiology into ideology: “it is the reader of myths himself who must reveal their essential function. How does he receive this particular myth today? If he receives it in an innocent fashion, what is the point of proposing it to him? And if he reads it using his powers of reflection, like the mythologist, does it matter which alibi is presented?” It is these questions that are the point of departure for the final part of this chapter. Through the postmodern forms of historiographical metafiction and parody, a subversive strategy against myth develops, as Carson develops a system of representation which *itself* represents a system of representation.

III

In the main AOR narrative Geryon sets out to author an autobiography. Though I will delve deeper into an analysis of this process in the third chapter, for now I want to focus on a specific case. When Geryon learns to write, he starts his autobiography as follows:

Total Facts Known About Geryon.

Geryon was a monster everything about him was red. Geryon lived on an island in the Atlantic called the Red Place. Geryon's mother was a river that runs to the sea the Red Joy River Geryon's father was gold. Some say that Geryon had six hands six feet some say wings.

Geryon was red so were his strange red cattle. Herakles came one day killed Geryon got the cattle.

He followed Facts with Questions and Answers.

QUESTIONS *Why did Herakles kill Geryon?*

1. *Just violent.*
2. *Had to it was one of His Labors (10th).*
3. *Got the idea that Geryon was Death otherwise he could live forever.*

FINALLY

Geryon had a little red dog Herakles killed that too. (37)

Of course, the Geryon that writes down this narrative as autobiography never experiences it. Rather, what appears to be the case is that it is a representation of what would be the autobiography of the Geryon from the remaining fragments of Stesichoros' *Geryoneis* poem. This representation, then, is a demonstration of Barthes' metalingual system. While both form and meaning in both iterations is the name 'Geryon', it refers both to the signified on the level of language (in this case, the narrative of the *Geryoneis*), but of course also its own corresponding concept on the level of myth (that is *both* its own narrative *and* the entire history of the myth behind the signifier 'Geryon'). However, the underlying level of the metalingual model, that is, on the level of language, is in this instance simply more myth (since it is Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*). As such, the *meaning* (the final term, or sign, of the first level and the first term, or signifier, of the second level) is already mythological. To go back to the turnstile metaphor, this is only strengthened further because on the level of language we are dealing with fragmentary material of a once complete narrative.

The fragmentary nature of the source material makes it ideal to be mythologized, for as Barthes states: "myth prefers to work with poor, incomplete images, where the meaning is already

relieved of its fat, and ready for a signification, such as caricatures, pastiches, symbols, etc.” (151). An example of this in the text is the caricature of the ‘little red dog’, which in fact refers to Orthus, the brother of Cerberus, and Geryon’s hound in Stesichoros’ *Geryoneis*. The sign ‘little red dog’ in itself does not automatically signify Orthus, but because we have the layer of the myth of the *Geryoneis* below it we can interpret this as signifying ‘Orthus’. As such, we have a poetic representation of the metalingual system captured in the AOR narrative. But this representation does not stop it from producing myth in turn: “the very resistance offered by poetry makes it an ideal prey for myth: the apparent lack of order of signs, which is the poetic facet of an essential order, is captured by myth, and transformed into an empty signifier, which will serve to *signify* poetry. This explains the improbable character of modern poetry: by fiercely refusing myth, poetry surrenders to it bound hand and foot” (159). This confused or lack of an order through the mythologization process is manifested in our case too. Its attempted resistance and attempt to distance itself through parody and irony can only go so far; since its original is a fragment, even the representation of myth produces more myth because it springs from the incomplete image of this fragment, necessarily filling in the holes, adding to the mythological conflict of what is historically factual and accurate and what is not.

Hutcheon’s original question regarding historiographic metafiction was *how* we can know the past today and *what* can we know of it. My analysis given above shows that mythology dominates these questions as the nature of its fragmentary material invites to question how the holes of the work’s history are to be filled. Accordingly, we trace the myth from a study of its historicity to its current status, as Barthes states:

Myth lends itself to history in two ways: by its form, which is only relatively motivated; by its concept, the nature of which is historical. One can therefore imagine a diachronic study of myths, whether one submits them to a retrospection (which means founding an

historical mythology) or whether one follows some of yesterday's myths down to their present forms (which means founding prospective history). (163)

The form is only relatively motivated because, as stated earlier, the myth needs a fragmentary source in order to become myth; to have the space to question its historicity. One aspect of the form that I have thus far left undiscussed is that the form of the AOR narrative is novel-in-verse. The motivation for this form is paradoxical in terms of Hutcheon's postmodernism: it is the same form as the epic (a form used for many myths), thereby strengthening its status *as* myth. Concurrently, as a postmodern text, it is self-consciously a *parody* of this same form. The nature of AOR's concept corresponds with Barthes' definition because *The Geryoneis* is, of course, historical while at the same time as it is mythical. The myth is re-represented, and it is through this process that it founds a 'prospective history'. Thus a diachronic study of this myth is used not to create clarity, but rather through a parodic attempt at such a study simply ends up further mythologizing its *already* mythological historicity.

Given that a diachronic study of myth produces more mythology, we may (re)consider the function of mythology, although it would be too swift to conclude that an escape from mythology is de facto impossible. However, since I have conducted a diachronic study in this chapter, how may signs may traverse between different sign systems in a spatial, rather than temporal sense? This question is important because such an enquiry would allow for us to research how signs may be de- and reterritorialized, and whether this process is possible within a mythological system, which calls for a theorization of what we may call 'textual space', which shall be done in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 - Mythology as an abstract machine

I

In the second chapter, the main objective was to explore how the text investigated its own past, which stemmed from another mythological text. Through Barthes' metalingual system, I traced the development of how the signs used in the *Geryoneis* were distorted and appropriated in AOR. This development suggests a voyage or journey of some kind, and was diachronic in nature. But a voyage can never be of a temporal nature alone; it also has to have been undertaken in some type of space. This begs the question: what is the space through which this journey has taken place? In the second chapter I mentioned that AOR has a 'heterotopical quality' about it, since it deals with different narratives (the *Geryoneis* and the AOR narrative itself) overlapping in one text, using a common signifier ('Geryon') for different signifieds (and through metalingual layering creates *forms*, *concepts* and *significations* as we have seen in the previous chapter), while concurrently covering up its underlying ideological codes. As such, the AOR text is a site where these different layers of metalinguality all come together, which is, in Foucault's definition, what makes it a heterotopia: "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (6). But then we have to ask: what is the 'real place' referred to in our case? And what is the *space*? It would be tempting to simply say that it is the *text*, but if I am going to claim that there is such a thing as a 'textual space', this claim requires of me to theorize the nature of textual space.

To this order let me begin with a difference between the terms 'work' and 'text'. Barthes makes the following distinction:

The difference is this: the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example), the Text is a methodological field. The opposition may recall (without at all reproducing term for term) Lacan's distinction between 'reality' and 'the real': the one is displayed, the other demonstrated; likewise, the work can be seen

(in bookshops, in catalogues, in exam syllabuses), the text is a process of demonstration, speaks according to certain rules (or against certain rules); the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse (or rather, it is Text for the very reason that it knows itself as text); the Text is not the decomposition of the work, it is the work that is the imaginary tail of the Text; or again, *the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works). (1977: 156-157)

Barthes' distinction here is complex. While the work can be 'held in the hand' it is also the 'imaginary tail of the Text'. For Barthes, the work is then an idea or concept, just as Text is an idea or concept. The work is a place in the sense that it can be displayed and held, hence we can point out where the work *is*. The 'Text' is that *space* (a methodological *field*) where several spaces (layers of historical language and myth) come together. Taking this distinction as our point of departure, we can ask: what is textual space *like*? The final sentence of the quote above shows that *Text* (not work) is *directional* - since it is itself a cutting across, creating a path. Further on, Barthes employs more spatial metaphors, which give us some insight into the nature of textual space:

The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible (and not merely an acceptable) plural. The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the *stereographic plurality* of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric). (1977: 159)

Here Barthes' use of spatial metaphors ("a passage/overcrossing") again confirms the Text's directionality. Secondly, the stereographic plurality suggests depth (dimensionality) and its "weave of signifiers" again, when read spatially, suggests a rhizomatic nature. The term 'tissue' should be read here in terms of the Text as a methodological *field*, which the reader creates in his act of reading as producing the Text, opposing a hermeneutical approach where a comprehensive 'meaning' (or 'co-existence of meanings') of the Text would be the object desired to be produced: "The logic regulating the Text is not comprehensive (define 'what the work means') but metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy" (1977: 158). For Barthes, the Textual produced is the explosion of codes the reader produces through the act of reading itself, which is why what matters is that these codes constantly *signify*, rather than that the Text 'answers to an interpretation'.

Though Barthes' metaphors are certainly spatial in nature, his suggestion here pertains more to the intertextual nature of the Text. The different qualities concerning Text that I have so far deduced from his analyses (rhizomatic as it can cut across works, directional, dimensional), align better with Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's philosophy on space, particularly their differentiation between smooth and striated space. The main differences between these two lies in the way space is approached. Space is striated when we seek to quantify it metrically, and is smooth when we experience this space as a space of different affects. But since the differentiation here lies in the way space is approached, there are similarities as well: "Of course, there are points, lines, and surfaces in striated space as well as in smooth space (there are also volumes, but we will leave this question aside for the time being). In striated space, lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another. In the smooth, it is the opposite: the points are subordinated to the trajectory ... In smooth space, the line is therefore a vector, a direction and not a dimension or metric determination. It is a space constructed by local operations involving changes in direction" (556). Going back to Barthes' analyses of the Text, we can see now that his analysis of textual 'cutting across' corresponds with

Deleuze's and Guattari's theory of smooth space. Similarly, we can see that Barthes' idea of a 'work' is a form of striated space in the sense that the idea of the work is finite, measurable and quantifiable, as it can be regarded and held.

As I have stated earlier, smooth space can become striated space. Though Deleuze and Guattari never developed a 'textual' model, they did develop a technological, musical, maritime, mathematical, physical and finally an aesthetic model. From these models we may be able to learn what type of qualities such a textual model would need to possess. For example, Deleuze and Guattari explain how the sea is a smooth space par excellence, but can become striated when divided in coordinates and subsequently navigated. Text is similar in this sense as it is smooth in its process of being *produced* (read), but striated when *interpreted*. If the Text can cut across several works and it is experienced only in act of production, we should read these quotes in the context of Barthes' move from (the death of the) author to (the birth of the) reader. The reader is able to trace themes, motifs and codes across several *works*, and thus it is his/her reading which is an act of production of *Text*. Different ways of analyzing a Text will consequently arrange textual space in different ways. For example, a narratological approach would arrange the Text into striated space. This is because a narratological approach divides a narrative into 'events' (on the level of fabula) and then follow how these events are chronologically arranged (on the level of story). Through this arrangement of narrative in 'events' (points), textual space becomes striated; the emphasis lies on the identification of the points through which we can navigate the Text's trajectory, making the trajectory subordinate to the points themselves. It is important to note that a narratological approach would divide textual space in a spatiotemporal manner: A kind of 'literary cartography' is executed through creating a map of narrative based on events (as they appear chronologically), not through mapping out the various (fictious) spaces in the Text (in so far as this would even be possible). To go back to Barthes suggestion of Text as a fabric, the narratological method untangles textual space, through mapping out a narrative in terms of events. This corresponds to Deleuze's and Guattari's thought concerning lines and points:

Let us return to the simple opposition between the smooth and the striated since we are not yet at the point where we can consider the dissymmetrical and concrete mixes. The smooth and the striated are distinguished first of all by an inverse relation between the point and the line (in the case of the striated, the line is between two points, while in the smooth, the point is between two lines); and second, by the nature of the line (smooth-directional, open intervals; dimensional-striated, closed intervals). Finally, there is a third difference, concerning the surface or space. In striated space, one closes off a surface and "allocates" it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one "distributes" oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings. (559)

I link this passage to Barthes' thoughts concerning Text in that for Barthes' the production of the Text should be a smooth space in the sense that the reader has to distribute him/herself according to the affects that they come across. For Barthes (and as we will come to see later, Deleuze and Guattari as well), what is affective is that the signs *signify* to the reader. Because *signification* (language "that enables a text to signify what representative and communicative speech does not say" Roudiez in Kristeva, 1980: 18) is affective a whole, full completion of the signified is not possible here; the affect keeps on signifying. Secondly, since the reader creates the text through an act of production (the reading itself), this allows for the reader to create passages/pathways through different works, which corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari's thought concerning the distribution of oneself in an open (textual) space. Deleuze and Guattari make an important distinction between smooth and striated space by mentioning the inverse relation between point and line. To come back to the textual model, this means that through the act of reading we are, in Deleuze's and Guattari's terms, producing Text *directionally*, but through shifting production towards interpretation our approach towards the Text becomes *dimensional*.

II

Having established the differences between smooth and striated space in relation to the Text, we need to turn back to AOR in order to see how this theory relates to this specific case. If we speak of Text in terms of space, what kind of voyage do the characters in a narrative make (again, in a spatial sense)? Deleuze and Guattari offer us the following insight:

Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they also develop in extension.

To think is to voyage; earlier we tried to establish a theo-noological model of smooth and striated spaces. In short, what distinguishes the two kinds of voyages is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space ... Voyaging smoothly is a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that. (561)

We can then ask: who (or *what*) makes this voyage, and in what way is the space in which it 'takes place' smooth and/or striated? Secondly, since (as shown in chapter 2) AOR was read as a postmodern text, is this voyage parodic or self-reflexive, and if so, in what way?

To attempt to answer these questions, I first want to elucidate the different levels on which this voyaging is taken place. The first level is that the sign 'Geryon' has started to voyage. The signifier 'Geryon' in the *Geryoneis* is the same signifier ('Geryon') in the narrative of AOR, but their respective *signifieds* are, of course, not identical. As I have shown in the metalingual model of chapter 2, the entire sign 'Geryon' from the *Geryoneis* becomes part of the *concept* of the *signification* (the sign on the level of the AOR myth) 'Geryon'. Secondly, the narrative of AOR also shows how mythology is used to cover up ideological codes within the AOR narrative itself. In this sense, we have two metalingual systems that seem to be running parallel: the first system would consist of what Girard dubs the language of the historical real on the level of language, and then the narrative of AOR on the level of myth. The second system would be the *Geryoneis* myth on the level of language, and again AOR on the level of myth. The problem with

conceptualizing two different (vertical) metalingual systems in this way is that (as Barthes himself would state later on) Text is only experienced in an act of production (reading), and that in this process the metalingual systems are bound to overlap (since Text cuts across), rather than simply existing side by side. In this sense, the vertical metalingual system falls short of being an adequate form of representation. Deleuze and Guattari propose a different, circular model, to which we shall come back, but first I want to discuss another form of voyaging that is presented in AOR.

After Herakles leaves Geryon, Geryon travels to Buenos Aires. As I mentioned in chapter 2, One of the main subjects in the AOR narrative is the way Geryon creates his autobiography (hence its title). As such, it is, then, a *biographical* narrative of an autobiographical voyage (and in this sense, we also have elements of a bildungsroman), and it is this self-reflexiveness which is a hallmark of AOR as a postmodern text. The sign Geryon has made a voyage from one sign system (the *Geryoneis*) towards another (AOR). The semblance between the two voyages is that in the first case, the sign has traversed between two sign systems, whereas the voyage to Buenos Aires I interpret, not just as an event in the narrative, but as a (self-reflexive) *representation* of a sign traversing in (or perhaps attempts to escape, as we shall see later) its own sign system. Consequently, this makes this voyage iconic because it imitates the earlier voyage. Thus, we can also read the creation of an autobiography as a sign reflecting on its own voyage (from one *work*, the *Geryoneis*, to another, AOR, cutting across a textual space) and also as a sign creating more signs (the writing and photographs created through his autobiography), its own semiotic system, also known as a regime of signs. Concerning regimes of signs, Deleuze and Guattari state:

If we call the signifying semiotic system semiology, then semiology is only one regime of signs among others, and not the most important one. Hence the necessity of a return to pragmatics, in which language never has universality in itself, self-sufficient formalization, a general semiology, or a metalanguage. Thus it is the study of the signifying regime that first testifies to the inadequacy of linguistic presuppositions, and in the very name of

Deleuze and Guattari distinct several terms here that need to be elaborated. Earlier we saw that for Barthes, semiology studies ideas in form (2009: 135). This implies that the form of an idea has a representational relationship with that idea. Deleuze and Guattari use the term ‘regime of signs’. They define this term as follows: “We call any specific formalization of expression a regime of signs, at least when the expression is linguistic. A regime of signs constitutes a semiotic system. But it appears difficult to analyze semiotic systems in themselves: there is always a form of content that is simultaneously inseparable from and independent of the form of expression, and the two forms pertain to assemblages that are not principally linguistic” (129). When Deleuze and Guattari state that semiology (as the signifying semiotic system) is only one regime of signs among others, they consequently contest the idea of representation itself, or more specifically, argue that representation is just one way signs may relate to one another. By employing networked, circular models, Deleuze and Guattari argue that every sign is part of a longer chain of signs, which is connected to other chains, which is why language does not have a “universality in itself” in the sense that it is not a closed off, finite system (which the representation of a metalanguage appears to be). Secondly, the circular model presupposes that there is neither a beginning nor an ending in the way one sign relates to another. This is important because this accentuates their emphasis on the importance of directionality. By following a regime of signs in one direction, the sequential order in which we encounter the signs is different, and thus the way we may interpret the way these signs relate to one another (and, consequently, the way they signify) becomes different as well. They employ this term as part of a larger argument concerning the way regimes of signs operate between (and in) the State apparatus and the nomadic war machine. In our case it is not the State apparatus that is the regime of signs that concerns us, but rather the position of one sign (Geryon) in relation to the regime of *mythology* that this sign is a part of.

Geryon shifts from *writing* the caricatured biography of the Geryon of the *Geryoneis* to capturing his own biography by means of photography. Thus, not only is there a shift in what is artistically expressed, but the *form* of expression shifts as well, from writing to photography. In relation to Deleuze's and Guattari's statement, I read this as a resistance against the regime of signs of mythology that Geryon is caught in, towards employing his photography as way of creating his *own* regime of signs (that is, a specific formalization of expression). Throughout the narrative, Geryon ponders the following question:

"What is time made of?" is a question that had long exercised Geryon.

Everywhere he went he asked people. Yesterday for example at the university.

Time is an abstraction - just a meaning

that we impose upon motion. Geryon is thinking this answer over as he kneels

beside the bathtub in his hotel room

stirring photographs back and forth in the developing solution. He picks out

one of the prints and pins it

to a clothesline strung between the television and the door. It is a photograph

of some people sitting at desks

in a classroom. The desks look too small for them - but Geryon is not interested

in human comfort. Much truer

is the time that strays into photographs and stops. High on the wall hangs a white

electric clock. It says five minutes to six. (93)

This example shows how Geryon uses his photography as a representation *of* the representation of time (via the clock). Time "stops" because the clock is captured in the form of a photograph.

Thus what we are left with is a representation of a representation which is deemed "much truer".

Because this representation signifies the *idea* of time in its photographic form, it makes it both

inseparable to this specific form of the expression of that idea as well independent in the sense that this idea could very well be expressed in a different form. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the signified of the clock (five minutes to six) is not what matters here, but rather what matters is that the photographic representation itself signifies continuously (since it signifies an idea), without resulting in a saturated signified.

What is postmodern about this example is that it is self-reflexive in that a return to semiotic pragmatics, by which I mean a return to a focus on the relationship between a sign and its agents and interpreters. This is demonstrated as a textual sign (Geryon) *is* the agent, attempting to voyage from one regime of signs (that of mythology) towards creating his own in the form of his autobiography. I read the autobiography here as a regime of signs as every sign (pieces of writing, photographs) within that regime signifies the autobiographic and representational connection it has to Geryon. When read as postmodern self-reflexivity, what becomes particularly important is that the photographs themselves are represented not through images, but language. In the previous example we had then a linguistic representation of a photograph, which in itself was a representation of the idea of time. We come across another manifestation of this issue further in the novel: "XL. PHOTOGRAPHS: ORIGIN OF TIME. It is a photograph of four people sitting around a table with hands in front of them" (136). When Deleuze and Guattari state that there is always a form of content that is simultaneously inseparable from and independent of the form of expression and not principally linguistic, this is illustrated because the description of the photograph (its linguistic form) gives us the *idea* of what this photograph would be like, which in turn could be described again. Let us consider the adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. This is clear because the description of a photograph will fail us continuously in its inability to answer questions that may arise (are the hands holding/doing anything? Are they resting on the table? etc.) when we try to hold the idea of the photograph in our minds, due to its lack of detail. Of course, even if this description was longer and these particular questions would be answered, new problems would arise because more

questions could be asked based on the new/extended text that were provided to answer the previous ones, ad infinitum. The issue being raised here, is that *the inverse is equally true* (a thousand words are 'worth' more than one picture, or even a single word can be worth more than a thousand pictures). Representations of representations become signs that are referring to others signs, as part of an endless signifying chain:

'There is a simple general formula for the signifying regime of the sign (the signifying sign): every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum. That is why, at the limit, one can forgo the notion of the sign, for what is retained is not principally the sign's relation to a state of things it designates, or to an entity it signifies, but only the formal relation of sign to sign insofar as it defines a so-called signifying chain. The limitlessness of signifi-ance replaces the sign. When denotation (here, designation and signification taken together) is assumed to be part of connotation, one is wholly within this signifying regime of the sign ... The signifier is the sign in redundancy with the sign. All signs are signs of signs. The question is not yet what a given sign signifies but to which other signs it refers, or which signs add themselves to it to form a network without beginning or end that projects its shadow onto an amorphous atmospheric continuum. (130)

If the question has moved from what the sign signifies, to which other signs it refers, we smooth textual space because we follow the *trajectory* of this sign.

Let us follow, as an example, the sign 'red' through the AOR narrative. Geryon himself is red. So are his dreams, his thoughts, it is red when he waits, the piece of chalk he has to write on a school board with is red, the lava flowing out from a volcano is red, a red butterfly flies by him, and on and on. If we would follow this sign as a hermeneutical code we would be inclined to read this as allegory, and attempt to uncover a deeper meaning through following it. This impulse would striate textual space: every iteration of the sign 'red' would be a point in this space, through

which we would be able to navigate (from point to point), and once complete, we would have mapped out an allegorical figure and have the possibility to decode it as a sustained metaphor. But if we read this as a smooth voyage, we have to return to the title: ‘Autobiography of Red’. Indexically, ‘red’ is a continuation of Geryon since his body is red as well. Thus, we have an indexical continuation of Geryon into other signs because of the continuation of ‘red’. The sign as such is reterritorialized because the indexicality places the two signs in relation to each other (and thus establishes a new relationship in the greater regime of signs that they are part of), and as such we have two points (the signs) with a line between them (the indexical relationship between the signs). In Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terms, if we would read this *smoothly* (as a space of affects), we acknowledge the ‘signifyingness’ of this indexicality but continue our voyage; when we start to trace these points (the iterations of the ‘red’ sign) as part of an allegorical figure, we start to striate textual space. When read this way, every iteration of ‘red’ becomes an indexical continuation of Geryon, and in this sense, what matters is not *what* the sign ‘red’ signifies every time we come across it, but rather, that we come across it *at all*, which is what Deleuze and Guattari dub the ‘signifyingness’ of the sign: we cannot constitute the meaning of the encounter with such a sign right away, but we cannot escape the fact that the encounter with the sign *signifies*.

A potential allegorical explanation of the ‘red’ sign is never revealed, even though the sign slips into Geryon’s photography as well. What happens accordingly is that (again, when read as postmodern reflexivity) this question of signifyingness is duplicated from the reader of the Text to a form of representation. It is Geryon himself who is constantly confronted with the sign, who is confronted with what it can mean to be ‘red’, what it means to have red thoughts and red dreams and to come across red objects. As such, it is the allegorical impulse itself which has become the object that is represented. The question then lies not with the one (the reader who traces the sign, who experiences the allegorical impulse through reading) or the other (the sign which is aware of the same potential signifi-ance of the sign), but both reader and sign share in the

questioning of signifyingness in the regime of signs that Geryon is a part of. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, this chain of signs (the iterations of 'red') in a regime of signs becomes a circular model:

Not only do signs form an infinite network, but the network of signs is infinitely circular. The statement survives its object, the name survives its owner. Whether it passes into other signs or is kept in reserve for a time, the sign survives both its state of things and its signified; it leaps like an animal or a dead person to regain its place in the chain and invest a new state, a new signified, from which it will in turn extricate itself. (131)

This statement reveals to us possibilities that the linear verticality of the metalingual model did not. If each circle constitutes a separate regime of signs, these circles can overlap (like Venn diagrams), and signs that are part of one regime can become part of another. Taking Deleuze's and Guattari's example (the name that survives its 'owner'), we can investigate now how Barthes' ideas of 'form' and 'concept' relate with Deleuze's and Guattari's circular model. When the sign 'Geryon' in the *Geryoneis* is divided into a signifier (the name itself) and the signified (the character behind the name), on the level of myth that entire sign becomes a *form* when it is carried from the *Geryoneis* to the Geryon of AOR. The concept (signified on the second level) of this Geryon is infused with the entire sign of the Geryon of the *Geryoneis*, but also with our reading of the AOR narrative. Combined, they are the signification (the sign on the level of myth). While this process seems linear (as is the case in a vertical metalingual system), this is not necessarily the case, as it is dependent on the *directionality* of reading (that is, producing in a Barthesian sense). If we were to read AOR before we read the *Geryoneis* the circle of the regime of signs is traced the other way around; likewise if we read the *Geryoneis* first and AOR second, a different Text would be produced. This supports the theory of the way we can smoothly voyage through textual space, as what matters is the directionality. Secondly, the sign 'Geryon' is not limited to these two works alone; for example, another being bearing that name appears in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*,

appearing as a creature with a man's head, the body of a wyvern, and the paws of a lion (akin to a manticore). This multitudinous usage of the name explains Deleuze's and Guattari's circular models, where signs can travel from one circle to the next, depending on how they overlap, which, in a Barthesian sense, depends on the way the reader produces the Text. This act of production of the Text is dependent on the number of circles of regimes of signs we can differentiate: "But what counts is less the circularity of the signs than the multiplicity of the circles or chains. The sign refers not only to other signs in the same circle, but to signs in other circles or spirals as well" (131). This is because, as in a Venn diagram, these circles can overlap and thus allow one sign to be deterritorialized from one circle to another. But this is only possible when we are able to recognize the various circles the sign is a part of; the fewer the circles recognized in our production of the Text, the fewer are the ways in which can see follow the trajectories of the sign and the way it is deterritorialized and reterritorialized. Both of these processes are paramount because the possibility of an absolute deterritorialization would allow for Geryon to escape from one regime to another.

III

Earlier we made the distinction between reading as a smooth voyage and interpretation/analysis as a striated one (in textual space). Similarly to the way smooth and striated space still constitute the same space (but are approached differently), so reading and interpretation switch between smooth and striated as well:

There is one other aspect: the signifying regime is not simply faced with the task of organizing into circles signs emitted from every direction; it must constantly assure the expansion of the circles or spiral, it must provide the center with more signifier to overcome the entropy inherent in the system and to make new circles blossom or replenish the old. Thus a secondary mechanism in the service of signifi-ance is necessary: interpretance or interpretation. (132)

Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly state why the circles must continue to expand, but its reason is not so difficult to guess: If the circles did not expand a kind of intertextual saturation point would eventually be reached since it would then be a closed off system and language *could* have a universality in itself, hence Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term 'entropy'. This would be a static, and in this sense, *already* metric and a striated space. Furthermore, this expansion of circles could be read in several ways, since we could expand the circles already recognized (as in augmentation), expand the *number* of circles, or both. In order to facilitate this expansion we need to interpret, as through interpretation we produce Text by producing intertextual relationships. But once started, this process cannot come to a halt:

The signified constantly reimparts signifier, recharges it or produces more of it. The form always comes from the signifier. The ultimate signified is therefore the signifier itself, in its redundancy or "excess." It is perfectly futile to claim to transcend interpretation or even communication through the production of signifier, because communication and interpretation are what always serve to reproduce and produce signifier. That is certainly not the way to revive the notion of production. The discovery of the psychoanalyst-priests (a discovery every kind of priest or seer made in their time) was that interpretation had to be subordinated to signifi-ance, to the point that the signifier would impart no signified without the signified reimpacting signifier in its turn. Actually, there is no longer even any need to interpret, but that is because the best interpretation, the weightiest and most radical one, is an eminently significant silence. (132)

Why do Deleuze and Guattari state that communication and interpretation serve the production of the signifier? It is because the signifier itself is only half of the sign, and meaning, even when left unsaturated, desires to be produced in the signified, but this signified is never fully saturated (since it is part of a sign which is part of circles of regimes of signs that are continuously

expanding); hence the reference to the redundancy/excess of the signifier. This is why they argue we cannot *transcend* interpretation, and argue instead that the best interpretation is silence, in our case, *reading* (voyaging smoothly in textual space).

To go back to my example of the sign ‘red’ from the second part of this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari offer us a new insight into reading the indexical continuation of the ‘red’ sign in his photography. Because ‘the ultimate signified is the signifier itself’, Geryon does not *need* to give an interpretation of what the iterations of the sign ‘red’ may mean; facilitating an indexical continuation of that sign from his life to his autobiography suffices, because this gesture unveils to us how this sign can travel from one regime of signs to another. While originally part of the regime of signs of mythology of the *Geryoneis*, Geryon, through indexically continuing the sign in his biography, appropriates the sign in his *own* regime of signs.

As we saw earlier, Deleuze and Guattari claimed that a smooth voyage is a difficult becoming. After my reading of AOR as a text of persecution, we have seen why this is the case with Geryon, since he was made a scapegoat. This scapegoating is never done so explicitly. It is not a *theme* to be found in a narrative, as Williams states in the *Girard Reader*: “Myth camouflages scapegoating even as it represents meaning in stories of gods, ancient heroes, foundations of social order and ritual, etc.” (1996: 97). Geryon was made a scapegoat by his brother and Herakles. In Girard’s theory of mimetic desire, the desire we experience for other objects (who act as models) is fueled by our desire to capture that model’s *being*, in order to accomplish our own being, which is the underlying, deeper desire. When Geryon’s brother and Herakles fail to possess Geryon’s being, the scapegoat mechanism is activated, and he is abused and left behind. Yet Deleuze and Guattari attribute to the scapegoat a resistance to the regime of signs it is a part of:

In the signifying regime, the scapegoat represents a new form of increasing entropy in the system of signs: it is charged with everything that was "bad" in a given period, that is, everything that resisted signifying signs, everything that eluded the referral from sign to sign through the different circles; it also assumes everything that was unable to recharge the signifier at its center and carries off everything that spills beyond the outermost circle. Finally, and especially, it incarnates that line of flight the signifying regime cannot tolerate, in other words, an absolute deterritorialization; the regime must block a line of this kind or define it in an entirely negative fashion precisely because it exceeds the degree of deterritorialization of the signifying sign, however high it may be. The line of flight is like a tangent to the circles of signification and the center of the signifier. (135)

In chapter one I read AOR as a text of persecution on the level of narrative, but this quote asks us to investigate how the scapegoat mechanism works on the level of semiology. Earlier in this chapter, I have argued that Geryon resists the regime of signs he was caught in (that of mythology), through creating his own regime of signs via his autobiography, from writing the biography of the Geryon of the *Geryoneis* to photographing his own voyage. While I have shown how the Geryon sign has travelled from the *Geryonis* to AOR, the same goes for the character of Herakles. Geryon attempts to escape the regime of signs of mythology through creating his autobiography, whereas Herakles desires to seduce Geryon in order to possess his being. But since this is impossible, he leaves him. Later on, Herakles and Geryon meet again in Buenos Aires. Herakles has another man with him, Ancash, who appears to be his lover (Ancash is also the name of a region in Peru, where the three travel to). When Ancash sees Geryon's wings for the first time, he reacts the following way:

Ancash ran his fingers slowly
down the red struts that articulated each wing base. Geryon Shivered.
He wondered if he was going to faint.

...

Now listen to me Geryon,

Ancash was saying,

*there's a village in the mountains north of Huaraz called Jucu and in Jucu
they believe some strange things.*

*It's a volcanic region. Not active now. In ancient times they worshipped
the volcano as a god and even
threw people in it. For sacrifice? Asked Geryon whose head had come out
of the blanket.*

*No not exactly. More like a testing procedure. They were looking for people
from the inside. Wise ones.*

*Holy men I guess you would say. The word in Quechua is Yazcol Yazcamac it means
The Ones Who Went and Saw and Came Back -*

*I think the anthropologists say eyewitnesses. These people did exist.
Stories are told of them still.*

Eyewitnesses, said Geryon

Yes. people who saw the inside of the volcano.

And came back.

Yes.

How do they come back?

Wings.

*Wings? Yes that's what they say the Yazcamac return as red people with wings,
all their weaknesses burned away -
and their mortality. (128-129)*

A little later, Geryon feels the attraction to Herakles returning:

What Geryon was thinking Herakles never asked. In the space between them
developed a dangerous cloud.

Geryon knew he must not go back into the cloud. Desire is no light thing.

He could see the thorns gleam
with their black stains. (132-133)

Eventually, however, Geryon is unable to resist Herakles and the two have intercourse. Ancash, angry when he finds out, punches Geryon. The two talk it out and Geryon realizes he does not really love Herakles anymore. Ancash then says he wants to see Geryon use his wings, and Geryon obliges, capturing it through his camera:

He has not flown in years but why not
be a
black speck raking its way toward the crater of Icchantikas on icy possibles,
why not rotate
the inhuman Andes at a personal angle and retreat when it spins - if it does
and if not, win
bolts of wind like slaps of wood and the bitter red drumming of wing muscle on air -
he flicks Record.
This is for Ancash, he calls to the earth diminishing below. This is a memory of our
beauty. He peers down
at the earth heart of Icchantikas dumping all its photons out her ancient eye and he
smiles for
the camera: "The Only Secret People Keep." (145)

I read Geryon's realization that he does not love Herakles anymore as another gesture of Geryon (the earlier being the autobiographical works he made) towards the rejection of the regime of

signs of mythology, since Herakles, like Geryon, is a sign that has travelled from the *Geryoneis* to AOR but is not the same character. Thus, like Geryon, we have the same signifier, but with a different signified. Herakles is then indexically connected to the regime of mythology that Geryon seeks to escape, and consequently his realization is another step towards rejecting this regime. Herakles instead still seeks to possess Geryon, claiming himself to be a “master of monsters” (129). Ancash, however, has a different reaction to Geryon’s monstrosity: he sees his wings as an opportunity. It is of value to note here that Ancash was not a character in the *Geryoneis*, and as such is a new character and sign in AOR. The fact that he embraces Geryon’s monstrosity, rather than use it as a means to incite violence, is therefore of significance. This significance comes to bear when Geryon decides to fulfill Ancash wish, documenting his flight in the Icchantikas volcano. Geryon’s flight into the volcano has an iconic relationship to the line of flight that is tangent out of the regime of mythology, since the documentation of this flight is another addition to his autobiographical regime of signs, which itself is a resistance against an attempt to escape from the regime of mythology. The fact that he states that this document is *for* Ancash reinforces his rejection of the regime of mythology, as Ancash is not part of that regime, but rather part of the new AOR (and this Geryon’s own) narrative.

The quotation (The Only Secret People Keep) given at the end of the quoted text refers to a line from Emily Dickinson’s poem *The Reticent Volcano Keeps* (1748), which appears as an epigraph to the AOR narrative. The final (and following) line of that poem is “Is Immortality”. Ancash, when he explains the beliefs of the villagers of Jucu, states that the Yazcamac return as red people with wings, with their weaknesses and mortality burned away. How does Geryon’s mortality ‘burn away’ when he flies down the Icchantika? Because Geryon immortalizes himself through documenting his life in his autobiography. Thus, he becomes immortal through his autobiography. Accordingly, through creating his autobiography Geryon has found a way to deterritorialize himself and his line of flight consequently leads him out of the regime of mythology. This deterritorialization raises several questions. First and foremost it must be made

clear where Geryon is traveling to, since his passage out of one regime of signs suggests that he has to voyage into another. Secondly, we would want to know the nature of this second regime (if we can still speak of a regime at all). Perhaps this regime corresponds best with how Deleuze and Guattari define a post-signifying regime:

What happens in the second regime, by comparison with the signifying regime as we have already defined it? In the first place, *a sign or packet of signs detaches from the irradiating circular network* and sets to work on its own account, starts running a straight line, as though swept into a narrow, open passage. Already the signifying system drew a line of flight or deterritorialization exceeding the specific index of its deterritorialized signs, but the system gave that line a negative value and sent the scapegoat fleeing down it. Here, it seems that the line receives a positive sign as though it were effectively occupied and followed by a people who find in it their reason for being or destiny. (141)

Geryon, through creating his autobiography has traced the line out of the regime of mythology, and, like Deleuze and Guattari state, it seems that the line receives a 'positive' sign, but the situation is more complex. "This is how things are in the passional regime, or the regime of subjectification. There is no longer a center of signifiante connected to expanding circles or an expanding spiral, but a point of subjectification constituting the point of departure of the line" (148). Geryon's point of subjectification coincides with the creation of his autobiography: it is the starting point from which he decides to flee from the regime of mythology. But through creating his own biography, something else is happening: he does not escape mythology *itself*. His autobiography tells a new and incomplete story, which has gaps, is a fragmented image, and which will travel along with Geryon as he travels on (there is no necessary ending point to the voyage of this sign). Mythology travels with Geryon not only because of his unavoidable indexical

relationship through his name, but rather that he is consequently bound to create *more mythology* through this autobiography.

This is pertinent because it sheds an important insight into the nature of mythology, as it now appears to have what we could call a *pragmatic function*. The union of these two terms needs to be explained by first explaining each term individually. Deleuze and Guattari divide pragmatics into having a *generative* and a *transformational* component. The generative component “shows how the various abstract regimes form concrete mixed semiotics, with what variants, how they combine, and which one is predominant” (161). Mythology, as we have seen in the case of AOR, possesses this generative component as it mixes different semiotics (its own narrative with that of the *Geryoneis*), but it is important to note that mythology can only do this when they are a semiotics with a history. Mythology needs historicity in the semiotics it works with in order to have an incomplete image to work with. This is why not all fiction can be mythical, and why Barthes stated that mythology has not a ‘natural’ but rather a historical origin. The transformational component “shows how these regimes of signs are translated into each other, especially when there is a creation of a new regime” (161). This too is relevant in our case, as mythology can split the sign into its two halves, and recharge the signifier with a different signified, while never fully letting go of whatever signified that was previously attached to it, avoiding any kind of saturation point in the signified. The term *function* in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terminology refers to that which “has only ‘traits,’ of content or expression, between which it establishes a connection: it is no longer even possible to tell what is a particle and what is a sign” (164). These traits are, then, its specific generative and transformative pragmatics.

What I then propose is that myth, in the sense of it possessing a pragmatic function, is what Deleuze and Guattari call an *abstract machine*:

An abstract machine in itself is not physical or corporeal, any more than it is semiotic; it is *diagrammatic* (it knows nothing of the distinction between the artificial and the natural

either). It operates by *matter*, not by substance; by *function*, not by form. Substances and forms are of expression "or" of content. But functions are not yet "semiotically" formed, and matters are not yet "physically" formed. The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function - a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and contents it will distribute. (163-164)

For Deleuze and Guattari, expression "constitutes indexes, icons, or symbols that enter regimes or semiotic systems", whereas the content "constitutes bodies, things, or objects that enter physical systems" (165). Secondly the difference between substance and matter is the following: "Substance is a formed matter, and matter is a substance that is unformed either semiotically or physically" (164). These distinctions are of value when we try to conceive the abstract machine. As the abstract machine itself is not a physical nor semiotic *sign system*, but an aspect or even a moment, where only the pragmatic traits of expression or content remain in function and matter. Consequently, this diagrammatic function of mythology allows for us to move from it having solely a representational function (in which both expression and content are necessary elements semiotically formed in substance). Mythology is diagrammatic because, as we have seen, it is capable of a deterritorialization of a sign from one regime to another, and is able to combine it with a different regime. By theorizing mythology as diagrammatic in this way, it moves from its mimetic function (which a postsignifying regime possesses) towards a simulative one: "The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (164).

We have seen this diagrammatic (deterritorializing) function of myth in the creation of Geryon's autobiography, but we can now also conclude that a deterritorializing movement out of one regime of mythology is not the same as escaping from mythology as an abstract machine. We can even explain the statement found on the back cover ('to live past your myth is a perilous thing') of the sequel to AOR, *Red Doc*> now, because to live past one's mythological regime is

something very different from the idea of living past the idea of mythology *as an abstract machine*.

Conclusions

Arguably one of the more common struggles in literary scholarship is finding a balance between close-reading a text in such a way that you can give new insights into the text one is studying, while simultaneously being confronted with the fact what one's close reading might say in the grand scheme of things. Whereas I originally set out to research what makes something 'mythological' and whether mythology could be produced, we are also dealing with a specific case study, AOR, which is a postmodern text. What postmodernism and mythology have in common is that they are both reflexive, but in different ways. As we have seen, mythology has long been regarded for its mimetic relationship within the society/community in which it operates. Postmodernism, on the other hand, as defined in Hutcheon's terms, is "not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and in the past" (2002: 7). What happens then, when mythology and postmodernism cross boundaries? If we are to study how narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and construct our notions of self, is it not inescapable that the mimetic or representational aspects of those narratives and images come under close scrutiny? What requires particular attention in Hutcheon's statement is her use of 'see' and 'notion'. What these terms suggest is a linguistic distance between readers and texts, where the postmodernist text, when it problematizes its own ontological status, allows for the readers to reflect on the text, themselves, and finally on the *relationship* between themselves and this text. This approach suggests language can function as an *intermediate*, since an image or notion of the self is something different from the *self it-self*. This would mean that we have three elements: the text, the notion of the self that we have constructed through exploring how we may relate the text to ourselves, and the self itself. This is why Hutcheon disregards mimetic mirroring/subjective projecting, as in that case the central question would be how these subjects are represented, rather than focusing on our own relationship with the text. But Hutcheon's analysis leaves out two key aspects. The first is that, while it certainly

can be of value to explore how a text aids us in constructing our notion of the self, any literary experience is also *affective*, which I contest is not something that could be captured in language in a holistic or absolute sense of that experience. As such, to come back to the three designated elements (text, notion of self, self), the text can affectively work directly in on the self in a way that defies or goes beyond denomination. Postmodern texts are in no way exempt from affective experience. For example, when a reader would first read Carson's translation/reworking of Stesichoros' fragments, the hermeneutic paranoia this unleashes in considering their accuracy is certainly an affective one. The second aspect is that any notion of the self that we may construct is itself also *another text* (especially when documented in some way). Consequently we could then take *that* text, and approach why we constructed this notion in the first place, based on the previous one, construct another text, and repeat this process again and again. This calls to mind Deleuze and Guattari's statement that every sign simply signifies another sign *ad infinitum*, although it differs as well. Every notion of the self we construct is inherently mimetic, since, as it is a notion of that self it has to represent (a part of) that self. It is simulative because this new text in turn will signify to us, setting in motion a process (or rather, take part in a process that is already continuously underway) of establishing new relationships between signs and their respective regimes we as self-as-signs are a part of. This causes the signs to be continuously de- and reterritorialized. This process shows us in a microcosm the complex relationship between representation and simulation. Although often thought of or explained in terms of being each other's opposites, I find this to be erroneous. This is why we can say can we move *from* representation *to* simulation; simulation should be understood as a framework in which representation takes place.

Perhaps it was a realization of this kind that in part prompted Barthes to write *Mythologies*. Barthes was in a sense ahead of his time when he made the link between *meaning* and *form* as existing in one and the same place, sequentially alternating, which already leans towards Deleuze's and Guattari's notion that every sign is simply one sign within a longer chain of signs. For

Barthes, the fact that a complete sign constituted a meaning, yet was again a signifier on another level of language, lead him to an understanding that perspective and approach were crucial in understanding our experience of this linguistic intermediary, which in his theory translated into a kind of continuous semiotic and intertextual awareness: everything signifies if we approach these chains as *signification*, that is, actively subject ourselves to signification. But what my analysis of AOR through the ideas presented in *Mythologies* revealed is that one can also approach the self as sign. A sign that travels, both through history and different Texts. This idea of the self-as-sign would become of great interest to Barthes in his later work. Writings such as *Camera Lucida* (1980) and the postmodern autobiography *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975) see Barthes moving towards increasingly personal subject matter, from the passing away of his mother and the experience of the photographs of her related to his childhood, to an autobiography in which Barthes would approach himself as Text. Barthes would become critical of *Mythologies*, deeming his analyses in the book to suffer rhetorically from using a methodology that itself was already connotative. But this does not mean Barthes' interest in mythology itself would diminish.

Barthes' approach towards his own past was not intended to demythify himself, but rather to gain an increasing understanding of himself as Text operating intertextually. This development does not reject the way postmodernity traverses the boundaries between Text and reality through a linguistic intermediate space, but rather adds to that, that the Text constitutes not just to the way we "structure" the way we see the self our construct our notions of that self, but that it also constitutes the *experience* of that self. In this light, Girard's statement that there is no term in language free of mythological connotations, and Meletinsky's statements that every important social phenomena is rooted in mythology, start to *signify* differently. For both Girard and Meletinsky, mythology was primarily mimetic, representational of the world but ultimately separated from it through the notion of a boundary between fiction and reality. Yet, if it is the direct constitution of our experience, the constant play in distance between meaning and form,

that has come under the sphere of influence of mythology, the idea of limiting the presence of mythology to that of a mimetic presence cannot suffice anymore.

It is here that I would like to return to AOR. I briefly touched upon the notion of Barthes' enterprise in penning his autobiography, which was not to be understood in terms of an attempt at demythification. As we have seen in the course of this study, it is specifically the autobiography that will mythologize. Why the autobiography? Much like mythology, any autobiography starts in a 'primordial' rather than an empirical time. Autobiographical writing cannot but be reflective: it happens after the event, has to represent it. Photography *happens* in the moment, it seeks to capture that moment in the photograph. Is this the reason why Geryon creates a photographic autobiography? A series of documents, which could fictionally represent a specific time and place within an empirical timeline? No, for whatever is captured in the photograph is a fragment, signifying a chain of signs and events, a larger story, which the specificity of the medium does not allow to be shown. As such, a photographic autobiography will always mythologize. Like Stesichoros' *Geryoneis*, what is left to the reader is a collection of fragments of a life. Apart from the fragmentary nature, we have also been dealing with linguistic representations of photographic representations. This only adds to the mythologization. Not only do we realize that we are presented with images that, even when collected, represent to us an incomplete narrative, but are even further removed from them since they are presented to us in a different medium (language). Through this double-representation, we are even further removed from the actual image, and yet at the same time closer because the linguistic representation signifies on its own account.

The final photograph in AOR is dubbed '# 1748' and prefaced with the sentence "It is a photograph he never took, no one here took it" (145). The photograph was apparently not taken by Geryon, yet there it is in the autobiography. This cannot but signify to us: who then took it? How did it end up in the autobiography? And so on. There is an iconic relationship here to the three verse lines of Stesichoros' *Palinode* ('this is not a true story...'), for if his slander of Helen

was not the reason why he went blind, then what was it? And if his writing of this verse was not the cure for his blindness, then what was? The very fact that we are asking these questions, or *can* ask them invokes Deleuze and Guattari: “Writing now functions on the same level as the real, and the real materiality writes” (164). In chapter 3 we made the distinction between matter as semiotically unformed substance, and substance as semiotically formed matter. Deleuze and Guattari here do not mean that matter, which is semiotically unformed, does not signify; on the contrary, something that is semiotically unformed certainly signifies, but what matters is that this does not necessarily result in a semiotically formed substance (the way a sign, in order to be complete, consists out of a signifier and a signified). Understood in this way, we must understand Deleuze and Guattari in the sense that the signification of matter is affective. This is why we must not think of simulation and representation as taking places on two separate planes or levels of reality:

“Abstract machines do not exist only on the plane of consistency [as immanent matter-function], upon which they develop diagrams; they are already present enveloped or “encasted” in the strata [both the plane of expression and that of content] in general, or even erected on particular strata upon which they simultaneously organize a form of expression [indexes, icons, symbols] and a form of content [bodies, things, objects]. What is illusory in the second case is the idea of an exclusively expressive or language-based abstract machine, not the idea of an abstract machine internal to the stratum and accounting for the relativity of those two distinct forms [the form of content and the form of expression]. (167)

I previously explained simulation as the framework in which representation takes place, Deleuze and Guattari explain it inversely, as they state that the abstract machine are already enveloped in the strata in which representation takes place. This why we can move *from* representation *to*

simulation. The reason why they say an abstract machine cannot be exclusively language-based (even though it does work with signs or substance) is because, if its deterritorializing and reterritorializing traits would be exclusively language-based, solely expressive and not affective, a smooth approach to textual space (as a space of affects) would not be possible.

As Deleuze and Guattari state, the diagram “knows nothing of the distinction between the artificial and the natural” (164). This lack of distinction shows why mythology, as an abstract machine, is capable of reterritorializing the questions given above into the real, because it denies the distinction or separation between a plane of content and a plane of expression and draws only a single plane of consistency (where a constant de- and territorialization takes place, alternating between semiotically formed substance, into semiotically unformed matter). In the case of mythology this gets even more complicated because it can never be natural, but has to be historical and fragmentary, in order for it to be able to distort. Because this distinction between the artificial (or a diachronic reconstruction of a myth) and the natural has ceased to be acknowledged in the abstract machine, a diagrammatic reterritorialization of mythological questions into the real has now become possible.

Works Cited

- Barthes, R. *Image, Music, Text*. Tran. S. Heath. Fontana Press, 1977. Print.
- . *Mythologies*. Tran. A. Lavers. Vintage, 2009. Print.
- Beecroft, Alexander J. "'this is Not a True Story': Stesichorus's 'Palinode' and the Revenge of the Epichoric." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 136.1 (2006): 47-69. Print.
- Carson, A. *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. Print.
- Curtis, P. *Stesichoros's Geryoneis*. Brill, 2011. Print.
- Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Tran. B. Massumi. Bloomsbury USA Academic, 2013. Print.
- Edwards, J., and R. Graulund. *The Grotesque*. Taylor & Francis, 2013. Print.
- Foucault, M. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Tran. J. Miskowiec 1984. Web.
<<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>>
- Girard, R. *The Girard Reader*. Ed. J. G. Williams. Crossroad, 1996. Print.
- . *The Scapegoat*. Tran. Y. Freccero. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Print.
- . *Violence and the Sacred*. Tran. P. Gregory. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979. Print.
- Golsan, R. *Rene Girard and Myth: An Introduction*. Taylor & Francis, 2014. Print.
- Horkheimer, M., and T. W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Tran. E. Jephcott. Ed. G. S. Noerr. Stanford University Press, 2002. Print.
- Hutcheon, L. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis, 1988. Print.
- . *The Politics of Postmodernism*. Second Edition ed. Taylor & Francis, 2002. Print.
- . *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. University of Illinois Press, 1985. Print.
- Kristeva, J. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Trans. A. Jardine and L. S. Roudiez. Ed. L. S. Roudiez. Columbia University Press, 1980. Print.
- Meletinsky, E. M. *The Poetics of Myth*. Trans. G. Lanoue and A. Sadetsky. Taylor & Francis, 2013. Print.
- Rose, M. A. *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.