A hermeneutic investigation of the *parergon* in artmaking, with special reference to Anselm Kiefer

by

ELFRIEDE PRETORIUS

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ARTS

in the

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART AND FINE ARTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Mr J P van der Watt

JOINT SUPERVISOR: Prof K M Skawran

NOVEMBER 1992
table of contents

PREFACE     1
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS  iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS  v
INTRODUCTION      1

CHAPTER 1

PARERGON AND THE POINT OF VIEW      19

1.1 THE POINT OF VIEW       20

1.1.1 context
1.1.2 title
1.1.3 presentation
1.1.4 connotation and inference
1.1.5 locality
1.1.6 unbounding
CHAPTER 2

PARERGON AND ASSOCIATION 42

2.1 THE ASSOCIATIVE IMAGE 43

  2.1.1 association, metaphor and parergon
  2.1.2 postcognitive and cognitive association

2.2 MYTH IN ASSOCIATION 50

  2.2.1 myth and language
  2.2.2 myth as model or supplement
  2.2.3 myth and Romantic association

2.3 PARADIGMATIC MEANING AND ASSOCIATION 66

CHAPTER 3

PARERGON AND CONDITION 69

3.1 A CONDITION 70

3.2 PRODUCTION 72

3.3 FUNCTIONALISM 74
3.3.1 hollow models and manufactured meaning
3.3.2 the function of collage

3.4 ROMANTICISM AND CONDITION 87
3.4.1 manufactured sentiment
3.4.2 a manufactured unknown
3.4.3 production, woman and threat 96

CHAPTER 4

PARERGON AND FUSION 95
4.1 FUSION 97
4.1.1 fragment and fusion
4.1.2 fusion as an alchemical process
4.2 FUSION AND THE SUBLIME 104
4.3 FUSION AND SACRIFICE 108
4.4 FUSION AND FIRE 109
4.5 TRANSCENDENTAL POWER 112
4.6 FUSION AND IMPURITY 114
4.7 ALMOST CLOSING THE FRAME 115

BIBLIOGRAPHY 118
ILLUSTRATIONS 131
APPENDIX 158
I declare that "A hermeneutic investigation of the parergon in artmaking, with special reference to Anselm Kiefer", is my own work and that all sources I have consulted or quoted have been fully acknowledged.

Elfriede Pretorius

30th day of November 1992.
This dissertation investigates the notion of *parergon*, a term denoting the unseen elements or "supplements" of any artwork. *Parergon* is a central concept in the deconstruction of French phenomenologist Jacques Derrida. The *parergon* escapes accurate description, since it concerns the interpretations and associations which are made in response to evocative images and titles. Consequently, the *parergon* reveals a subjective, pluralistic and alterable nature, since both interpretation and association are dependent upon specific individuals, as well as on a specific time and place.

In this investigation, I mostly refer to my own and Anselm Kiefer's artworks. A Romantic spirituality is detectable in all the works under discussion. Although the investigation of the *parergon* is of primary interest in this dissertation, a sub-theme regarding such Romanticism threads through the dissertation. The very idea of *parergon* is Romantic, an aspect which necessitates such secondary investigation.
The term parergon is a deconstructionist concept. For the purpose of this dissertation, I have chosen to investigate deconstruction for its relevance to my own artmaking, although many publications on deconstruction have already appeared. In my investigation, I discovered that parergon is a key concept in deconstructionist aesthetics and a global term for a complex of metaphysical activities "around" the artwork. The parergon is deconstruction: it is deconstructionist production, interpretation, association and signification. It thus denotes the "unseen" deconstructions which take place apropos the artwork, involving both images and materials.

The remark has often been made that my work has a feeling of reconstruction and deconstruction, almost like "sculpted" paintings. A latent Romantic undercurrent is furthermore detectable in my work, a sentiment of which I have become aware over the last couple of years. This manifestation of a Romantic spirit is often accompanied by expressionistic markmaking and a constant desire to pile, layer, deconstruct and fragment images. A combined interest in deconstruction and Romanticism has thus fuelled the research of this dissertation, being relevant to my own artmaking.

Initially, in the investigation of deconstruction and Romanticism, the Romantic projection of an image of an idealised state seemed to be in antithesis with the sceptic nature of deconstruction. Yet, the further I went with my research, the more convinced I became that the many manifestations of deconstruction are postulated by a radical desire to transcend the conventions and limitations of human thinking, which is an essentially Romantic concept. A publication by Richard Foster, The New Romantics: A Reappraisal of the New Criticism (1962), Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, has further substantiated my interpretation. The very idea of *parergon* is Romantic, since its characterisation as an insubstantial, concealed or metaphysical presence is a transcendentalism, a Romantic concept.

At present, the debates on deconstruction are either radically taken by its hermeneutic rigour or they are sceptic of its innovation. The notion of Romanticism is not often associated with deconstruction, an attitude originating in logical positivism and found in Modernistic discourses which seem to deny Romanticism. Although deconstruction might thus seem like a "fashionable" topic to research, such research is postulated by a sensibility which is evident in my artmaking, but also fills a "gap" or area of neglected concern in deconstructionist discourse. This dissertation is consequently more of a deconstruction of deconstruction, or a creative reinterpretation of deconstruction, since I have a dual intention with my investigation: of primary interest is the investigation of the *parergon* in artmaking; of secondary interest is the postulation of a close relationship between deconstruction and Romanticism. For these purposes, I mostly refer to the artworks of Anselm Kiefer and my own.

Discovering the art of Anselm Kiefer has proved to be a turning point in my own artmaking. I sense and understand his work intuitively. Conceptually, his artworks are role models for me, although I do not use the same subject matter or images. Kiefer relies more on untransformed found material, such as straw, babies' teeth, frocks, pieces of string and manufactured metal (lead and steel, for example). I find the appeal of Kiefer’s rigour, his artistic self-confidence and the challenging gutsiness and sensitivity of his vision, compelling. For the purpose of this dissertation, his work has proved to be perfectly suitable in demonstrating a deconstructionistic sensibility in combination with explaining my own artmaking process.

In Chapter 1, I attempt to demonstrate that *parerga* are constantly challenging dictums. The investigation in this chapter concerns the *parergon* in relation to interpretation or the point of view. In Chapter 2, the investigation is extended to the notion of association as *parergon*. It is argued that the multifaceted nature of interpretation arrives at undecidable, "unknown" positions regarding association which correspond with the Romantic notion of the unknown. In this chapter, special mention is made of the deconstructionist position regarding myth in relation to association, since deconstructionists express a fundamental doubt concerning epistemological premises. In Chapter 3, the *parergon* as a condition is elucidated. The argument in this chapter demonstrates that the preference for a functional and conceptual mode of expression is induced by the prevailing rule of technology. The special emphasis
on constructed surfaces in twentieth century works, especially collage as a constructed medium, is concurrent with an age dominated by technological structures. The influence of a culture of technology on contemporary Romanticism is also looked at.

The final phase of the dissertation investigates the idea that, by being poetic, the *parergon* discloses a character of fusion. Chapter 4 is a type of summarising hypothesis which posits the view that it is only in the poetic realms that paradoxes and contradistinctions in modes of knowing cease to exist. The poetic act of fusion recalls ancient practices of alchemy, a postcognitive poetic activity of transcending the boundaries of existence. As such, the idea of the *parergon* as poetic fusion confirms the hypothetic similarity between deconstruction and Romanticism.

The Appendix is an extended illustration of the possible associations that may be connected with the image of the ladder.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to my supervisors, Mr J P van der Watt and Prof Karin M Skawran for their valuable criticism and advice.

My thanks are also due to my father, Prof P S Dreyer, who provided assistance and advice in unofficial capacity, and to my family for their unreserved patience.

I would like to express my appreciation to the University of South Africa for granting me a Postgraduate merit bursary, as well as for the Robin Aldwinckle merit bursary. Financial assistance given by the Human Sciences Research Council towards the costs of this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at, are my own and should not be regarded as those of the Human Sciences Research Council.
abbreviations

C.P.D.  Collins Paperback English Dictionary

D.H.I.  Dictionary of the History of Ideas (in some instances the full bibliographical detail is used)

E.D.M.  Everyman's Dictionary of Non-Classical Mythology

G.E.L.  Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon

L.D.S.  Lexikon der Symbole

O.C.A.  The Oxford Companion to Art

S.S.C.D.  Smith's Smaller Classical Dictionary

s.a.  sine anno

s.v.  sub verbo
list of illustrations

1. Carl Gustav Carus, *Faust im Studierzimmer* (*Faust in his study*) [s.a.]. Charcoal, with traces of red on bluegray paper, 55,6 x 42,1 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett.

2. Carl Gustav Carus, *Fausts Traum* (*Faust's dream*) [s.a.]. Charcoal on bluegray paper, 59,4 x 43,8 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett.


In this dissertation, the *parergon* is investigated in relation to my own artmaking process and to deconstructionist interpretation. My purpose with the investigation of the *parergon* is to illuminate how deconstruction works in artmaking, that is, how and why artworks are made and how they should be approached. I believe that, in varying degrees, contemporary artmaking takes part in the general *Zeitgeist* of deconstruction.¹

My deconstructive attitude to artmaking often results in fragmentation. Such fragmentation is central to the understanding of *parergon*, a concept which features prominently in the aesthetics of deconstructionist Jacques Derrida. In this dissertation, I take the stance of interpreting *parerga* as the fragmented "unseen" elements in and around the artwork, such as: interpretations; meanings and feelings evoked by images; symbolic associations; and the *Zeitgeist* of the work. These facets of the metaphysical reality of the artwork are in fragmented form, since they are relevant only for a specific time, place and person. When images are fragmented, it leads to a confusing multitude of information being assimilated in hybridised, symbolic form, since the fragment represents a greater whole. This notion complicates the discourse around the *parergon*, since the fragment cannot be investigated without the context of the larger totality and vice versa. As such, the investigation of the *parergon* in the respective chapters shows overlaps, but at the same time there is a distinct focus in every chapter.

¹ *Zeitgeist* is an internationally used German word meaning "a spirit of the time".
As an introduction to the investigation of the *parergon* within the context of a deconstructivist aesthetic, some of the relevant working expressions are briefly illuminated in order to create a paradigmatic context.

--- fragmentation ---

Fragmentary expression has appeared in multiple form in history, yet, it has received special attention since the advent of collage in twentieth century. Fragmentation is noticeable in art "styles" at present, which has the consequence that interpreters are constantly challenged and motioned into alternative, pluralistic ways of seeing. Stylistic forms such as Expressionism, Romanticism, Minimalism, Classicism, Baroque and even craft, are encountered in the contemporary art scene. Fragmentation is also visible in the present age in which consumerism and production dominate.²

The notion of fragmentation demands an inclusive approach in interpretation in order to comprehend the undecidability of the *parergon*. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I investigate the *parergon* as the fragmented interpretation of the single artwork, extended into the broader perspective concerning styles and movements. In the second chapter, the fragmentation in modes of knowing is addressed which has certain consequences for the understanding of the *parergon*. In the third chapter fragmentation as a condition of the time is investigated. The last chapter reinterprets the deconstructionist artmaking process as a symbolic form of alchemy in which fragments are fused into a poetic artwork.

The investigation of the *parergon* is necessary in order to determine whether it is possible at all to arrive at meaningful interpretations within a context of radical fragmentation as encountered in deconstruction.

---

² Although, according to Lawrence Kritzman (1981: vii), modern art tends "to give valuable consideration to the fragmentary and the chaotic", the esteem of fragmentation can be traced back to the sixth century Pre-Socratic philosophers.
The concept of *parergon*, both the focal interest and the framework for this project, is of central concern in Derrida's influential work on deconstructionist aesthetics, *The Truth in Painting* (1987). *Parergon* has been derived from the Greek word, *ergon*, meaning "work", and *para*, meaning "beside", "alongside of", "beyond" (G.E.L. 1935, s.v. "ΤΑΠΑ" and "τάπεψις"). In his derivative use of the concept, Derrida owes much to Heidegger. In *The End of Philosophy*, Heidegger interprets the Greek word *ergon* in Aristotle's philosophy as follows:

> Thought in the Greek manner, the work is not work in the sense of the accomplishment of a strenuous making. It is also not result and effect. It is a work in the sense of that which is placed in the unconcealment of its outward appearance and endures thus standing or lying. To endure means here: to be present at rest as work. [Heidegger 1973: 5]

The *parergon* thus refers to the notion of presence in its concealed form. The *parergon* as "supplement", "extra", "exteriority", "remark", "addition", or "note" to the artwork (Derrida 1987: 54-6), refers to that which is constructed neither "outside" nor "inside" the artwork. The discourse of interpretation around the artwork attempts to uncover or discover such concealed presence. In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida acknowledges Cézanne in the choice of title: in a letter to Emile Bernard (23 October 1905), Cézanne says, "I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you" (Derrida 1987: 2). These words emphasise the crucial role of the artist in rendering artworks meaningful, as well as the role of the onlooker who projects meaning onto the images.

The term *parergon* connotes the fact that the meaning of an artwork is not constituted by its presence as real object alone. The *parergon* cannot be measured scientifically or rationally, since it is metaphorically postulated. The term refers to associative meanings or interpretations which take shape in the imagination of the viewer in response to the evocative metaphoric imagery of the artwork. As a result of such imaginary meanings or interpretations being attached to the artwork, the latter changes from its pure physical presentation into a significant statement.

Existing interpretations are constantly subject to addition and revision, thus the *parergon* is subject to a continual "reinscribing" or "over-reading". Both artist and viewer play crucial roles in this constitution. In Chapter 1, the role of the viewer takes precedence over that of the artist, whereas in Chapter 2, the role of the latter is explored in the constitution of *parerga*. 
In this investigation, three core metaphors are involved: point of view, frame and context, further generalised via the notions of structure (system) and meta-levels (associations). A pragmatic viewpoint is hence articulated in the discourse surrounding deconstruction and the **parergon**. According to the pragmatic stance, meanings are not universally valid, but constituted by personal acquaintance and the point of view. Referring to description and the point of view, I follow Givón (1989: 1) who argues that “the description of an entity is incomplete, indeed uninterpretable, unless it specifies the point of view from whence the description was undertaken”. Accordingly, “a picture is not fully specified unless its frame is also specified” (Givón 1989: 2). There is an important relation between meaning and context. Givón (1989: 2) says: “The meaning of an expression cannot be fully understood without understanding the context in which the expression is used”. If the content of the image is open-ended, so is the context. There is nothing new about these notions; it is the reconstruction of these concepts into the deconstructivist stance that is of interest in this dissertation.

The essential open-endedness tolerated by the pragmatic method in general, leaves ample room for mystic and metaphysical entities and converges on that point with deconstruction. It will become clear in this discourse that, even in deconstruction, the point of view, context and frame, decoded by Derrida as the **parergon**, can never be escaped.

--- paradigm ---

In order to define the **parergon**, it is necessary to determine its operative paradigms. I follow Givón (1989: 21) once again, who acknowledges C S Peirce in his argument that there are no “pure” paradigms, since signs (or iconic images) are mixtures of symbols, indexes (references) and icons, distributed along multi-dimensional spaces. Givón (1989: 44) further argues that if the frame or context is stable, the meaning of the

--- being pragmatic ---

--- paradigm ---

--- being pragmatic ---
image or sign would be stable. The notion of paradigm has become of central importance in recent philosophic and literary criticism, since writers have noticed the emergence of unstable relationships concerning, for instance, object versus paradigm, or knowledge versus paradigm.

Although the meanings of artworks are not stable, it does not imply that interpretation is context-free. Derrida says that the structure of the \textit{parergon} is of such a nature that

\[
\text{... no totalisation of the border is even possible. Frames are always framed: thus, by part of their content. Pieces without a whole, 'divisions' without totality ...} \quad [\text{Johnson 1987: 416, my emphasis}]^5
\]

Contextual frames are thus always preceded and followed by other paradigms or contexts: the "innocent eye" seems impossible. The artist makes the artwork within a certain frame of mind which allows the viewer to draw another frame of interpretation around the artwork. These paradigms or contextual structures function, however, in relative manner. According to Maritz, a structure is, on a semantic level

\[
\text{... a combination of components which form a specific whole. A sub-structure is a combination of components, which as a combination is itself a component of a larger structure ... . When the regularity is absolute, the structure is systematically closed. Such a structure may be referred to as a closed system. When the regularity or orderliness of a structure is not absolute, it is regarded as an open system ... . Although scientists are often astounded at the wonder of reality (at its systematic nature), closed systems are seldom found.} \quad [\text{Maritz 1981: 4}]
\]

Paradigms, frames or \textit{parerga} (as interpretations) can never be closed, since viewers differ and works are regarded differently from epoch to epoch. For Derrida, the "closure" of philosophic concepts - as absolute structures of formalised or systematic knowledge - is the sovereign gesture of logocentric thought (Norris 1983: 22). Closure would imply a starting and finishing point, thus creating barriers and divisions.

The paradigmatic boundaries of artworks are subject to the viewpoint of the viewer, thus alterable. According to Barthes, structure implies both boundary and perspective, a horizon within the "comforting area of an ordered space" (Sontag 1982: 310). In Paul Ricoeur's language, both

---

5 The term "frame" or "paradigm" corresponds with "structure". Semantically, "structure" is differentiated from "reference" or "association" to indicate meta-levels or foundations, although many corresponding features are detected.
artist and artwork become "talking subjects" (Bakker 1973: 163). The artwork as poetic work, is contextualised as a result of the artist's poetical perspective/view of the real or world. Consequently, as Givón (1989: 45) argues, interpretation hinges on relevance, similarity and/or analogy, drawing associative paradigms around the artwork.

--- discourse ---

The role of discourse is vitally important in the constituting of the parergon, since critical assumptions may be constructed and deconstructed via discourse which may lead to approximations of the artwork's possible meanings.6

Since the 1960s, structuralist views of language, also evident in the theories of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, became a new way of thinking which had a revolutionary effect on most disciplines (Staton 1987: 133). Via semiotics, the authority of language has been asserted; semioticians such as Barthes, have extended this type of discourse to other disciplines, acknowledging the differences in meaning expressed by speakers about the same texts, underlining the process of the production of meaning.

Deconstruction cannot be separated from discourse. It is impossible to render a full account of the importance of the concept of "discourse" in deconstruction in this dissertation; for the purpose of this investigation, it suffices to describe it as:

- a condition for the possibility of play (discourse)
- a sort of play which makes play possible

---

6 Chomsky was the first linguist to draw serious attention to a comparatively neglected aspect of linguistic behaviour, namely its creative character (Wiener 1973-1974: 324) (although he recognises a precursor in Wilhelm von Humbold). The structures dealt with by most grammarians are surface structures. Generative grammar, Chomsky's main contribution to technical linguistics, takes its theoretical point of departure from deep structures that explain the ability of all speakers of a language to utter sentences that may never have been uttered before, and to be understood at once by other speakers of the same language. A language is not an actual but a potential (and potentially infinite) set of utterances, governed by the laws of its deep structure (Wiener 1973-1974: 324). Languages whose surface structures are widely different, may share the same deep structure and this may reflect the fundamental structure of mind.
a sort of play which “produces” the play in any playing (Evans 1991: 177).

The notion of “difference”, originating in Nietzsche and Saussure especially, is relevant here. Decoding the above-mentioned points, it means that discourse is possible in the first instance, because there are differences of opinion. Secondly, because there are such differences, discourse is non-final or a type of “play” of alternatives. The fundamental difference further induces the production of alternative discourses on any text or poetic work.

For the purpose of this investigation, the parergon will have to be considered in relation to metaphor, that is, contexts of inflected meanings.7 The figurative language of metaphor displays an essential open-endedness which is relevant for both literary works and artworks. An artwork, however, does not function in the same way that a literary work does, since the visual experience is of special importance in the artwork. The meaning of an artwork is not constituted via discourse alone; it is also “seen”, “recognised” or “experienced”. The hermeneutic discourse around the artwork will have to incorporate both the semiotic inflections of the metaphor attached to the image and the open-ended visual function of the metaphoric image. A fragmented complex of possible metaphoric meanings is consequently involved in the investigation of the parergon.

The artwork thus requires a phenomenological attitude from the viewer. Staton (1987: 62) argues that, in the phenomenological position as encountered in deconstruction, there is an attempt to dissolve divisions between the outside (object) and inside self (subject) via consciousness. Then the “unified ‘is-ness’ of existence is experienced” (Staton 1987: 62).

— being hermeneutic —

Contemporary hermeneutics regard the praxis of discourse as a pivotal method by which the meaning of an artwork can be constructed or deconstructed. William James, of the Modernist school of pragmatism, defined the pragmatist as someone who

---

7 The metaphor refers to “an object or action that does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance” (C.P.D. 1986, (s.v.) “metaphor”).
... turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. ... it means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth. At the same time it does not stand for any special results. It is a method only. [James 1931: 51]

The above-mentioned viewpoint, expressed in 1931, would not have sounded out of place in contemporary hermeneutic theory in which a pragmatic approach is taken in interpretation by considering the artwork in its paradigmatic context. The scope of this dissertation does not allow for a comprehensive historical account of hermeneutics, since such modes of thinking are already found in Greek philosophy, as indicated earlier. Yet, the nature of the dissertation demands a heuristic survey of recent hermeneutics, since the parergonality of artworks is greatly constituted by interpretation. For this purpose, I refer inter alia to writers from different branches of philosophy: existentialist Martin Heidegger; phenomenologist and deconstructionist Jacques Derrida; hermeneuticists Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer; structuralist Barthes; and pragmatists T Givón and William James. In the interpretation of Anselm Kiefer's work, I often refer to Mark Rosenthal.

French phenomenologist, Paul Ricoeur, identifies one of the central problems in hermeneutics as centering on epistemological specificity (Ricoeur 1981: 165), since the concept of interpretation seems, at the epistemological level, to be opposed to the concept of explanation. These concepts, usually addressed together, have given rise to many disputes since the time of Dilthey and Schleiermacher (Ricoeur 1981: 165).

According to the tradition to which the latter authors belong, interpretation has certain subjective connotations, such as the implication of the reader in the processes of understanding and the reciprocity between interpretations of the text and self-interpretation. This reciprocity is known by the name of the hermeneutic circle; it entails a sharp opposition to the sort of objectivity and non-implication which is supposed to characterise the scientific explanation of things. [Ricoeur 1981: 165]

---

8 The hermeneutic circle is a concept already emerging in classical philological hermeneutics, the circle being the grammatical whole-part relationship. Words are understood in the context of the sentence, and the meaning of the sentence is reliant on the functions of individual words (Kisiel 1985: 4). The hermeneutic circle theory is sometimes encountered as the hermeneutic spiral.
Other theoreticians such as Gadamer radically influenced hermeneutics by altering its course from scientific verification to a theory or method of understanding. Gadamer gave hermeneutics its stamp as a philosophical matter, emphasising not so much the scientific basis of understanding, but understanding as "a standing within a happening of a tradition, Überlieferungsgeschehen" (from Gadamer's first major influential publication on hermeneutics: Truth and Method: Fundamental Features of a Philosophical Hermeneutic, 1965: 293). Taking a pragmatic stance, Gadamer views the conditions under which understanding takes place, as crucial (Kisiel 1985: 6). According to Ingram (1985: 44), Gadamer's theories reaffirm relativism, "aiming in particular at exploring the movement of understanding in its concrete appropriation of possibility from the transmitted heritage of the past" (Kisiel 1985: 6). Gadamer sees interpretation as dependent upon time and place, because of the constant alteration taking place in the transmittance of conventions from the past into new historical circumstances. Gadamer has taken his cue from Heidegger:

Reflexion is bending-back, and as such it is the explicitly accomplished presentation of what is present; explicitly, that is, in such a way that what is present is presented to the representer. ... The experience of reflexion ... presupposes, however, that the relation to beings in general is experienced as representatio, as re-presenting, making-present. ... This, however, can only become historical [understood in the manner of the history of Being] when idea has become idea, that is, percep­tio. [Heidegger 1973: 60-61]

Heidegger's metaphysical Schritt zurück (stepping back) demands an abrogation of and victory over modes of thinking in a technological age (Ijsseling 1964: 27). Such a post-cognitive attitude, a "stepping back", is required in the appreciation or evaluation of the artwork, since the artwork is the ambiguous embodiment of the poetic stance.

--- licence ---

In this dissertation, the stance is assumed that the artwork, as a poetic structure, is a relatively autonomous structure. The artwork will be regarded as a poetic structure as it is defined in the literary theories of New Criticism and deconstruction. Staton (1987: 12) sees a poem

... as a unified linguistic object, ontologically independent (having its own Being), with laws of its own. These laws, usually in the forms of metaphor, paradox, and irony, structure the poem's language. Through the complex organisation of these analogical structures, ... a poem works to resolve tensions and ambiguities.
Since artists are poets, poetic licence is bestowed upon them. As poetic interpreters of their worlds, artists enter the domain of several disciplines, such as philosophy, politics, sociology, religion, mythology and many more. As artist, I have the freedom to move in the terrain of philosophy, but also to develop my own kind of aesthetic, or deconstructivism, based on deconstruction as philosophy.

Deconstruction originated as New Criticism which appeared in the 1930s, but only made its presence felt in the 1950s. The New Criticism used metaphorical and ambiguous language, rather than literal and univocal expressions (Abrams 1986: 141). Since the 1960s, the European influence of Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and others, have injected New Criticism with radicality (Abrams 1986: 141). Their deconstruction questions absolutist viewpoints and logical arguments, leading to arbitrariness and open-endedness. At present, the strategies of deconstruction include the most rigorous attempts yet to reckon the consequences of sceptical doubt (Norris 1983: 34). Derrida, for instance, propounds a radical subversion of the metaphysical concepts and presuppositions in all modes of discourse without exception (Abrams 1986: 142). Since deconstruction, it has become crucial to defend the point of view and articulate it in convincing manner, because of the increasing awareness of the everpresent possibility of revisionism.

The radicality of deconstruction has instigated the conviction that interpretation, thus the parergon, may be altered at any moment in time; it will be argued in this dissertation, however, that hermeneutic licence does not sanction interpretations which are inconsistent with the Derridaian “full and inner meaning” of the artwork.

--- a deconstructivism ---

The investigation of the parergon is tied to deconstruction. Both deconstruction and pragmatics are concerned with text-immanent hermeneutic methodology. Although deconstruction is an “ism” of a specific time and a new movement in art, it is applicable to art of any time or place (Griffiths 1988b: 53). The deconstructionist sensibility

---

New Criticism, as a method of literary criticism with strong impact on Anglo-American philosophy, dominated literary discourse until the sixties (Staton 1987: 12). The group, which included John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, W.K. Wimsatt and others, aimed at raising the status quo of the poetry, seen as a cover term for all literature, by establishing it as an independent linguistic object (Staton 1987: 12). Such endeavours were aimed at counteracting logical positivism which have dominated criticism since the nineteenth century.
occurs in many forms, but a consistent characteristic seems to be an attitude which accepts the artwork as a process of signification, but rejects any meaning before or outside it (Griffiths 1988b: 53). In Chapter 1, the **parergon** is investigated in terms of the point of view to ascertain whether a pronounced final interpretation of an artwork is possible. Chapter 2 takes this issue further by questioning the artmaking process, that is, the reasons or grounds for selecting certain images if their mythic origins have become suspect.¹⁰

I have selected the artworks of Anselm Kiefer for this investigation, since the deconstructionist sensibility is particularly strong in his art. Kiefer is a contemporary German artist, living and working in Buchen, in the Odenwald. His work signifies a form of deconstruction by lamenting a sense of loss, that is, the "unmetaphysical" nature of contemporary culture in which myth is voided and divested of grandeur (Griffiths 1988b: 60).¹¹ Yet, his references in titles and images revive the myth at the same time; it is thus a deconstructivism which seizes the irony of deconstruction and invests it with Romanticism by exposing both an awareness of the historical horizon and a transcendentalist idealism. This deconstructivism is also manifested in my own paintings.

Although the aesthetic under discussion may be seen as a deconstructivism, it is not the scope or purpose of this dissertation to supply a complete discussion of deconstruction as philosophy. The aesthetic which is argued certainly does not purport to function primarily as a deconstructivism. It should rather be regarded as part of a general spirit of the time, that is, as a manifestation of a deconstructionist spirit in the different products of culture in the sociological, political, environmental, humanitarian and religious realms. It is my view that all noteworthy contemporary art relies to some extent on deconstructionist thinking, since the artist participates in the general Zeitgeist.¹²

---

¹⁰ Deconstruction aims at deconstructing the critical theory itself, which leads to closure and final dictum. Ironically enough, as will become clear in this dissertation, although deconstruction is a strategy rather than a theory, it lies within the sphere of critical theory.

¹¹ In Chapter 2, the position of myth with regard to association is investigated to determine whether such mythic references have any purpose at all.

¹² In Chapter 3, the **parergon** will be investigated in terms of such a spirit of the time in order to determine the latter influence.
Further, it is not incorrect to argue that most critical undertakings or interpretations are deconstructionist in character. Any attempt at critical assessment or analysis does include a certain amount of decomposing and/or resolving. The radicality of deconstruction as a critical theory is located in its active praxis of a revision/deconstruction of texts, viewpoints and traditional absolutes, corresponding with the active deconstruction and reconstruction of materials in the artworks under discussion. Miller (1986: 115) argues that deconstruction is “only the current version of a long tradition of rhetorical study going back to especially the Greeks, though to some degree to an aspect of Greek thought that has tended to be obscured or effaced”. An agenda for deconstruction is found, for example, in Aristotle’s emphasis on the arbitrariness of the linguistic symbol (Givón 1989: 76-77):

... Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections of the soul, and written marks are symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. [De Interpretatione, transl. by J L Ackrill 1963.]

According to Derrida, to deconstruct is

... to bring out a radical disjunction between logic and rhetoric, intention and sense, what language explicitly says and what its figural workings constrain it to mean ... . Deconstruction is a rigorous consequence ... compelling for the fact that [it] work[s] to question or confound all normative concepts of logic meaning. [Norris 1983: 157]

Such viewpoints reflect pragmatic methodologies which offer no particular results and have no dogmas or doctrines other than their method (James 1931: 54). 13 Deconstructionist strategies are demonstrated by way of “unclosing” or deconstructing texts rather than explanation as a kind of “theory”, since deconstruction’s foundation premise regards a deconstructing of the critical. 14 The constitution of parerga a s a

---

13 Several publications have recently appeared in which pragmatism and deconstruction are critically assessed in terms of the above point of view: for instance, Diane Michelfelder’s Dialogue and deconstruction: the Gadamer-Derrida encounter (1989). Albany State University Press.

14 Several possible incentives for the blooming of a deconstructionist spirit could be identified: (1) The nineteenth century nihilism of Nietzsche that predicated the idea of the Übermensch (superman or overman) who has overcome his own limitations and given his life meaning by becoming a creator (Urmson 1966: 209) is significant. Nietzsche’s “will to power” can also be understood apart from “sublimation” - a transcendence of psychological and natural barriers. (2) The synthetic thought patterns of Hegel and other phenomenologists: phenomenology (and existentialism) attempt to relocate the origins of meaning in our concrete lived experience prior to the impersonal ‘objectivism’ of a narrow scientific attitude (Kearney 1987: 1) gave deconstruction an impetus. Through the openness of appeal, the phenomenological method lends
The deconstructionist process is thus a revisionist praxis of reinterpretation of events and images via connotation and metaphoric association. In this mode, images are eclectically selected from a vast range of possible sources, in order to convey specific meanings. This process is echoed in the use of materials.

--- romanticism ---

The Romantic nature of the *parergon* is a sub-theme in this dissertation. Romanticism is not a central part of the investigation, since the scope of this dissertation disallows such a focus. Hence, I have incorporated the reference to the Romantic mode of thinking and expression only as a secondary but necessary consideration, since the very concept of *parergon* is Romantic.

Although Romantic expression is not limited to specific historical periods only, a survey of pre-twentieth century forms of Romantic expression has to consider the Romanticism manifesting more or less from 1780 - 1850 and the Neo-Romantic revival roundabout 1885 in the Symbolism of poets such as Baudelaire, the Neo-Kantian philosophies, and the Symbolist art of, for instance, Puvis de Chavannes, Redon and Moreau. The Symbolist manifesto published in the Figaro in 1886, stated that the essential principle of art is to "clothe the idea in sensuous form" (O.C.A., s.v. "symbolism"). This perception closely resembles the notion of the *parergon*.

---

15 The reader will note that I use upper case for historical movements and lower case for the general consciousness or sensibility.

16 The Romantic expression found in Symbolism is basically mystical. Just as Baudelaire, for instance, was opposed to the realistic and scientific concepts of art (Weinberg 1969: 13), deconstructionists argue an annihilation of structures constituted by rational thinking. Poetry is
The twentieth century Romantic spirituality became evident in a few British works produced from 1935 - 1955, a period which is often designated by the term “Neo-Romantic”. In A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination Britain 1935-55, David Mellor has edited a number of essays dealing with an alternative interpretation of personal, metaphysical, libertarian and ecological preoccupations of artists in the years 1935 to 1955, which could be interpreted as essentially Romantic. The designation, “Neo-Romantic”, is generally used to describe art and literature just before and after the turn of the century. Another designation, “New Romanticism”, is used in amongst other publications, “The New Romantics” (1988), edited by Andreas Papadakis, to describe the Romantic art of the twentieth century. It has, however, become more of an accepted term for the Romantic spirituality emerging from the late 1970s, since it seems to be manifest in much more prominent way.

Richard Foster, in The New Romantics: A Reappraisal of the New Criticism (1962), also interprets the new modes of critical thinking since the 1940s, as a version of Romanticism. I concur with this interpretation, since there are clear points of similarity between the more recent forms of New Criticism, already indicated as deconstruction, and the Romantic sensibility. Foster (1962: 21) bases his view on the New Critic’s preference for poetry, the mention of Truth and Knowledge without reference to observation, logic or clear dogmas, the notion of a “higher” reality, and their often fervid discourse. According to Foster, one of the few advocates of this viewpoint, the real identity of the New Criticism, as literary movement, is constituted by the Romantic sensibility (Foster 1962: 21). Although contemporary Romanticism does reflect similarities something which does not inform, but suggests and evokes; it tries to “show exactitude where there is none” (Weinberg 1969: 13). These words also describe the character of the parergon which is suggested via certain metaphoric images and which, in turn, reflect indefinite states of mind. In Chapter 4, the parergon will be investigated in terms of its poetic function, that is, in terms of its position regarding sublime or unknown states.

17 In revisionist manner, several artists such as Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, Balthus, David Salle, Sandro Chia, Eric Fischl and others may be interpreted as New Romantic artists, although they have worked for a great part of their lives within an overriding Modernist Zeitgeist (Griffiths 1988d: 54-60).

18 The term “Post-Romanticism” is also sometimes encountered. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will use “New Romanticism”.

19 The New Critics of the years 1940 - 1960, under influence of the conceptualism of High Modernism, advocated a “fresh and virile intellectual leadership” (Alfred Kazin, quoted by Foster.
with other historical periods, twentieth century Romanticism seems to have been ignored by international Modernists. Foster (1962: 16) accuses Modernists of narrowmindedness, because they display a definite preference for non-Romantic literature. According to Keith Patrick, the Modernist viewpoint which disregarded the continuation of strong Romantic trends in the twentieth century, is invalid (Papadakis 1988b: 43). Patrick points out that there are few major figures of this century who have conformed to the Modernist premise and that ultimately the Modernist view becomes one of a number of possible critical perspectives from which to view the world.²⁰

One of the principal effects of deconstructive criticism has been to disrupt, in dialectical spirit, the historical scheme that contrasts Romantic with post-Romantic literature in particular (Culler 1983: 248). Post-Romantic works are usually interpreted as a sophisticated or ironical demystification of the excesses and delusions of the former (Culler 1983: 248), yet they seem to be governed by the same kind of spirituality. A pragmatic perspective on New Romanticism takes account of the time and place of its appearance; so it can also be understood as a reflection of the sense of collapsing Being, the Heideggerian “laboring animal”. In Chapter 3, the position of the *parergon* is examined in the face of metaphysical collapse.

It should become clear in this dissertation that different manifestations of Romanticism are located in the form of the presentation. Conceptually, they vary but little. There is a distinction in the notion of universality versus locality, for instance, although all Romantics are acutely aware of their historical stance. In both Pre- and Post-Modernism, the word “romantic” is used to defend the free expression of imagination and association in the arts. Through visions of a primeval society, Romantics attempt to transcend all restricting conventions: an emotional sentimentality, usually described as transcendent idealism, appears in dramatic ambiguous works revealing a longing to transcend the limits of the present state of existence.

 According to Fekete (1988: 43), Modernism in culture is nothing more then the collapse of the Gombrichian schemae or conventions that were seen as a continuation of earlier traditions. Modernism attempted to parody the classical idea of the artwork, as object of universal and eternal beauty.
In the verbalisation of a deconstructivism in this discourse, a Romantic mode of exposition is found. This mode tends to reveal a preference for holism, a phenomenological stance and an integrating tendency rather than an analytical one. Poetry is viewed as the most perfect form of utterance or language. The rational and logical faculties are seen as being in service of the imagination and there is a moral inclination which reveals both idealism and sentimentalism.

The artworks of Anselm Kiefer and those of myself which will be discussed in this dissertation, emit a specific Romantic spirituality. It will be investigated whether it is possible to describe the *parerga* under discussion as both Romantic and deconstructionist. The Romantic paintings and sculptures of Kiefer are strongly rooted in his being German. The viewpoints predicated in his work, however, are not necessarily true for other contemporary Romantic works. In my work, the present historical and political horizon is of the utmost importance; the imaginary, non-logical, mystical and mythical entities enter into dialectic and an underlying desire for transcendence is detected. In Kiefer's and my work, there are literary, historical, mythological and religious references. Especially cultural nationalism is found, coupled with global concerns, proclaiming pluralism. Presentday Romanticism is an art of inclusion *par excellence*, in which the imaginary and visionary play a powerful part. Not only is the sociological aspect found in the reappraisal of production in a return to traditional values of technical artistic mastery, but also in the Romantic notion of the artist as poetic educator. There is a desire for reconciliation of man and nature/cosmos/history, mainly in response to man’s experience of alienation from his true being, resulting from the overwhelming dominance of technology and mechanisation. These notions echo nineteenth century escapist attitudes.

--- relatedness ---

From the above-mentioned it is gathered that in order to postulate a post-structuralist, post-Romantic or deconstructionist stance, a relativistic position is unavoidable. When boundaries are not clearly defined as, for instance, in metaphorical images and words, the viewer is confronted with an open-endedness leading to ambiguous and subjective interpretation. It thus follows that a great deal of relatedness is involved in poetic production and reception practice.
It is my view, furthermore, that all images used in paintings, are inventive variations based on what is already there, or what has been done or said before. Artmaking is then reduced to a response or reinterpretation of what already exists. Images or presentations then become mere "traces" of presence, that is, copies of earlier presences. In Chapter 2, the process involved in the selection of images is investigated in relation to such a deconstructivist aesthetic.

In deconstruction as philosophy, the deconstruction of texts is impossible without exactly those texts. The discourse as vehicle of deconstruction in literary theory, equals the deconstructive process of rendering in artmaking. Both such discourses and renderings consequently become "post-structures".

The arguments in this dissertation are relative and sequential. By adopting such a stance, the possibility for a cyclic repetition of preferences, conventions and tastes is identified. After Modernism - an arthistorical movement concerned with essences, puristic practice and stylist - the avant-garde thing to pursue seems to be anti-purism and inclusiveness, resulting in another stylist, Post-Modernism. After the restraint of the classical taste, the excesses of Romanticism appear exciting. In this way, preferences alternate to produce sequences of taste, only manifested differently because of their being in another time and place. Since the stylistic turn usually seems radical and new at the time of occurrence, it is differentiated from the previous "movement".

Although Romantics have often been viewed with suspicion - perhaps because of their insistence on imagination, intuition and feeling - the Romantic turn at the time of its occurrence is indisputable. The present Romanticism is blooming, perhaps in sequential response to the overriding conceptualism and abstraction of the twentieth century. It becomes a matter of taste, and novelty, exactly like interpretation, is often determined by taste.

Since it is the viewer who projects meaning onto the images, the question of taste is relevant in the consideration of the nature of the parergon. The associative meaning evoked by the images varies from viewer to viewer, since metaphoric images validate a choice of associations in which the taste of the viewer is the determining factor. This line of reasoning frames my argument for the everpresent possibility of revisionism of the artwork. As such, the parergon escapes absolute definition.
Deconstruction counterposes logocentrism, that is, thought processes premised on logicality and certainty. Yet, as Johnson (1987: 410) points out, Derrida, for instance, slips into the same logocentrism in his "close readings" or deconstructive interpretations, being analytic in nature. In this dissertation, the argument is put forward that deconstruction is forever propelled by ambiguities, the notion of which is responsible for complicating interpretation of the *parergon*ality of works governed by a deconstructionist sensibility.

The notion of the *parergon* is essentially paradoxical, since frames and boundaries are not eliminated in deconstruction, but texts are seen as "unframable". The paradox is encountered in the fact that both the argument concerning the recognition of frames and boundaries and the one denying their absolute validity, are equally sound. Johnson (1987: 416) describes the total inclusion of the frame as both "mandatory and impossible".

Such ambiguities, encountered in both deconstruction and Romanticism, are discussed in various stages of the argument, especially in the intermingling of historical awareness and emphasis on the moment, the insistence on both paradigm and open-endedness, and the diffusion of arbitrariness and meaning. If I succeed in raising such feelings of ambiguity in the reader, I have succeeded in my venture, since artmaking is forever dealing with such equivocations.

In addressing the *parergon* in a deconstructivistic aesthetic, I intend setting up a dialectic: the four poles of my dialectic are my own artmaking process, the art of Anselm Kiefer, deconstruction and Romanticism. These four poles will be linked via the investigation of the *parergon*.

In my dialectic, I intend to demonstrate that *parerga* are constituted by irony which invests artworks with meaning within a fragmented context of undecidable and ever-changing signs. The viewpoints expressed in this dissertation, must be seen as structures in themselves, not as cast-iron conclusions. I follow James (1931: 53) here: "Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest."
CHAPTER 1

parergon and the point of view

... the task that Western painting has assigned itself since the Renaissance, must be seen not simply as a desire for veridical representation but in a more delimited sense as a concern to fix the mutual relations of objects in space, in which the painter navigates like a seaman, constructing positions from one corner of the canvas to another by working out co-ordinates from specific landmarks or reference points that can provide a point of orientation. [David Morse 1981: 280]

In the Introduction, a framework furnishing a contextual positioning for the notion of the *parergon*, has been constructed. It has been mentioned briefly that in the *par ergon* intimate relationships between frame, paradigm, context and interpretation are set up. This chapter will investigate the *parergon* as interpretation, discourse and the point of view, since it is via these that contexts or paradigms are discovered. *Par ergon*, however, is both point of view and context.
Pointing to the *parergon* as interpretation, Derrida decodes the *parergon* as designating

... a formal and general predicative structure, which one can transport intact or deformed or reformed according to certain rules, into other fields, to submit new contents to it ... It is the concept of the remark, of this 'General Remark', ... without being part of it and yet without being absolutely extrinsic to it. [Derrida 1987: 55]

The word “remark” suggests the sense of adding meanings to a body of association constructs. The remark, in the sense of “comment” or “utterance”, semantically entails the idea of casualness, being incidental; this stresses the incidental nature of the *parergon* which is relevant only for a specific viewer at a specific time and place. It converges with the concept of a point of view in this regard, being of a temporal and incidental nature.

The first part of this chapter, explores interpretation as the point of view, departing from the artwork. The artist “manufactures” potential *parerga* via evocative metaphoric images which instigate the interpretation of the viewer. In the second part of the chapter, the revisionist approach as a point of view and a form of deconstruction, will be examined against the background of the nature of the Romantic *parergon*. *Parergonal* revisionism will be interpreted as an alternative strategy of hermeneutic theory.

In this chapter more emphasis is placed on the role of the interpreter, although an attempt is also made to determine the intentions of the artist. The artist’s role in the “manufacturing” of the *parergon* will become clearer when I explain my own artmaking process in the investigation of association in the next chapter.

1.1 THE POINT OF VIEW

*Parerga* are partly manifested as points of view, albeit of the artist or the viewer. The point of view implicates the roles of both artist and viewer, since the artist articulates a point of view via the artwork and the viewer expresses a point of view in response to the artwork.

The *parergon* as point of view reflects the artificial framing of vision in the use of the camera, but already appears in Renaissance constructs of scientific perspective. In this regard, Masheck (1991: 35) refers to Leon Battista Alberti’s well-known idea of “a painted image as windowlike”, which “does not simply apply to the (overall) surface of a painting, assumedly framed”. According to Masheck, the “flat surface with edges precedes what Alberti calls a window, which is a construct, willfully imposed”. He goes on to argue that that the “window” idea is “a trope, and a signal of the essentially fictive poetics of painting”.

The aperture in the visual field, thus in the mind's eye, seems to be imbued with personal preferences, however "objective" the viewer might try to be. According to Rosand (1981: 28), "framing", that is, articulating a point of view, means composing, the selecting of parts from a greater whole, although the "cropped" images continue beyond the "frame". The point of view is an "arbitrary bounding of a field of vision creat[ing] a situation of acknowledged fragmentation as it isolates a discrete part of a, theoretically, infinite continuum." (Rosand 1981: 28).

The notion of the parergon (or framing), could also be related to the Romantic "window on the world" concept.1 The window is an effective metaphor for the point of view, creating a kind of framework or perspective from within which the present is viewed. The idea of a "window", a "frame" or a parergon concerns both viewer and the artist. The viewpoints of both contribute to the process of "manufacturing" meaning. In order to determine the point of view of the artist, who instigates the parerga surrounding the artwork, the semantic signs emanating from the artwork have to be explored. These issues provide a context or a framework for the interpretation of the artwork.

1.1.1 context

Any artwork has an additional text, a context or subtext which exists in unseen capacity as part of the parergon and of the point of view. Semantically, context links closely with paradigm. In the investigation of the point of view, the paradigmatic context of Anselm Kiefer's Ausbrennen des Landkreises Buchen (1975), (Ill. 3), is explored in order to discover the underlying meaning of the work and the point of view of the artist.2

---

1 This nineteenth century notion is evident in numerous Romantic works, such as Caspar Gustav Carus's Faust im Studierzimmer (Faust in his study) and Fausts Traum (Faust's dream) (Ill. 1 and 2), both not dated, but produced between 1815-1835. The window in these works functions as a metaphoric division between the inside and the outside, as well as the alienation of the person on the inside, often the artist or a woman. In these works, an allegorical relationship between the imagination and the unknown outside world is set up.

2 Anselm Kiefer, Cauterization of the Rural District of Buchen (1975). Oil, charcoal, and glue on twenty strips of burlap, bound, 60 x 42 x 8 cm. Private collection (Rosenthal 1987, Pl.28). Hereafter referred to as Ausbrennen.
A context is a mental construct, involving different degrees of consciousness (Givón 1989: 98). Because the context is constructed from within a certain point of view, any interpretation of such a context is pragmatic, that is, the consequence of a certain mode of thinking - in this discourse, a deconstructivist mode. The context is discovered in the constant breakdown and exploration of the mode in which the work is presented.\footnote{In \textit{Of Grammatology}, Derrida (1976: 158, 163) maintains that there is nothing outside the text, in this instance, the artwork. Everything has its origin in the given, originating in the thing itself. According to Abrams (1986: 130), Derrida, in expressing this view, does not posit a foundational given, but a point of view, a stand.}

Since traditional presentation is challenged by the absolute abandonment of recognisable imagery in \textit{Ausbrennen}, the interdicting veils of presentation have to be lifted in order to discover the content or meaning of the work. As a departure point, the title of the work is investigated.

1.1.2 title

The title is an integral part of the artwork, referring the viewer to a specific exterior context or framework which adds to the interior \textit{parergon} of the work. In \textit{Ausbrennen}, reference to the real world is made via the title. In contradistinction to the minimalist appearance of the imagery, the title of the work draws a specific paradigm of German history around the painting: Buchen, the nearest village to Kiefer's factory-cum-studio in the Odenwald, Germany, is the site of a military installation where large quantities of benzine are stored (Rosenthal 1987: 60). This presents a constant threat to the people of the surrounding area. Buchen is furthermore situated in the upper region of the Black Forest, traditionally a very beautiful area of Germany, so that destruction of the area will readily evoke strong protest. The act of cauterisation further refers to the cyclic end-of-season burning of the fields in order to encourage new growth in the next season.

The region of Buchen, which is referred to in the title, still exists; it is not destroyed. Givón (1989: 135) describes such information, as "unchallengeable information", an epistemic modality. As such, the district has both a historical reality and a mythic reality, for instance in the way that the surrounding, real forest is contained in myths, language and memories. Thus, a real and mythic time and place is specified via the title of the work.
This information provides a paradigmatic beginning in determining the context of the work, already erecting a *parergon*. Derrida, using the metaphor of a coffin for paradigm, argues that this “paradigmatic coffin” is constantly vulnerable to being “multiplied, described, serialized, analyzed, detailed, displaced, turned about in all its states (or almost) and from all its angles (or almost)” (Derrida 1987: 195). At the same time, there are certain imperturbable aspects, which make it stand up to all manipulations of interpretation, “all assaults, ... all perspectives and all anamorphoses” (Derrida 1987: 195, extending his figurative image into a wooden coffin in upright position). The above-mentioned information falls into this category.

1.1.3 presentation

The presentation of the work in the form of an open book extends the paradigm by creating a mode of documentation and historicity. Kiefer has “manufactured” this paradigm via the mode of presentation of the work, which adds another *parergon* to it. This process of manufacture is the outcome of the artist’s interpretation of her/his world and the reworking of a point of view into a poetic statement.

In the form of presentation of *Ausbrennen*, Kiefer seems to have expressed a viewpoint concerning the natural environment of the region, the crisis situation around the German identity after World War II, and the traumatic position of Jews during the war years. By portraying a surface burnt to ashes, Kiefer displays global concerns by hinting at the destruction of the environment. By attempting to rouse concerns for the destruction of the environment and to reconcile the modern German with nature in *Ausbrennen*, Kiefer forges a purifying shamanistic sensibility. At the same time, he suggests that the “contaminated” historical past is over and done with: he thus intends and envisages a “purification” of the German post-war identity, which implies freedom from deeprooted feelings of guilt. Kiefer aspires to reinstate art as moral force, as catalyster to “improve” the contemporary existential being, dulled by technology.4

4 Such a venture seems like a deconstruction of art's function after the elitism found in Modernism, when the art object was increasingly functioning in authoritative exclusivity. Yet, *Ausbrennen* is still, as in Modernism, conceptually and exclusively premised, challenging the modes of presentation in its obscure imagery. The modern/post-modern debate is taken further in Chapter 1.2 and 3, also addressing the functionalism of Post-Modern art.
Encrusted, texturised surfaces evoke strong feelings of expressiveness. The Expressive content found in the form of the presentation (since there is no recognisable imagery) intermingling with political notions, partly establishes the work's power of restitution. In a Romantic sense, the expressive, scorched surfaces may be seen as ruins - either of society, history or the imagination. 5 The imagery in Ausbrennen is, furthermore, reminiscent of the mythic, cyclic changes of regeneration in nature. 6 In the form of presentation, Kiefer could be seen as revealing Conceptualistic, Romantic, political and Expressionistic intentions. 7 The work may also be seen as a history painting or a politically aggressive criticism of the German military divisions, immediately resuscitating the not so recent yet burning memory of a Nazi regime. 8 It may also be argued that, in the attempt to close a chapter in Jewish history by conceptually suggesting visions of new, fresh lands, Kiefer opens up the abyss of horrors in memory. 9

5 In contemporary Romantic works, a sentimental undercurrent concerning the natural environment of man/woman is often found.

6 Such images are found, for instance, in nineteenth century Romantic works such as Philipp Otto Runge's Der Morgen, Der Abend and Die Nacht and Caspar David Friedrich's Kahlter Baum and Das grosse Gehege bei Dresden. These works are illustrated in Glaesemer, J. (s.a.), Traum und Wahrheit: Deutsche Romantik aus Museen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje. Plates 210, 212, 213, 60 and 74.

7 Traditionally, critics make sense of history by creating groupings or sequences and a genre, a mode, a theme or a particular type of understanding develops (Culler 1983: 248). Differentiations like "late", "early", "neo", "pre" and "post" and others are used to define movements. Such differentiations lead to the creation of closed systems, divisions and logocentric constructs. Consequently, modernity shows a fragmented world view, so that critics and historians have come to realise that it is impossible to continue with an analytic approach in terms of history and the cultural products that are part of that history.

8 The historical reference could be decoded as Romantically premised: the previous century's Romantic sensibility has been characterised by an overpowering historical awareness.

9 David H. Hirsch has done a fascinating study on deconstruction in this regard: The Deconstruction of Literature: Criticism after Auschwitz (1991). He argues an ideological link between the Holocaust and deconstruction, both being the culmination of a Dionysian culture of decadent excess. In several instances he refers to Auschwitz as a burning memory which refuses its extermination.
The viewer, however, is confronted with a scorched and charred surface only, devoid of any form of historic reference or imagery. It is only via the creative role of the imagination that such inferences in meaning are made. The specific historical paradigm is deconstructed in the mode of presentation, thus rendering the specificity and locality of the imagery unsure. Further uncertainty is met in the technical "easiness" and radical minimalism of the work which could be misinterpreted as a technical incapability on the artist's part and lead to a suspicion of Kiefer's aesthetic.

1.1.4 connotation and inference

According to Dillon (Staton 1987: 367), the reader/viewer employs two basic operations in the attempt to make sense of the narrative of events as it is encountered in the text/artwork: connection and inference, also decodifiable as connotation. In Kiefer's Ausbrennen, the viewer actively participates in the constitution of the *parergon* by inferring meaning to the broiled surfaces in the context of the indicated title. The hard, scorched surface of the opened pages of the "book", that is, the form of the iconography, lifts the artwork from comfortableness and jars the viewer into response. The viewer cannot be a passive participant in the signifying process when confronted by such a surface. The open-endedness of the "image"-less imagery, being reduced to expressive, charred surfaces, creates the potential for a number of associations or inferences. The conceptual reference to Auschwitz in Ausbrennen, for instance, may have contributed towards the rendering of a radically expressive surface. The abhorrent associations with burnt bodies and death confront the viewer into active participation in the constituting of the meaning paradigm (or the *parergonality*) of the work. The expressiveness of the materials thus leads to stronger imaginative and emotional associations.

Such a reader/viewer-responsive surface strengthens the power of expression of the artwork. The surface of Ausbrennen is part of the

---

10 These notions correspond with that of association which will be addressed in the next chapter.

11 Reader-response theorists cover a wide spectrum, according to Staton (1987: 351). They vary from seeing readers/viewers as passive responders to active creators of meaning; critics such as Fish and Bleich see readers/viewers as experiencing meaning in the texts via active participation (Staton 1987: 351). In such instances, the meaning of the work is largely dependent on the viewer. Although true to a considerable degree, this viewpoint is debatable as well, otherwise the constant possibility of revisionism would not have existed, which implies that the artwork contains an eternal compound of potential
"voice" of the artwork which may be seen as a mutation of metaphor: its creation, a beginning; the discourse on it, an end. Yet, they are identified by sameness - the beginning is recaptured in the end and vice versa (Ricoeur 1981: 167). Such an obscure description may be substituted by using Derrida's definition of discourse or parergon as the meeting point of "families" of opinion: it is the locus of gathering of both "Riss (Ausriss, broaching, Umriss, the contour, the frame ...) and that of Zug, o f Ziehen, Entziehen ... (trait, to draw, to attract, to withdraw ... ") (Derrida 1987: 193).

The artist attempts to engage the viewer in ways so as to direct the parerga. According to Barthes, every system of meaning, thus also the concealed parerga, is the sumtotal of different levels in hierarchical relationships with one another: no level can produce meaning on its own (Sontag 1982: 257-258). The combined efforts of artist and viewer creating and interpreting images via connotation and inference, may lead to the discovering or uncovering of concealed presence.

1.1.5 locality

In connotation and inference, the notion of locality is central, which coheres with that of identity. Although artworks, via their power of expression, can appeal on a universal level, their identity is locally premised. The deconstructivist aesthetic articulated in Ausbrennen, clearly subscribes to the importance of local values. The district of Buchen, its history and people are important in the determining of the meaning value of the work. A viewer from that region will probably identify more strongly with the work and thus constitute a different parergon around it than the next viewer.

The German identity, both during and after the war, is furthermore relevant for a specific time as well. The twentieth century post-war identity is a specific one which depends on the time and place for its character. The principles of absolutism and universalism are thus unsettled, since the parergon is coloured by the interpreter's familiarity with the local content of the work. Derrida (1987: 22) imbues the notion of locality of the image with an emphasis on local or "inner" meaning:

One makes of art in general an object in which one claims to distinguish an inner meaning, the invariant, and a multiplicity of external variations through which, as through so many veils, one would try to
see or restore the true, full, originary meaning: one, naked. Or again, in an analogous gesture, by asking what art means (to say), one submits the mark ‘art’ to a very determined regime of interpretation which has supervened in history: it consists ... in interrogating the vouloir-dire of every work of so-called art, even if its form is not that of saying.

The inner meaning of the art object necessitates the appreciation of locality in interpretation in order to come closer to its “true” meaning. Parerga only exist as temporal and present instances of interpretation (Ricoeur 1981: 198), because of the fact that plurality and locality assume prominence in it. The notion of temporality, as evident in the writings of several theorists, converges with locality: the alternative reality recreated in the artwork can only be experienced via the potency of the images which opens up worlds of references. They are temporal worlds, differing from viewer to viewer, situated in place and time.\(^\text{12}\)

1.1.6 unbounding

If parerga vary according to the informedness of the viewer, the establishment of a constant and fixed paradigm becomes untenable. A situation arises in which the boundaries of interpretation are constantly shifted.

Within the sense of locality which is premised in Ausbrennen, a transcendence of boundaries occurs at the same time via connotation and inference. The surface structure, displaying a sweltered construct of materials, evokes feelings of ancient and primitive rituals of burning. Although the work refers to a specific historically chronological time, there is also a mythic a-chronological sense of time embedded in it. Present, past and future times enter into dialectical relationship via

---

\(^{12}\) According to Derrida, the most assuring conceptual premises are dismantled the moment the parergon takes place. Conceptual discourses on art, according to Derrida, are still dominated by the logocentric tradition of positivism postulated by nineteenth century philosopher Immanuel Kant. Late nineteenth century philosopher, Nietzsche, was the first to critically approach allegedly permanent values and express a fundamental doubt concerning absolute truth. In his deconstructive rejection of simple value dichotomies, value hierarchies such as true and false, moral and immoral, beautiful and ugly, and so on, are questioned as they have been historically produced (Wilcox 1974: 2). Such theoretical projects in general do not foresee that universal or objective values will discontinue, but they question the validity of such values as local values (Fekete 1988: 124). Such a sceptic attitude results in fragmentation in interpretation, since the latter oscillates between possibilities. Kritzman (1981: vii) remarks that fragmentation presupposes an underlying, invisible, ideal order, being the manifestation of a broader world view. Such world views or conditions of the time are addressed in Chapter 3.
association and reference. Kiefer has abolished historical time in order to
realise an ideology of mythic meaning. Time has synchronic meaning
here, the future and the past suspended to create an eternal mystic
moment. The artwork becomes an eternal act of burning, attaining
transcendent meaning via the annihilation of time and place.¹³

According to Morse (1981: 276), the very act of painting is a symbolic
process in which the chronological dimension of time becomes diffused:
a painting is started at a specific time and place, but is extended over
an undetermined period of time. Yet, the inverse is also true: a painting
may begin as arbitrary and provisional marks and develop into a more
scientific and deliberate construction of images. Such a mythic sense of
time and place echoes the mythic ouroboros concept which subverts
 chronological time into suspension.¹⁴

In parerga, the locality of the specific time and place of the artwork is
relevant, but it is also suspended via the associations which are
conjured up by the imagery. The notion of synchronic or suspended
time in parerga could further be illuminated by quoting Derrida's idea of
"blindness": we cannot "see" beyond past or future time. All we have
are memory and visions (Kelly 1991: 102-104), so that chronological time
is deferred. Parerga are thus continually subject to alteration and only
have validity for a specific time and place.

The "groping gesture" of the blind person is metaphoric of the poetic
posture of the artist, edging towards the art object-in-becoming. The
artist cannot precisely predict or plan the initial impact or outcome of
the artwork. The parergon is created, incited by faint ideas and partial
notions of vision (also of the myth) and accompanied by memories
(Kelly 1991: 103) - thus fragments. Kiefer possesses only partial
knowledge of the total history of the region of Buchen and of the war
years in Germany, since he was born in 1945. Even if he did experience
the war in person, it would still have been relative experience.

¹³ Eliade (1954: 35) decodes this transcendental sense of time, that is, chronological
history or "profane" time abandoned for mythic time, as a moment in time "filled" by
meaning. Any meaningful act or moment in time suspends duration and abolishes
chronological time to participate freely in mythic time, a deconstructionist time that
transcends barriers.

¹⁴ Ouroboros is encountered in many symbolic forms, as, for instance, the foetus, the
egg, the snake biting itself in the tail. This concept receives special attention in
Chapter 4.
The notion of suspended authority in the *parergon*, also suspends the notion of originality. In such a deconstructionist mindset, all claims to authority are negated, since both artist and viewer establish the meaning of the artwork. The *parerga* are formed by both artist and viewer, but both possess blind vision and partial knowledge. This reduces "greatness" or "ingenuity" of the artwork to a single poetic statement amongst many others. If chronological time is suspended, hierarchy is also deferred. Pluralism in opinion then becomes an accepted given in the interpretation (or *parergonality*) of artworks.

1.1.7 plurality

At this stage of the investigation it would seem that in the *parergon* an essential pluralism is predicated which eliminates supremacy. The point of view can never be authoritative, since pluralist opinion nullifies single, absolute and conclusive interpretation. Pluralism is a vital constituent of the deconstructionist consciousness, indicating a simultaneous acceptance of different styles and interpretations.\(^{15}\)

Pluralism may be decoded as a plurality of being, a view expounded in Heidegger's postulation of an ontological difference in being.\(^{16}\) The notion of difference is tied to locality and identity. Difference is identity, according to Heidegger, although the idea of difference has no place or determination (Heidegger 1973: xii). The emphasis on difference aligns with the concept of subjectivism, rooted in Kant's aesthetics; his viewer is a "synthesiser who unifies the plurality of impressions, whether he

---

15 Sociologically pluralism denotes several autonomous but interdependent groups, and philosophically the metaphysical doctrine that reality consists of, that is, independent entities rather than one unchanging whole (C.P.D. 1988, (s.v.) "pluralism"). The notion of pluralism has its roots in nineteenth and early twentieth century aesthetics, Although still based on universals, the emanating idea from the period is the fact that all interpretation should depart from the "thing itself", the physical artwork, already leaving room for subjective interpretation. Kant confirms this phenomenological stance in his theory of *Anschauungen*, that is, sensory immediate impressions (Stöig 1972: 20). The later Heideggerian thesis (during the fifties) maintains that the interpreter/artist's situation, the occupied horizon, has its own past and future. Yet, Gadamer (during the sixties) foresees a fusion of horizons (Howard 1982: 151), for instance, when great art is experienced. The attainment of understanding then becomes an "event" during which frontiers and boundaries vanish.

16 A concept extended in the theories of Derrida, especially in *Of Grammatology* (1977) and *Writing and Difference* (1978). Ontology is a philosophical term which attempts to describe the grounds or the nature of being; it can also indicate the proposed theories for phenomenological entities.
does this at the moment of creating a work ... or at the moment of its viewing ... ." (Howard 1982: 135).17

According to Fekete (1988: 58), a theory of value or evaluation must be a theory which acknowledges pluralism and subjectivism, and:

... that admits the aesthetic irreducibility of the internal world. ... We create or discover the aesthetic object in order to invite ourselves to explore transferences consciously, even deliberately and ritualistically ... and we thereby realise our own implausibility, arrogance, violence, vision, passion, and love.

Such plural transferences take place in response to the aesthetically experienced artwork.

1.1.8 flux

In the pluralistic interpretation of Ausbrennen, a position of uncertainty is arrived at in which a definite or final context for Ausbrennen seems impossible. The remarks which may be made about the work have no authoritative value. A flux of interpretations becomes relevant in response to the “immovable” or “inperturbable” information belonging to the artwork.

The parerga of interpretations seem to be induced by the open-ended imagery which is a reflection of the artist’s complex sensibility. The fact that it is impossible to describe the conceptual underpinning of Kiefer’s Ausbrennen as either political or expressionistic or romantic, renders absolute verdicts obsolete. The interpretation cannot be sustained by a stance of “either/or”, thus leading to diverse and contradicting angles. A flux of “both/and” interpretations become valid because of the ambiguous nature of imagery and materials.18

17 In contemporary hermeneutics, metaphoric associations are often imbued with gender characteristics, such as phallic or female. Such notions have fundamental implications for the parergon, since the “reading” or interpretation of a work might result in a difference in parergon based on gender difference. Culler (1983: 43) describes the grounds on which feminists have deconstructed such phallocentric assumptions, for instance, governing literary works. Feminist criticism questions literary and political suppositions of male-oriented interpretations of texts and offers alternative insight in and experience of such texts. As such, a recognition developed of a difference between female and male readers, which has led to an awareness that polysemy in meaning is inevitable.

18 Derrida’s deconstructionist oeuvre of critical readings of key Western thinkers reveals a subversion of Western logocentric practice of a binary opposition of “either/or” into a deconstructionist logic of “both/and” and “neither/nor” (Kearney 1987: 125). For the
The interpretation of \textit{Ausbrennen} thus leads to a stance of arbitrariness, since when diverse interpretations are simultaneously possible, it calls for an arbitrary choice.\textsuperscript{19} The notion of arbitrariness echoes that of play. In the attempt of deconstruction to overturn categorical assumptions and categorisations, a fundamental undecidability is raised in the deconstructivistic aesthetic by opening up boundaries and creating flow or flux. Gadamer decodes the inviolable flux of being in terms of \textit{Spiel} (play), that is, a social praxis of self-presentation in which, as in the festive act/play, there is a constant dynamic state of becoming, “a movement in and out of presence” (Schweiker 1990: 180).\textsuperscript{20} In this hermeneutic undecidability, the deconstructivistic aesthetic echoes Ricoeur’s viewpoint:

\ldots there is no pure ‘given’ - ... the language of ‘givenness’ or even ‘pregivenness’ is heuristic. It is a means of creating a different perspective from which to view things, a deliberate forcing of issues such that current sediments are stirred up in order to discover other possibilities. [Ricoeur 1974: xix, editor’s introduction]

In the flux of the hermeneutic circle or spiral, another interpretation becomes possible the moment the former interpretation is on the verge of closing. As such, the hermeneutic circle is carried out in the binary emergence of event (or artwork) and meaning, or “beginning” and “end”.\textsuperscript{21} Figuratively speaking, the “beginning” of the artwork may be seen as the intention of the artist; the stance of diffusing beginning and end, as a metaphor for the intention of the artist merging with the purpose of this discourse, both “either/or” and “both/and” will be used.

\textsuperscript{19} According to the pragmatic viewpoint of Givón (1989: 95-96), the arbitrariness concept, as emanating in the nonfinality of deconstructionist arguments, seems to be tied to several factors: structure, function, cognition, language and as a consequence of the “idealized data base”. For the purpose of this discourse, it is relevant that arbitrariness is seen as an implicit consequence of deconstructionist conceptions.

\textsuperscript{20} Such a state recalls Greek theatre of fate and cruelty in which the audience was part of the “play”, participating to such an extent that their response sometimes influenced the outcome of the play. In a Dionysian culture of decadence, the notion of play is central as an arbitrary reason for foulplay.

\textsuperscript{21} Such a view echoes the myth of ouroboros. Derrida maintains that the answer to any question arrests an “abyss” which already presupposes that there is no decidable answer, that is, the answer is dragged down into the abyss in advance. The abyss in the Derridaian sense is an infinite space filled with indefinite multiplication (Of Grammatology 1976: 189).
interpretation of the viewer. Whether the intentions of the artist correlate with the interpretation of the viewer, cannot be predicted in advance. Nevertheless, the "end" of interpretation can come near to the "beginning" of intention. This "beginning" of interpretation concerns the role of the artist.

1.1.9 ideology

It has been indicated that an underlying idealism can be detected in the work of Kiefer. Such idealism or ideology seems to be often present in forms of human activity, since humans are beings who make choices and choices are premised by viewpoints. Even in a deconstructionist aesthetic, which appears to be non-idealistic since it postulates a radical pluralism, such idealism is implied.

Deconstruction's innovation lies in its radically sceptic attitude to all forms of absolutism, yet, as such, it becomes another form of idealism. Idealism denotes measuring against a single, ultimate entity. The *parergon*, in the light of deconstruction, is not measurable as an "ideal" interpretation or an ultimate truth. The *parergon* is nothing more than an approximation of what an artwork could mean. Yet, in Kiefer's *Ausbrennen*, the arbitrary interpretation is measured against the existing "coffin" of presentation and unchallengeable information, so that the desire to uncover the concealed "inner" meaning of the work remains. It seems that a deconstructionist ideology is more accurately described by the word "desire" (a Romantic concept).

In the aesthetic deconstructivism, previous history is not negated but extended, since Derrida, for instance, instead of measuring his text against the traditional standard, wants to measure it against itself (Evans 1991: xv). Yet,

---

22 Idealism, in its philosophic usage, is distinct from its popular usage. Most commonly, in philosophical context, it has stood for a theory "to which physical objects can have no existence apart from a mind which is conscious of them" (Urmson 1960: 134). In its narrower sense, Idealism originated in the eighteenth century with the postulates of Berkeley and gained ground with Kant. Other Idealists were Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Lotze (Urmson 1960: 136). Their Idealism is still based on rational premises, even Hegel's postulate of synthesis which is a presupposition of categorisation (Mure 1970: 82). Since deconstruction denies permanent or fixed categorisations in arguments or interpretations, the viewpoint of deconstruction as a type of idealism is debatable. If there is nothing to measure the stance against, idealism is impossible. Yet, it can be demonstrated that deconstruction is another form of idealism, based on the fact that it is post-structuralist in essence, thus measured against structuralism.
Derrida has always been emphatic in his claim that deconstruction is not a simple rejection of traditional scholarship and rigor: critical, deconstructive reading [artmaking] has to pass through traditional rigor even if the ultimate effect is to show that such rigor is never as absolute and well founded as it claims to be:

Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. [Evans 1991: xv, quoting from Of Grammatology 1976: 158, my emphasis]

The idealism found in the notion of the *parergon* is thus not arbitrariness without any direction at all, but the demonstration of the abrogation of authoritativeness. The latter is encountered as the familiar yearning (or idealism) in modern art to reduce the "authorial voice", although it is also a cyclical purge that artists undergo now and then for various purposes (Ashton 1988: 32). The reduction of the authorial voice is tied to the extension of the self as a sociological being, that is, into plurality. The artwork is then not a reflection of the viewpoint of the artist as the egocentric self, but of the self as part of a culture and a world.

Within a minimalist aesthetic in which there is little visual material with which cognition can come to grips, as found in a conceptual work such as Kiefer's *Ausbrennen*, "there will be a tendency to isolate evaluation from more cognitive approaches to art" (Wollheim 1980: 229). Evaluation then grounds strongly in the spirituality extracted from the work-as-totality and from the few semiotic signs that could be decoded from the iconography. If locality and specificity are absent in such works, the proper functioning or constituting of the *parergon* will be deterred and the "authorial meaning" will be lost in the indistinct imagery. By attempting to create anonymity, the work is then further obscured, still falling in the Modernist trap of self-evidency and elitism. Yet, in *Ausbrennen*, Kiefer creates an effective corpus of signs to avoid rampant theorising. As indicated, the title (imbued with local and specific references) is of vital importance to bridge the gap of understanding between artwork and viewer and to direct the *parergonal*ity of the work. The specificity of the local event does not deter the ideal of the extension of the real into myth and symbol. As Ricoeur (1974: 65) indicates:

---

23 In the language of literary criticism, the "authorial voice" is an expression used in reference to absolutism, authoritativeness and fixed parameters, also to the writer's/artist's/critic's power.
... the very possibility of divergent and rival hermeneutics - ... is re­
related to a fundamental condition which ... consists in the following: 
that symbolics is the means of expressing an extralinguistic reality. ... 
Hermeneutics is ruled by the open state of the universe of signs. [my 
emphasish]

1.1.10 a dialectic

It has been debated that, in the suspension of hierarchy, universalism 
and chronology, a dialogue takes place between the real and the 
metaphoric. The artwork reflects a fragment of the real as well as the 
conceptual process continuing in the mind of the artist in response to 
the real. The parergon thus discloses similar attributes, being constituted 
by fragments of interpretation. The arbitrariness and incompleteness of 
the frame of interpretation invites the viewer to participate in “a game 
of completion” (Rosand 1981: 29).

By way of semiotic opposition and dialectic intertextuality, meaning is 
arbitrarily evolved as the content or meaning of the imagery converges 
in deconstructed context, that is, in the parergon. By creating open-ended 
imagery in Ausbrennen, the parergonality of the painting is freely 
constituted by deconstructing traditional modes of presentation in the 
obscure imagery. Kiefer did not reduce the potential meaning, however, 
but has unleashed a creative potential parergon in the open-ended form. 
The mode of presentation creates a complex contextual positioning for 
the work which renders its meaningfulness more powerful. Instead of 
narrow definitions, in the deconstructionist parergon different entities 
enter into meaningful relationships.

In a logic of “both/and”, the next section will demonstrate the 
revisionist consequences of the deconstructionist viewpoint for 
historical contentions and other split conventions. It will present itself as 
another “game of completion”.

1.2 REVISING THE POINT OF VIEW

In the previous section, a “frame” for a deconstructionist aesthetic has 
been traced in a hypothetic description of the parergon as interpretation. 
It has been pointed out that the notions of doubt and uncertainty are 
prominent in the construction of parerga. Doubt often instigates a 
process of purification in which traditional conventions are questioned 
and re-evaluated. As such, different parerga are constantly constituted 

24 In revisionistic mode, the beginnings of deconstruction in the twentieth century may be 
detected in Modernism in the theories of the New Critics (or even earlier than that in
around artworks. In deconstructionist mode, Sandler (1980: 345) argues that

... depending on the criteria for what is new in art and difficult to accept, some historians prefer to treat any moment as a cross-section, a continuum from more to less, light to dark, rather than as a sharp break between the 'good,' forward-looking vanguard and the 'bad,' backward-looking academy. This alternate approach, which has even entailed the rehabilitation of 'academic' art, has been called revisionism.

Revisionism is not a new concept - the thinkers of the Renaissance, for instance, were active revisionists in terms of their revisionism of Greek thinking. Only the context and aims of the type of revisionism differ. In revisionism as deconstruction, however, the term is of special importance as deconstruction aims for an active praxis of unbounding as a measure of purification. In the search for meaning in revisionism, thus also in the construction of *parerga*, a process of "unveiling" takes place, like the removing of the petals of a rosebud. According to the theories of Heidegger and Nietzsche), instead of seeing the generation of Derrida as the ultimate deconstructionists (New Criticism has been prefaced in the Introduction). In his essay, *The Dehumanisation of art*, Ortega points out the "arbitrary" character of Modernist art: "A traditional painter painting a portrait claims to have got hold of the real person when, in truth and at best, he has set down on the canvas a schematic selection, arbitrarily decided on by his own mind, from the innumerable traits that make a living person" (Ortega 1968: 38). The viewpoint of Ortega reflects uncertainty. Deconstructionist thought patterns were evident in the Modernist movement, in which "both world and self came to exist experimentally, that is, as hypotheses for which there was no final proof" (Kuspit, 1991: 100). To be avant-garde in Modernist terms, meant a profound doubt of traditional absolutes - a deconstructionist attitude, which necessitated liberal and tolerant political systems to accommodate such doubts. Artists felt free "to take the risk of being modern" (Kuspit 1991: 100) and to challenge history and traditions in artmaking. Post-Modern artmaking seems to have reversed the process of purification into an aesthetic of inclusiveness.

25 The sceptic attitude of deconstruction questions purist notions and sees it as an excuse for conceptual latitude. It thus becomes a strategy of "purification", an ambiguous purification of purism. Deconstruction, as philosophical strategy, departs from the viewpoint that systems (that is, closed or absolute systems) run into "blind-spots of paradox" - *aporia* in Derrida's Aristotelian terminology (Norris 1983: 19), which prevent it from having effectual meaning. The deconstructionist strategy is set on cultivating doubt and transforming hierarchies in thinking, undermining the legitimacy of categorical thinking. The notion of doubt, revolt and rebellion is also a central one in Romanticism. Vaughan (1978: 22) refers in this regard to the political revolutions and ideals of democracy which dominated the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. The sense of the loss of democratic rights "had a very real meaning when applied to the memory of the Utopian dreams of the previous century" (Vaughan 1978: 22).
revisionists, closed logocentric systems function on the premises of divisions and systems, which is a kind of "purification" process, an intentional act of analysis.\textsuperscript{26} According to Derrida, such argumentation "destroy(s) the instability of the relations of whole to part" (Derrida 1987: 27).\textsuperscript{27} In raising doubts about analytic and logocentric systems, contemporary scholars are of the opinion that truth should be discovered and approximated by treating any moment or artwork as a synthesis, that is, as the manifestation of a cross-section of intentions, influences and meanings.

In the previous section, it has been demonstrated that it is impossible to assess 	extit{Ausbrennen} in simplistic manner. By referring to Buchen in both its real history and imaginary destruction, Kiefer is articulating a cross-section viewpoint, open to various interpretations and responses. He has created 	extit{parerga} by referring to local and mythic issues, open to immediate revision. The 	extit{parerga} of interpretation are constituted in the imagination of the viewer, existing in "invisibility" and mirroring the imaginary, non-historical portrayal of the cauterisation of Buchen. The imagery has been instigated by a doubt concerning the German government's installations in the region as well as the traumatic past political events. It is thus untenable to interpret the work puristically; a revisionist attitude is necessary.

Ortega's and Sandler's deconstructionist viewpoints are examples of challenges to conventional conceptions which advocate purist structures and single answers. The open-ended deconstructionist and revisionist viewpoints deconstruct and negate traditional absolutes and boundaries.\textsuperscript{28} Split contentions, for instance, regarding arthistorical

\textsuperscript{26} Derrida (1976: 3) explains "logocentrism" as "the metaphysics of phonetic writing (for example the alphabet) which was fundamentally - for enigmatic yet essential reasons that are inaccessible to a simple historical relativism - nothing but the most original and powerful ethnocentrism, in the process of imposing itself upon the world, controlling in one and the same order. Logocentrism concerns 1. the concept of writing ... 2. the history of (the only) metaphysics ... 3. the concept of science ... ."

\textsuperscript{27} Deconstructionists aim for a sublime of arbitrariness by critically deconstructing critical assumptions. However, to abrogate critical distinctions or categories presupposes the existence of such structures. As such, a fundamental ambiguity resides at the root of deconstructionist argumentation. Norris (1983: 171) describes the paradox of deconstruction as "theory ... caught out by the play of rhetorical signification which continues to circulate beyond its control or conceptual grasp".

\textsuperscript{28} The deconstructivistic aesthetic also addresses assumptions that philosophy or critical evaluation, supposedly a "rational" enterprise, is something quite apart from poetry, the literary and fine arts, the latter arts viewed as "irrational seizures" (Norris 1983: 1).
"styles", are being debated at present: in this regard, Lippard (1973: 7) notes that traditionally there has been a kind of "split" between styles and movements, such as "the old classical-romantic thing, but that in the last couple of years those terms have become pretty irrelevant, or confused". The notion of "style", Barthes describes as "a form with no clear destination, the product of a thrust, not an intention, and as it were, a vertical and lonely dimension of thought" (Sontag 1982: 32). Its frame of reference is not historical, it is the artist/writer's "thing", "glory", "prison" and "solitude" (Sontag 1982: 32). In demonstration of the deconstruction of these types of "split" contentions in stylistm, Higgins (1978: 95) could be quoted:

T. S. Eliot in the 1920s and as a young man could attack the romantic poets epitomised by Shelley in the name of classic eternity. But he himself, in The Cocktail Party, must draw on Shelley's 'Ode to a Skylark' to maintain his classic identity in his late work. Young Stravinsky seems antithetical to Schoenberg's expressionism and the tone row method - yet old Stravinsky finds it necessary and relevant as a working method and perhaps a part of his own system. The neo-classic tone of the nineteen twenties appears to us half a century later to have a romantic element embedded in it. 29

In further demonstration of the revisionist approach, Kiefer's aesthetic in Ausbrennen may be compared to that of Franz Marc, a German Modernist Expressionist. 30 It has been indicated earlier that the *parerga*

Accordingly, the conceptual activity of the artist is often alienated from his/her "poetic" sensibility (and also from the praxis of artmaking), as if such entities do not function in absolute inviolable togetherness. Such conceptions are found in logocentric structures which prevailed until New Criticism, but are often still dominating discourse. In this regard, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (born in 1712, thus often seen as a "pre-Romantic") provides an example, although he, in turn, attempted to deconstruct the existing structures of society and modes of thinking. Rousseau, using a term which has become fashionable, namely "discourse", in his critical attacks, postulated four relevant factors in aesthetics: sensory experience, pre-rational instincts, the capacity for imitation and the instinct of communication (Broome 1963: 184-5). Deconstructing Rousseau, it may be argued that these distinctions have become suspect in literary and art criticism, as well as other distinctions such as the elevation of Classical art as "simple" and "sublime" (Broome 1963: 186) while degenerate contemporary art forms only serve as artifice (Broome 1963: 187).

29 Equally, the genius of Picasso would encompass both classical and romantic inclinations: his Cubistic works are products of stronger intellectual activity while other works show him being heir to Goya's strong Spanish romantic spirit (especially his subject matter and sense of drama).

30 Sandler (1980: 345), for instance, expresses such doubt or revisionism by distinguishing between the exclusive and inclusive viewpoints of both Modernism and Post-Modernism. The latter approach is a rehabilitation of traditional or "academic" viewpoints, which
of *Ausbrennen* could be described as either Expressionistic, Minimalistic, Romantic, political or Conceptual in nature. Marc’s Expressionism in *Tiger* of 1913 (Ill. 4), is coiled around the artist’s “central core of feeling”, turning “towards outer reality with a sense of trepidation” (Cardinal 1984: 35). Sentimentalising the fate of the mortal animal, Marc expresses a call for the emancipation of spiritually bound man/woman, propagating a utopia in primitive nature. The utopian vision concerns both being and aesthetics. The Expressionism in *Tiger* cultivates the ideal of unleashing uninhibited emotionality, so that subjective impulses wilfully reject objective rules. The animal is idealised as a free “being” in nature as a reflection of a utopian dream existence.

The painting is Romantic in its insistence on the narrative and the drama: the tragedy of *Tiger* is located in the pathetic expression in the animal’s eyes, becoming the focal area around which the animal is coiled. Kiefer’s *Ausbrennen* signifies the same sentiment concerning the environment and the work is also invested with drama and tragedy (via the resurrection of the past). Both works show a sentimental attempt to reconcile man and cosmos.

According to Levine, the glowing presence of the colour in Marc’s works gives it the “appearance of some type of cosmic or supernatural flame” (Levine 1979: 80). The symbolic use of colour, as well as the abstracted form, signify a reduction of “world to mind” in which naturalistic form has been deconstructed. Such conceptualism is seen in

diffuses the boundaries between the historical periods and sees Post-Modernism as an extension of Modernism rather than a radical break with Modernism. Such revisionism is concerned with similarities which cultivate “sameness” and a flux rather than traditional separatist attitudes which emphasise differences. In such a mode of discourse, previous *parerga* are continually inscribed and overscribed.

31 Franz Marc, *Tiger* (1912). Oil on canvas. 111 x 111,5 cm. Städtische Galerie im Lehnbachhaus, Munchen.

32 Expressionism, as one of the major Modernist movements, attempted to operate outside history and “lay hold of essences and eternal certainties” (Cardinal 1984: 86). This autonomous attitude was reflected in many of the other Modernist movements. Greenberg is usually credited for defining Modernist art as autonomous: he views art after Modernism as “an end in itself”, and the aesthetic “an autonomous value ... that ... doesn’t have to celebrate or glorify anybody or anything ... “ (Greenberg 1960: 65). Modernism “signals the marginalisation of all styles, past and present ... and all assertions of centrality are immediately stomped on as authoritarian hyperbole” (Kuspit 1991: 100).
Kiefer's *Ausbrennen* also in his radical deconstruction of naturalistic form. His deconstructionist aesthetic points to a revolt against history and tradition in presentation, an aesthetic which is in direct opposition to pre-twentieth century attitudes in which the merging of aesthetic rules into a part of the infallible machinery of universal order was propelled indirectly by the growth of seventeenth and early eighteenth century rationalistic philosophy, and also by a "direct turning to philosophy by criticism in order to justify aesthetic rules upon the widest possible grounds" (Bate 1946: 29).

In revisionist mode, it is possible to view the Expressionism in Kiefer's Post-Modern *Ausbrennen* as simply an extension of Modernist conceptions, instead of the common belief that "the age of modernist art is over and that a new set of theories is needed to describe art today" (Halley 1981: 112). In this regard, Givón (1989: 111) refers to the correlation in iconic coding as the proximity principle: "The closer two mental entities are to each other semantically or functionally, the more likely they are to be placed together, in linear proximity, in the linguistic code". Both Expressionism and deconstruction seem to advocate autonomy of expression. Both *Ausbrennen* and *Tiger* are strongly conceptual and lend themselves to readings of apocalyptic sentiment, themes of cataclysm, motions of challenging the viewer into participation, anxiety and the myth of collective renewal. In both works there is a regenerative strain concerned with physical and spiritual realities. The conceptual proximity of the two artworks evident in the linguistic fusion, signals conceptual fusion. The imagery signifies clues that the onlooker should construe the two manifestations of the same ideas as a single event (Givón 1989: 112). The correspondence between the Expressionist and Romantic sentiments in the two works, is echoed in Cardinal's view of Expressionism:

> Passionate and urgent, the creative impulse in Expressionist art springs from a commitment to the primacy of individual truth, to subjectify as verifier of what is most real. This commitment is a central tenet of a current of philosophical and psychological thought which, springing from German Romanticism and relayed by such individualist thinkers as Stirner and Nietzsche, was emphatically revived in the Expressionist period. [Cardinal 1984: 35, my emphasis]

In a pragmatic viewpoint then, the clear-cut divisions between Romanticism and Expressionism, Modernism and Post-Modernism, become suspect and diffused; there seem to be more overlaps than differences. The *parergon* seem to reveal an ambiguous and holistic nature. Artmaking must rather be seen as an inviolate flux, mirroring the state of being, in which disputes on the separation of human faculties are resolved, such as the rational and intuitive, or *a priori* and *a posteriori* thought. Artists derive ideas on both the levels of the *a priori* and *a posteriori*: such narrow distinction is suspect. The *parergon* also functions on both the *a priori* and *a posteriori* levels. Art medium is
the vehicle for expression, just as expression is interchangeable with conceptual intention.

Such suspect distinctions are also reflected in the traditional boundary between so-called "poetic" language (supposedly irrational) and everyday language (that seems to have sense and logic as guiding principles). Ashton (1988: 33) cites the nineteenth century French poet, Mallarmé in this regard:

There are two languages: the practical language of the everyday and the poetic ... the sole duty of the poet is the Orphic explanation of the Earth. The arch-poetic example is Orpheus, who in his very destiny provides the perfect story of deconstruction. After he was torn to pieces by the furies who wished to silence his poet's song, Orpheus' head floated down the river, still chainting.

This allegory is symbolic of the elusive character of the power of poetic language: even after critics have torn the artwork to pieces, it still goes on signifying, unwary and independent. Not only is it the duty of the artist/poet to have an Orphic attitude, the viewer and interpreter should also assess the artwork in terms of a synchronic approach. The different pieces of Orpheus still make one Orpheus, like the pieces of a puzzle. The *parergon* is thus both poetic and rational. It is impossible to clearly distinguish between the manifestations of rational and intuitive activity.

In this chapter, the point of view, concerning both artist and viewer, has been addressed in the investigation of the nature of the *parergon*. It has been demonstrated that it is impossible to arrive at final dictum since the figurativeness of the symbolic and metaphoric image disallows

---

33 According to Urmson (1960: 22), these terms were already introduced in the late scholastic period to translate two technical phrases in Aristotle's theory of knowledge. The terms have undergone several marginal changes in meaning, but generally *a priori* now indicates arguments, propositions and ideas, insofar as they are independent of experience. *A posteriori* is usually contrasted with *a priori* to denote "empirical", that is, depending on experience. Of importance for this dissertation is the fact that empiricist philosophers have sometimes taken the stance that all ideas are derived from experience (Urmson 1960: 23).

34 It is Kiefer's view that the consequences that emanate from an artwork after the artist has finished it, paradoxically do not concern the artist in the end: "Das Lamento ist überwunden" (The lament has been overcome) (Burckhardt 1985: 114, my transl.).

35 Previous Romantics and Idealists have adamantly argued for the intuitive and emotive forms of thinking, although, ambiguously, it remained an intellectualising process. In nineteenth century Romanticism, irrationality and mystical thought combined with the idealistic belief in the power of the unconscious and the supernatural, the confidence in feeling, vision and premonition (Geismeier in Glaesemer J. (s.a.): 46).
singular interpretation. Such pluralism in opinion is also relevant in a broader sense, that is, in viewpoints concerning styles, conventions and historical periods. Artistorical debates can continue for an indeterminate period of time, as I have demonstrated in my debatable merging of the notions of Expressionism and Romanticism. Such an interpretation which merges aspects (or fragments) of Expressionism with Romanticism, jars the reader into rethinking and re-evaluating the traditional boundaries between Romanticism and Expressionism. The act of deconstruction is thus meaningful and not merely arbitrary: it could be argued further that historical conventions should in fact constantly be subjected to scepticism, revisionism and doubt in order to keep the vitality of discourse on artworks going.

The possibility of revisionism has consequences for the artist concerning the creation of the potential meaning "coffins" in artworks. The artist has the task to create images which are strong enough to shoulder any revisionism. The artwork should be able to withstand the onslaught of deconstruction by upholding its paradigmatic "coffin". Such a viewpoint is reflected in the words of Ortega:

In the museum we find the lacquered corpse of an evolution. Here is the flux of that pictorial anxiety which has budded forth from man century after century. To conserve this evolution, it has to be undone, broken up, converted into fragments again and congealed in a refrigerator. Each picture is a crystal with unmistakable and rigid edges, separated from the others, a hermetic island. And, nonetheless, it is the corpse we could easily revive. We would only need to arrange the pictures in a certain order and then move the eye - or the mind's eye - quickly from the one to the other. [Ortega 1968: 107]

Deconstruction and revisionism thus shift the focus of attention to the powerfulness of images, to their strength in upholding deconstructive interpretation via convincing metaphoric meaning. It also brings to the fore the matters surrounding knowledge about associations and the ontological grounds for contentions about connotation and inference. In order to attain a clearer understanding of these issues, the notion of association will be specifically addressed in the next chapter, although the term has already entered the discussion several times.
A culture... that knew only the kangaroo until it was confronted by a monkey would produce an understanding of that difference different from that of a culture, which, knowing the baboon, chimpanzee and monkey, encountered the kangaroo. [David Morse 1981: 287]

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that the parergon, existing in unseen capacity, is perpetually subject to alteration. It was recognised that it is impossible to have fixed or closed interpretations, since the point of view differs from viewer to viewer.

In this chapter, the relationship between the point of view, association and knowledge will be investigated. Since the questioning of association in this chapter is overridingly based on my own paintings, stronger emphasis is placed on the position of the artist concerning the notion of parergon.

The term "association" is an uncomfortable philosophical concept, since it describes the mental ideas of the perceived reality. These ideas have undergone radical changes in deconstruction, invalidating any authoritarian position, that is, of being universally valid. For the
purpose of this discourse, investigating the *parergon* around the artwork, it is necessary to re-assess the notion of association in a context of deconstruction. The old philosophical question of how we acquire knowledge or ideas will be posed again, comprehended by the term "association".

The first part of this chapter looks at the nature of the selection process which precedes association in the rendering of an image. The second part addresses mythic association and the viewpoints of deconstructionists in this regard. Myth is of pivotal importance in association and will therefore receive special attention. In the last part of this chapter, the consequences of deconstructionist association for paradigmatic meaning will receive attention.

2.1 THE ASSOCIATIVE IMAGE

In the previous chapter, the notions of connotation and inference were mentioned in relation to the decoding and interpreting of images. These terms are related to the concept of association. I prefer to use the term, "association", in this chapter, since semantically it conveys the concept of mental imaging more adequately than "connotation" or "inference".

Philosophically, association concerns "unseen" knowledge, existing in obscurity in the mind. The use of the term "association" has undergone several marginal changes in history. The term is, moreover, employed differently in the various disciplines. Prior to the twentieth century, association, being restricted to the mental and cognitive faculties, was already the source of many disputes since it was evaluated and measured against scientific verification. Since the middle of the eighteenth century the concept of the association of ideas has increasingly been seen as the most basic, the most fecund, and the most pervasive explanatory principle in the human mind (D.H.I. 1973-1974, s.v. "association"), since it concerns "unseen", thus unverifiable knowledge. Apart from its obvious position in empiricist epistemology and in psychological theories of learning, the association of ideas has played a fundamental role in the ideas of progress, in utilitarian, legislative, economic and moral theory, in theories of organic evolution, in functionalist social theory, and in theories of the functions of the nervous system and in psychoanalysis (Wiener 1973-1974: 111).

1 René Descartes (1596-1650), for instance, defined the concept of mind negatively as all that does not pertain to the body, resulting in restricting language for describing mind to analogy. Descartes divided mind and matter, the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, the immaterial and the material. The impact of Cartesian mind-body dualism separated man's mind from his body and from the world of objects outside the mind. Such narrow separation is suspect.
The idea of "unseen knowledge" corresponds with Derrida's *parergon*, also circumscribed by the term "unseen". The greater part of the *parergon*ality of the artwork is generated by the interpretation of the metaphoric image, in turn dependent upon association. In this chapter the ironic nature of association in deconstruction will be demonstrated.

2.1.1 association, metaphor and *parergon*

The notion of association is vital to the constitution of the *parergon*, assigning "ornaments" or "decorations" to the artwork:

... that is that which does not belong to the whole representation of the object as its integral part but only as an external addition ... [Naomi Schor quoting from (and translating) *The Truth in Painting*, 1981: 244]

In association, the metaphor is of crucial significance. Metaphor's figurative character implies a complexity in association, especially when applied to artmaking. Metaphor penetrates to the very depths of meaning, being a vehicle for the transference of meaning. According to Ricoeur, the metaphor is more than transference: it is "a commerce between thoughts, that is, a transaction between contexts" (Ricoeur 1977: 80). In essence, the metaphor, being a figure-trope, freely presents "one idea under the image of another" (Ricoeur 1977: 62). The metaphor concerns semantic innovations which Ricoeur (1977: 117) decodes as the principle of association. Within association, the principle of relativism is prominent, that is, creating resemblance relationships.

There is a semantic difference between "reference" and "association": "reference" has a rational connotation, of directing the attention to something specific. Reference indicates a distinction between the concrete and the ideal use of reference. In artmaking, ideal references indicate either real or conceptual entities (Walhout 1985: 50), while the concrete reference will be operative in titles, words or collage. Some theoreticians have also added a fourth component, namely that of self-reference (Walhout 1985: 50): in this instance images/words/texts have meaning because their referential power is contained within them(selves), as encountered in the use of found objects or materials (also collage as found material).²

In association, the notion of mimesis as a kind of resemblance is also called into question.³ Especially in deconstruction, the notion of mimesis

---

² This aspect receives more attention in Chapter 3 in the discussion on collage as a constructed medium.

³ "Mimesis" (imitation), a post-Homeric word, is a key critical concept in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle (Walhout 1985: 50). Most probably the word "mimesis" originated in
is of special importance, since deconstruction questions and deconstructs assumptions regarding the metaphysical reality. Mimesis embraces relationships of language to reality; texts to the world; inner expressions of reality related to outer reality; the imitation of nature, and so forth. The term addresses conceptions of a constituted reality which seem to create multiple hermeneutical problems, since the notion of mimesis, a relative concept to association and reference, has proved to be a rather elusive and pervasive one in the history of criticism. Modern discourses prefer to use the term "reference" instead.

Contemporary scholarship and critics adamantly argue for deigesis rather than mimesis, replacing imitation and direct representation with narration and retelling (Brink 1987: 130). Derrida, for instance, disallows any conception of mimesis, since, according to him, no statements can be taken as absolutely true, yet neither as false (Walhout 1985: 39). Pragmatically, associative knowledge in deconstruction connotes multitudinal associations and a large, ever-present coherent context into which new additions are incorporated. As such, association reveals a hybrid nature, ever ready to assimilate new information, based on "old", stored information (Givon 1989: 169). This "stored" information is not seen as authoritative but as supplementary, just as the present is seen as a supplement to the past.

2.1.2 post-cognitive and cognitive association

In the making of paintings, there is a rational, conscious selection of images, but sometimes the imagery "happens" post-cognitively. In assessing my own artmaking process as well as scrutinising other Post-Modern and New Romantic artists’ work, I have devised three terms which may describe the vital constituents of association (and thus thé parergon in part) in the deconstructionist aesthetic. These are: borrowing\(^4\), deviation\(^5\) and appropriation\(^6\).

---

the rituals and mysteries of the Dionysian cult in Greek times, that is in dancing, music and singing (Wiener 1973-1974: 226). In the fifth century the word "imitation" moved from its context of cult into philosophy and started to mean "reproducing the external world" (Wiener 1973-1974: 226). According to the philosophical postulation of Plato, the observed reality is an imitation of an ideal world, or a derivation of the eidos which is one general form for all things (De Vleeschauer (s.a.): 128). Ideas are not objects to be observed, but stay in the spirit of God; the mode of existence of things is thus a reflection (mimesis) of these ideas (De Vleeschauer (s.a.): 130).

---

4 Borrowing, also eclecticism, allows the artist to borrow from any sources to enrich or enforce his images. The random usage of borrowing in certain Post-Modern works has led to critics such as Kuspit describing it as "decadent" (Kuspit 1991: 100).

5 Deviation denotes the concept of an open system in which unusual or personalised
In my work, *Sjamaan* of 1989 (Ill. 5), I have borrowed and appropriated, amongst others, the image of the ladder. To appropriate, borrow, or deviate from sources is premised on the concept of association. In selecting the image of the ladder in *Sjamaan*, I have incorporated a certain order/structure/pattern of associations into the corpus of possible meanings which invite and add to the spirituality and sensual experience of the work.

The metaphoric image of the ladder evokes all kinds of associations: personal, mythical, religious and functional. I have “borrowed” a mixture of these to incorporate into the possible nexus of interpretations of the image of the ladder, in order to allegorise ascension or passage through. The metaphoric ladder may be seen as a functional object found in the observed reality which may or may not be an imitation of an idea existing in “unseen” capacity in many other forms. The choice of image was instigated by the observed real object, which may have become a model for figurative meaning. I have deviated from the functional meaning generally attached to the ladder, a very mundane object, in order to comment on the metaphoric nature of the ladder which can take on many forms in contemporary society. (The well-known social climbing is a modern variation on the ancient one. Even if all roots or beliefs are denied, the desire to ascend still exists, possibly in order to attain power, status or freedom. As such, an added existential meaning could be read into the image.) The mundane object, as part of the perceived reality, has become the model or vehicle via which other associations may merge. The intention in *Sjamaan* was to comment on contemporary society and to demonstrate that underneath all exteriors we are mortal, mythic creatures. I intended to denote a recognition of a certain patterning in human behaviour.

In deconstruction, traditional contexts of images are challenged and sometimes non-logical combinations of images are formed. The pragmatics of appropriation is preceded by a selective process. This eclecticism, which denotes borrowing, is one of the prime areas of dispute in both literary deconstructionist strategies and its aesthetic

associations are introduced.

6 Appropriation denotes “propemness” or “suitability” of deviation and borrowing to the artwork. If appropriation is absent, a certain mannerism develops in which all meaning is lost.

alternatives, since original “firsts” or one archetypal prototype are questioned but not entirely abandoned. Recalling Derrida’s “coffin”, certain similarities in association are observed concerning real objects. In Sjamaan, I have chosen to use the image of the ladder although there are several other associative variants for it, for instance, columns and mountains. I have used the image of the ladder which is both similar and dissimilar to the descriptions found in ancient cosmologies of the desire to communicate with the gods, to ascend to heaven. In these cosmologies, the ladder is usually encountered as a metaphoric connection between heaven and earth. The ladder, primarily a symbol of ascension, is often associated with the rainbow. In Christian art the ladder of virtue is found, on which progression is achieved on virtuous merit (L.D.S. 1990, s.v. “leiter”). The ladder is associated with the tree – the core around which primitive community life was centred. Derrida (1987: 169) interprets the ladder in several ways: he argues that “the double ladder erected, riveted, shackled, never arrives”, being representative of a symbolic act of leading a way. This metaphor reflects the endless adding of parerga to artworks, which do not “arrive” either. He sees it furthermore as metaphoric of the sexual act: “Staircases, ladders, the step on a staircase or a ladder, going up as well as coming down, are symbolic representations of the sexual act” (1987: 169).

The reference to the ladder is a supplementary repetition of ascension/column/tower/mountain. The connotative meanings are appropriated in order to become functional in the signifying process. It does not matter whether there is an archetypal first for my image; the primary function of the ladder image is to allow viewers to make their own associations. The radical deconstructionist will appreciate the ladder in its self-referential capacity; the person who has other beliefs and convictions, might attach different associations to the ladder. The “coffin” of the possible parerga is the symbolic ladder. Association in deconstruction thus becomes ironic and ambiguous since it could incorporate, within a single image, contradictory associations.

In Sjamaan, I have borrowed the desire to build up surfaces thickly from an Expressionist tradition in artmaking. In supplementation to impasto paint application, I have also deviated from traditional paint impasto by using pieces of paper, wrappings and shiny materials to create my own type of “impasto”. The surfaces have been constructed with several layers of material and deconstructed again by overpainting, incising, tearing off and superimposing images onto the underlayers.

8 The reader is referred to the Appendix for further examples of associative forms and shapes of the metaphoric concept of ascension.
The surfaces have been treated decoratively to imitate surface patterning and superficiality. Glossy papers have been used in the underlayers, becoming metaphoric in the imitation of the "glossy" exteriors of some people, which I consider an untruthful form of being, a denial of true being. Any front that is put up, or an image that contradicts the self, creates an ironic sense of being. If shiny blue is toned down with earthy brown, the paint becomes a vehicle of metaphor carrying meaning. A double paradox emerges here: the glossy surfaces are like "cover-ups", yet they are covered again to indicate a denial of that appearance.

The process of deconstruction or excavation of materials can carry on for an indefinite period of time; I have taken the conscious decision to stop at a certain point, since I felt that the painting was "working" - a subjective, debatable point of view. Maybe the present state of the work is unfinished; it could still be reworked. As such, I see any work of mine as still in process. At the moment of its being publicly displayed, the work is merely a reflection of a process of a certain period of time.

The constructed surfaces are parerga in themselves, since they evoke associations. The physical quality and character of the materials are metaphoric and symbolic so that they represent additional sensual realities or parerga. The process of building up and deconstructing surfaces is furthermore allegorical to the constructing and deconstructing of parerga. Paint and other materials have been layered in metaphoric manner, echoing the process of deconstruction which overrides and reconstructs existing structures in order to find other or new meanings.

Such deconstruction is also detected in the appropriation of the idea of shamanism as found in primitive societies. In Sjamaan, the primitivism, mysticism and magic associated with the real shaman have been appropriated. I have appropriated the idea in deconstructionist manner by appropriating the primitive concept to Western culture. I do not have firsthand or "original" experience of primitive shamanism, yet I see shamanism as a process of exorcising or purification which is widely applicable as metaphoric experience. By deviating from the "original" context of the concept and incorporating both the "first" and the appropriation thereof in the single concept, the viewer is thus enabled to interpret the imagery on many levels. There is a "real" archetypal model in the contemporary world culture for my conceptual reference to shamanism in the painting; whether there is an ancient archetype for my model does not make a difference.

post-cognitive borrowing

In the making of Sjamaan, a degree of chaos existed initially when colours and images were put down in an exploratory and intuitive manner, directed by a vague inclination or idea construction. On this basic foundation or groundwork of relevant images, others were
overpainted or collaged as if to deny or extend the initial images. Some kind of order was then constructed via a selection of images and an excavation (or deconstruction) of art materials. Such a procedure involves a post-cognitive working method. Whether the order existed first, in terms of an idea which was deconstructed into several interpretations of meaning, or whether the chaotic ruling in the intuitive, was neatly ordered into conceptual understanding, is undecidable. In such a deconstructivism, recalling a Romantic unknown, the image is consciously constructed, but also sometimes “discovered” or excavated in the materials used. The associative image is arrived at via a chaotic mixture of rational selection of image; intuitive understanding of images; possible sentimental or emotional connotations to the image; and/or compositional considerations (or through other means).

In Sjamaan, I have tried to render the connotative sentiments and feelings cohering to the concept of shamanism, that is, the metaphoric experience of elevation/transcendence/upliftment. In such a mode of association, interpretations are also often intuitively or subjectively postulated. Consequently, one possible interpretation of the painting might regard the work as a landscape painting evoking primeval sentiments. Alternatively, the painting may be seen as a conceptual work accommodating transcendental visions of a landscape in transition, or the imagery may be interpreted as being universally symbolic of transcendence, so that it becomes relevant for all times. By observing the image of the mother and child in the landscape opens up other possibilities. The associations evoked by the images are thus alterable and undecidable, resulting in temporal parerga being drawn around the painting. At the same time, those frames of reference are “ruined” since, by contemplating the work, the viewer may have other associations which are still in correspondence with the imagery. A post-cognitive experience of the imagery thus develops which incorporates both cognitive and post-cognitive associations, thus a fragmented complex of associations.

Intuitive or post-cognitive association is decoded as a “seeing as” in Ricoeur’s terms. It “contains a ground, a foundation, that is, resemblance; no longer the resemblance between two ideas (association), but that very resemblance that ‘seeing as’ establishes” (Ricoeur 1977: 213). In the post-cognitive selection, the association transcends rational explanation and is simply “seen as” such and such. In defining “seeing as” as the poetic equivalent to association, Ricoeur (1977: 213) proposes to

... proffer the missing link in the chain of explanation.... Half thought, half experience, ‘seeing as’ is the intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together.
“Seeing-as” overridingly postulates the parergon. Such a view denotes a certain pragmatism which signals relativism, being in direct opposition to the formalist notion that the cognitive, the aesthetic and the ethical dimensions are separate entities (premised on nineteenth century Kantian theories). Ricoeur holds that the impression should not be rationalised but simply accepted. In such a post-cognitive attitude the artist or viewer intuitively selects from a mass of images/experiences/associations, those that he/she “sees as” relevant to the intentional meaning. The question of parergonal reference can then be “posed both at a semantic and hermeneutic level”: the former deals with order and structure, the latter with interpretation, sensual experience and spirituality (Ricoeur 1977: 216). The association of ideas is then expanded from linear into non-linear association.

It has been argued so far that the imagery in Sjamaan was both borrowed and recreated in response to the observed reality and that my creative deconstructionist activity in the work concerned the appropriation of ideas in deviated form and the physical deconstruction of art media. I have thus created parerga in the making of the painting, since the created images and materials are symbolic and signify certain meanings. It was debated furthermore that the deconstructionist artist’s selection of images is premised on irony, since images evoke associations which resuscitate myth although “firsts” are not known. The notion of myth has thus already been drawn into the discussion, but will be examined more closely in the next section.

2.2 MYTH IN ASSOCIATION

The associative and metaphoric parergonality of the image is closely related to myth. Myth plays a crucial role in metaphoric association, since it often accounts for a powerful parergon around a work when a contemporary image is imbued with myth. Contemporary thinking conflates the notions of locality and pluralism. These issues have induced the revival of myth in contemporary literature and the arts, since myth lends itself to regional and anthropological readings.

---

9 Einstein’s scientific theory of an alternative fourth dimension in space helped pave the way for such thinking. The primary Euclidean characteristic of Einstein’s space-time continuum is a variable curvature from place to place caused by the gravitational force of the matter distributed throughout the continuum (Henderson 1983: 6). The possibility of curved space suggested psychological and spiritual interpretations of alternative perceptions of reality, invalidating linear perspective.

10 Myths are stories recounting an earlier age, narrating how natural phenomena and social customs, for instance, came into existence, using certain personages for these (C.P.D. 1986, s.v. “myth”).
Myth and symbol are interrelated although not synonymous. According to Ricoeur (1974: 28), myth is subordinated to symbol, so that myth is imbued with local content whereas symbols function on a more universal level. In contemporary artworks, images are often invested with mythic content and titles often refer to mythic events. It will be demonstrated in this section however, that the knowledge underlying such mythic associations is of a specific nature which has specific consequences for their paradigmatic meanings.

2.2.1 myth and language

Myth has been transferred, primarily via language, from ancient times to the present, indicating a non-logical homeground for such knowledge. The importance of language in contemporary hermeneutics has brought about a renewed awareness of myth. Writers such as Barthes see a close relationship between myth, language and meaning, although a full meaning is not imposed right at the outset (Sontag 1982: 119):

... there always remains, around the final meaning, a halo of virtualities where other possible meanings are floating: the meaning can almost always be interpreted. One could say that a language offers to myth an open-work meaning.

The writer (or the artist) says Barthes, "is a 'transitive' man [woman], he posits a goal ... of which language is merely a means; for him language supports a praxis, it does not constitute one" (Sontag 1982: 89). The language of the artist is decoded here as the artist "talking" via images. Barthes' pragmatic approach assigns a functional role to language, namely the retelling of old truths in narrative form.

In mythical references, dialectical metastructures emerge which operate in relative mode: according to Bakker (1973: 16), no single sign has any meaning if it does not function in relation with other signs. This relativism functions as a dialectical system of meaning, since myth is constructed from fragments of earlier myths, like language is formed

---

11 Kearney quotes Ricoeur in stating that "our finite and historically situated existence transgresses our subjective intentions" so that the human subject "is not a self-sufficient cogito, but a ... being who discovers that he is placed in language before he possesses himself in consciousness" (Kearney 1987: 92). This view stresses the crucial role of language in the understanding and use of myth.

12 The special affinity between myth and language is already found in the narrative nature of the discourse of Platonic Socrates: he often brought forth a mythos, a narrative of a happening, instead of an argument, that could illustrate more clearly the philosophical statement (Prinz, U. and Diehl, V. 1982: 38).
from fragments of earlier languages and like interpretation of artworks is sometimes based on fragments of earlier interpretations. In forming associations,

... mythical thought forms a structure from the remains and the debris of events. By building its palaces from the odds and ends of anterior social discourse, it offers an inverse model of science, which gives the form of a new event to its structures .... [Ricoeur 1974: 43]

2.2.2 myth as model or supplement

Via interpretive discourse and the poetic language of the artwork, myth is resurrected. The imagery in my work *Met kronkelpad en sekelmaan*, (Ill. 6), is predominantly modelled on observation and association. The images are the result of the observation of the ways of human beings. Centrally placed is an image of a table which metaphorises human construct. By presenting a looming threatening figure in the background, the work describes both the constructive and deconstructive activities of people. I did not try to paint any great discovery; it is simply an alternative version of old truths. I am not an originator, I am a copier, but not of three-dimensional reality; my created reality concerns a spiritual reality which transcends barriers.

A *parergon* of myth might be discovered in *Met kronkelpad en sekelmaan* in the reference to the classical myth of Apollo and Dionysus in constant battle, which serves as model or supplement to the presently observed reality. I have thus created the space for the mythic event to

13 According to Wiener, an analysis of myths shows that the one is actually a transformation of another, so that in a corpus of myths there is a deep structure that explains and generates the actual surface structure of myth (D.H.I. 1973-1974, s.v. "myth"). Eventually, there are cultural linguistic differences in mythological beliefs and customs; but, as structuralists have pointed out, a general pattern or, as post-structuralists have indicated, points of similarity are still discernible. Structuralist Lévi-Strauss takes up the theme of the structuring of the mind in *La pensée sauvage* (Ricoeur 1974: 36). The "mind in its natural state", that is, the primitive mind (or the *bricoleur*) is based on a complex system of nomenclature and association in which heterogeneous structures of myth and totemism follow rigorous rules (Wiener 1973-1974: 326).


15 Kerényi describes Dionysus as the child who was not merely "effiminate" from the beginning, but hermaphrodite in nature (Jung and Kerényi 1963: 68). Dionysus was presented in antiquity as a tense equilibrium between being and non-being, between life and death, a boy in a macabre cloak and hood washed ashore as a baby in a chest with his dead mother. The sea, as the mother in labour, is Dionysus’s refuge (Jung and Kerényi 1963: 67). Yet, mythologically there is a deeper affinity between the sea and Apollo (a natural affinity in terms of cosmic holism, or the attraction of opposites). The
"rehappen". Contemporary theorists do not agree on the epistemological premises for myth. Deconstructionists, such as Derrida, adamantly articulate a logical scepticism in this regard. According to Derrida, myth is constituted by faded metaphors of reappropriation; that is, metaphors of "ground-foundation or home-return which signify a desire to recover lost origins or transcend time towards a final vision of presence" (Kearney 1987: 131). Taking his cue from Heidegger, Derrida extends notions of reference and association into a theory of "white mythology" (Kearney 1987: 131): metaphysics "has forgotten its own mythological derivation, because it has covered over or whitewashed those metaphorising figurations which gave rise to its concepts" (Kearney 1987: 131). Heidegger (1973: 4) uses the word "unconcealment" to describe the emerging of presence. According to him, the appearance of things is a "gathering", an "outward appearance" (Heidegger 1973: 5), thus a form of exposure of presence, or a presencing of presence.

Correlative herewith is Derrida's notion of blindness and tears as a veil over sight - seeing, yet, not seeing (Kelly 1991: 102). Truth comes to us in the form of echoes, guises and shadows. This corresponds with Derrida's notion of the "envelope" or parergon. He talks furthermore of a "chain of supplements" (1976: 154):

Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived. That all begins through the intermediary is what is indeed 'inconceivable' [to reason]. [Derrida 1976: 157]

Writers such as Mircea Eliade, on the other hand, strongly argue for a structuralist view of myth, thus premising the belief in a home ground or foundation of myth on its universal occurrence.16 Eliade (1954: 38) defines an "absolute" reality that consists of certain archetypes, so that any reference, association, myth, symbol, or allegory, in essence actually refers to this absolute reality. Eliade (1954: 38), recalling Derrida's "white mythology", describes the "unhistorical" character of collective "memory" as a failure to retain historical events and its particularities. He differs from Derrida, however, in assigning to memory the function

primordial child Apollo is fish, embryo, born from the uterine waters or the sea. Several images of the boy carried by a dolphin is found on, for instance, Greek coins, performing meritorious acts (Jung and Kerényi 1963: 67). In adulthood Apollo retains the same character of order and logic.

16 In this regard, the myth of the eternal return, amongst others, might be cited, on which Eliade has done a scientific study to indicate its universal and multicultural occurrence (The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History, 1954).
of reducing historical specifics to archetypes (Eliade 1954: 77). It is Eliade’s (1954: xiv) belief that “history can be repeated indefinitely, in the sense that myths serve as models”. He uses the terms, “exemplary models”, “paradigms” and “archetypes”, to indicate transcendental origins at the beginning of time, primarily transmitted from the ancient to the modern times through language. Eliade’s postulations are based on a structuralist view of myth in which certain repetitive patterns in human behaviour, from the earliest beginnings to the present time, are observed.

My interpretation of the myth of Apollo and Dionysus in Met kronkelpad en sekelmaan presents a “white-washed” version of its archetypal form, of which I do not have primary knowledge. It could also be seen as another version in the chain of repetitions of the myth, in which it has been creatively reinterpreted. I have acquired secondary knowledge of this myth in the form of alternative interpretations of earlier versions: I have gathered, for instance, from various sources (for example, Ritter 1971: 441 - 445) that the Olympic headgod Apollo/Jupiter is throughout one of the central images in classical humanities, while Dionysus/Bakchos/Bacchus belongs to the world of mystery. Both personalities are versions of earlier beliefs and narratives. The wordpair Apollonian/Dionysian became a philosophical concept with Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy (1871), although it has a prehistory in classical philology. Several writers have addressed the binary concept of Apollo/Dionysus, for instance Schlegel, Baur, Schelling and Bachofen. For Nietzsche, Apollo and Dionysus are personifications of the primeval characteristics of the world’s foundation: both these cosmic principles act in people. The representation of the Apollonian is encountered as dream and vision; harmonious order; ethos; plastic arts; epics: the vision of the Apollonian artist triumphs over everyday reality and recognises a higher pseudo - world. The Dionysian is all movement, haste, ecstasy - in the arts, it represents the lyrical element. The Dionysian artist breaks through barriers. The Apollonian spirit continues in philosophy and science, and the Dionysian in religion and the cult of mystery. After Nietzsche the Dionysian is also the recognition of a doctrine of values and the unity of destruction and new creation; of the present-day reality in opposition to the negation of the world by Christianity and the flight of reality in Romanticism (Ritter 1971: 445).

I have used this body of interpretations of the myth in the making of the painting, which adds to and supplements the parergon. I do not consider the myth of Apollo and Dionysus as necessarily true, but it

17 Both spellings of Apollonian/Apollinian are found in literature, although Apollonian is more usual in English.
functions as a supplement to the present, since my departure point for
the painting was the presently observed reality. The winding movement
of the paths or roads in the lower part of the painting, as well as the
fiery red-orange "burning" images in the central and upper parts, may
represent the Dionysian. The dark colour evokes a sense of obscurity
which for me depicts the uncertain, "probing" attitude with which one
goes through life. The image of the table, rendered in yellow, may
represent the Apollonian in its positive lightness and its being a
construct.

Such mythic references reflect a second-hand use of the myth; a type of
association within other associations, or an interpretation of
interpretations. This view is mirrored in Higgins' poem:

Whose is the idea of the fish?
Whose is the fish?
Where, then, is the vanity?
Can 'vanity' imply 'in vain'?
Can existence be in vain?
Where does this place the poem? [Higgins 1978: 155]

According to Derrida, associations are nothing more than mere
repetitions or copies, since the origin of the copy or association has
been lost. Yet, Derrida advocates that this loss must be:

... conceived without nostalgia; that is, it must be conceived outside the
myth of the purely maternal or paternal language belonging to the lost
fatherland of thought. On the contrary we must affirm it ... with certain
laughter and with a certain dance. [from 'Difference' in Speech and Phe-
nomena, Kearney 1987: 133, my emphasis]

At the same time, Derrida does not close this viewpoint: in terms of
interpretation he leaves room for doubt by describing the "crevice
through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be
glimpsed" (Derrida 1976: 14). This statement recalls the Romantic
unknown, resulting in radical ambiguity when a logical scepticism is
predicated in disallowing knowledge on myth whilst the possibility of
such knowledge is not excluded either. As such, a sum total of the
"onto-interrogative" structures of meaning surround the art object
(Derrida 1987: 22).

In Kiefer's Unternehmen "Seelöwe" I of 1975 (Ill. 7), not only the myth of
opposites, as met with in Apollo and Dionysus, serves as supplement to
illuminate the painting, but it is also based on a real event, becoming
the vehicle via which the transference of the mythic meaning is
conveyed. 18 Present and past time is united in myth. The viewer is
confronted with imagery which recalls a known event in history,
namely an irrational, whimsical ill-conceived undertaking by the
Germans in the summer of 1940. As such, the viewer associates with
the "familiar" history, which constitutes a specific meaning paradigm around the work.19

An ironical slant is added to the work by contrasting the ridiculous masterplan with the burning fire of actual war. The same sense of irony is encountered in the idea of painting the planning of a historical failure, in contradistinction to premodernist ideas of history painting, in which greatness was glorified. The ambiguity in the "failed" historical venture, is parodied in the use of colour, enhancing the sense of irony through contrasting warm orange with cool blue. These colours are associated with the cosmic elements of fire and water, two of the four basic constituents of the cosmos. In supplementation, the myth thus emanates as a model or illumination of the present or recent history, creating yet another parergon. In the earliest beginnings, so it is said, fire, water, earth and air were omni-present, in chaotic existence.20

The image of the tub of water refers to both "real" historical waters and the mythical tub, or container full of water, which is associated with the womb as container of new life (in this case the Nazi plan). The regeneration concept, a constructive positive concept, is associated with water and the womb. In contrast, the deconstructive concept is embodied in the myth of the battle-hero and his ambition to conquer at all costs.

The chairs on a sort of platform behind the bathtub in Unternehmen "Seelöwe" I, are placed in such a way as to simulate thrones. Mythologically, the chair as symbol associates with "throne": a symbol for rule and fame in worldly and sacred spheres (L.D.S. 1990, s.v.


19 In their military planning, the tradition existed with the Germans to employ toy soldiers as a means of teaching military strategy and planning actions. In Operation "Sea Lion" they used tubs and model boats (Rosenthal 1987: 35). Hitler had approved a plan to invade England by sea, called "Operation Sea Lion". It was assumed that the navy could prepare within a month. Troop movements would be carried out with a primitive armada of barges pushed by tugboats. This physically inadequate equipment would be manned by the inexperienced German navy, which would transport several thousand horses for use upon landing (Rosenthal 1987: 35).

20 In Christian mythology, based on the Bible, the myth of the creation of order from primordial chaos is narrated in Genesis. Another version is the Phoenician creation legend of Sanchuniathon (eleventh century B.C.) that places Air and Chaos in the beginning, proceeding to Wind and Desire, who produced Mot in the shape of an egg. When the egg opened, it produced the sun, the moon and stars. Later, under the influence of Light, the waters separated from the sky (E.D.M. 1953, s.v. "Phoenician Creation Legends").
"Thron"). It has the meaning of seating for rulers, while the nation kneel, stand or sit. Relating this interpretation to the painting, it laconically indicates the Nazi leaders who are planning the invasion in their chairs, while the nation (army) has to do the work. Both chair and table are associated with human planning/construction. The three chairs, being representative of seating for rulers, evoke the Trinity concept, creating yet another frame of interpretation via association around the images.

Kiefer's initial impetus for examining the Nazi era may be derived from the spirit of revolt of the sixties, but an overly synthetic approach has overtaken the initial association of idea. The obvious history painting has become much more complex than simple narrative. As such the parerga of such painting are fragmented and complex. Not even myth can render the interpretations authoritative. The mythic content which is read into the image is simply one amongst other interpretations. Myth is hence a vehicle of reference that the artist manipulates to enrich and endow the artwork with meaning. Its meaningfulness is dependent upon the level of informedness of both artist and viewer.

Whether myth has been used as supplement or model to enhance the poetic commentary on a real event, or whether the real event has been used to strengthen and add to myth, is arbitrary. Whether the origins of myth are proveable or not, myth does continue to present itself to us in guised form. The artist has creative power at his disposal, through the medium of the artwork, to create his own "retelling" of myths, or create alternative versions of myths. Kiefer affirms this view:


2.2.3 myth and Romantic association

In contemporary artmaking, the use of mythical reference has gained new impetus, because of what might be called a New Romantic sensibility. The renewed interest in myth is proof of a Romantic quest for reconciliation in a pluralistic and highly technological age. Griffiths describes myth in Romantic artmaking as follows:

21 We have talked about gods that are sad without people. It could also be that there are gods that have no relation to humans. As artist I believe that it is possible to create these powers (my transl.).
The special myth of nearly all cultural Romantics is that the Romantic consciousness is ever in search of its totality: of that, as it were, empyrean realm in which uniqueness will find completion. The Romantic urge is to connect or reconcile its special individuality through ideas, or literature, or art, with nature; or with reality; or with the totality of things. [Griffiths 1988c: 31, my emphasis]

The myth of the quest or desire for completion is probably the strongest tie between deconstruction and Romanticism. The rendering of endlessly alternating seasons in Romantic art is emblematised in the neverending spiral of interpretation in deconstruction, or the parergon. This condition is represented by the myth of ouroboros.

ouroboros

As has been indicated, contemporary thinking ascribes an ambiguous nature to mythic association which “borrows” from a “ground-foundation” and signals a “home-return” (Kearney 1987: 131). Association has attained a character of supplementation “which borrows from a heritage, the resources necessary for the deconstruction of that heritage itself” (from Writing and Difference (1978), also quoted in Kearney 1987: 132). This process of association, as well as the process of erection of parerga around artworks reflect a continual process of reinscribing, thus a type of “beginning in end” or ouroboros procedure. It is a recycling process which has to depart from the artwork every time.

In contemporary Romanticism, this myth is illustrated in the fact that, according to Rosenblum, such Romanticism is

... really Romanticism in terms of historical retrospection and reflects the whole condition of neo-ism, revivalism and retrospection that we have in the 1980s as opposed to being an organic continuation of earlier traditions. The big historical break in continuity took place in the 1960s and 70s and anything younger today is likely to be wilfully self-consciously retrospective rather than part of the same tradition. [Griffiths 1988d: 53]

In Sjamaan, as Romantic work, historical boundaries are both maintained and transgressed in the use of mythic association in its images. The ambiguity found in shamanism concerns the visionary state of the shaman - he is in a trance, yet he forever returns to his earthbound state. Hovering between different states of being, ambiguous territory is occupied. In these alternative and transitory states of being, Romanticism and myth converge conceptually with deconstruction in its strategies of deconstructing “historical” texts in order to attain new meaning. Under influence of a deconstructionist consciousness, denying its own operative strategies, the ambiguity of New Romanticism is encountered in its aspiration toward both open-endedness and historical delineation.
In my painting, *Aan die einde van die reënboog*, (Ill. 8), the myth of ouroboros is also conceptually infused.\(^{22}\) The title of the work indicates a Romantic sensibility by conceptually evoking the idea of a mythic pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In ancient myths such as Gilgamesh, the Great Flood that destroyed all life was followed by the rainbow which embodied the promise of a new beginning. The "end" thus produces a new beginning in the myth. In this work the use of mythological figures, such as Oceanus, who sits placidly and effeminately in the sea enjoying his elevated status of god of the water, revives the myth of ouroboros via sequence.\(^{23}\) A sense of repetition is evoked by resuscitating pioneer South African history in the collaged fleets of ships entering the bay of the Cape of Good Hope and invoking the sense of mystique and adventure traditionally surrounding Africa which has instigated many expeditions and settlements in the continent. The image of the rainbow represents such Romantic dreams of adventure which have often had disastrous consequences.

In the foreground of the work, two massive figures are found, who serve as "entrance gates" for the ships, being metaphoric of the new beginning in another world at the end of the journey. The two figures are divided by a narrow passage evoking associations of passage, either of birth or death, both being intermediate passages into another state. As such, both the beginning and the end are contained in the painting. The passage recalls the labyrinthine path and the serpent:

\[
\text{The labyrinthine path ... is created and articulated by the relationships one develops with space. Because one is fundamentally alone, space become one's partner. Tricky, elusive, yet promising growth and richness, space becomes the seeker's bride ... .} \ [	ext{Argüelles and Argüelles 1977: 48}]^{24}\]


\(^{23}\) Oceanus, god of the water, who was believed to surround the earth in ancient history, is called the son of Heaven and Earth; the husband of Tethys; the father of all the river gods and water nymphs of the whole earth (S.S.C.D. 1937, s.v."Oceanus"). The Atlantic ocean was sometimes called Oceanus, thus a relevant choice of image, the work being South-African. In Greek myth, Homer allocated Oceanus to the position of father of the gods, a position also substituted by the Christian God.

\(^{24}\) The serpent symbolises the labyrinth; it is an androgynous hybrid, being unclearly portrayed in cosmology and ancient myths in terms of gender. The serpent plays an extraordinarily important role in cosmologies and myths, also taking on different guises. Besides being associated with sexuality; the underworld; the power of renewal; spirit or deity; rain and vegetation; earth and water; and energy, the serpent is sometimes male, often female. The prime characteristic of the serpent is being symbol of conveyance and transference (of, for instance, energy, evil, power) (L.D.S. 1990, s.v. "Schlange"). The serpent is associated with Satan, chaos, the feminine and the conveyance of evil, yet
The passage can further be metaphorically linked to the vagina, the locus for physical fusion of male and female. As such, a nexus of ouroboros entanglements is arrived at. Via the deconstruction of the naturalistic human form and evocation of different associations, a compound of water/rock/figures is attained.

**narrative alibi**

South-African real history has been used in *Aan die einde van die reënbou* to act as prototypal source for mythic commentary. Similarly, in *Sjamaan* the borrowed conceptual use of the idea of the shaman as healer, priest, or wizard, is an attempt at commentary whilst employing a known prototype. Norris (1983: 136) describes Coleridge's method of circumventing "the problems of his own idealist metaphysic by constructing various kinds of narrative alibi through which to present them as a species of private case-history". This narrowly describes the unmediated vision of Romantic aspiration which can be detected in *Sjamaan* in the appropriation of the narrative and literal to attain metaphysical and metaphoric meaning. The use of the ladder as metaphor in *Sjamaan* concerns "the degree of imagination ..., not the quality of the imagery, but the quality and force of the emotion symbolised by the imagery" (Lascelles Abercrombie in Norris 1983: 136). In the flux of *parerga*, paradoxes in association dissolve. It is a matter of the text/artwork that

... suspends the situational reference to the author's [artist's] original experience, and is thus free to enter into relation with other texts ... in such instances, reference is not entirely obliterated; it is simply deferred. [Kearney 1987: 102 - 103]

Both the notion of shamanism and that of the journey into the unknown are Romantic in essence, but in both cases the historical horizon is faded and diffused. In an aesthetic deconstructivism, history is not an ideal stance to measure the present against: the historical reference or association exists in supplementation and illumination of the present. The illumination of the present via a narrative alibi is an ambiguous and unintelligible undertaking which escapes precise definition to become a Romantic unknown.  

25 Most Baroque and Romantic styles reveal ambiguous, non-linear thinking whilst linear thinking is usually found in logical scientific thinking. Montesquieu, Sterne, Coleridge, Schlegel, Thoreau and Nietzsche are all primarily non-linear thinkers. In terms of association, a Romantic spirituality shows disparateness and ambiguity. This ambiguity is already evident in nineteenth-century Romantic hermeneutics. Nineteenth century phenomenological idealism was counteracted by German materialism (Karl Marx), nihilism (Nietzsche) and pragmatism (William James, John Dewey), although being deeply...
mythic originals are simulated, appropriated, repossessed or recreated in synthetic manner via narrative alibi. This is an ironic process, since the myth is resurrected as a response to the observation of the real world, whether the mythic prototype existed or not.

the dome

The image of the rainbow in *Aan die einde van die reënboog* resembles the shape of the dome image used in Kiefer's *Jeder Mensch steht unter seiner Himmelskugel*, (III. 9). The medium of watercolour enhances the conceptual fragility of a dream, a dome of heaven, and effectuates a feminine, delicate, poetic quality (Rosenthal 1987: 18). The metaphor of the dome recalls the myth of protective motherhood, but also allegorises the fragile *parergon*, a delicate "bubble" which can be broken at any moment. Kiefer's image of the saluting child-soldier under a dome draws associations of Nazi soldiers in "maternal" underground shelters, safe and saluting. The figure seems to be infantile, recalling both the myth of the protected childfigure and that of men as gods creating their own little kingdoms. This metaphoric image of the dome is

influenced by phenomenology (Urmson 1960: 121). The strong scientific and dogmatic base of philosophy until the end of the nineteenth century, was reinforced by the insistence of all science of nature on causality and determinism (Delfgaauw 1957: 15). Ideological worldviews and the sense of being were governed by the dialectical problematic evolved from the relationship between science of nature and technology, which were viewed as boundlessly valid (Delfgaauw 1957: 23). Depending on similarity and/or juxtaposition, empiricism and the reality of technology still influenced association, although, according to Kearney (1988: 99), the philosophies of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, for instance, remain "within the limits of a Romantic epistemology which [sees] all forms of 'objective knowledge' as a negation of self-understanding".


27 The deconstructionist notions of partial vision and knowledge are echoed in the portrayal of the saluting figure in the dome: idiotic and silly, the Nazi could have implicitly believed that the "dome of heaven" he concocted, corresponded to a celestial vault, such as has been imagined in various religions (Rosenthal 1987: 18). Rosenthal refers in this connection to Mircea Eliade, 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*: 118 - 121.

28 For further reading on the myth of the child, the reader is referred to, for instance, the interpretations by Jung and Kerényi in *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myths of the Divine Child and the Divine Maiden* (full bibliographical detail in the bibliography).

29 Wilhelm Reich, the German philospher, whose early work shows "an attempt to link the Marxist economic-class analysis with a psychoanalytical understanding of the significance of sexual repression in the development of fascist patriarchal society", (Sjöö and Mor 1987: 17), was devoted to "the liberation and enjoyment of healthy human power as the only valid political goal. Biological energy - unrepressed and undistorted - he saw as a continuum of cosmic energy, with no non-organic distinctions made between the 'physical"
inclusive of both the notion of *parergon* as context, point of view and paradigm, and of the Romantic notion of a subliminal realm over and above the real.

**the Romantic Dionysian**

The Romantic images referred to so far, such as the unknown or the hypothetic dreamworld, represent alternative or “other” worlds to the real ones. The “other” is a Romantic concept which designates an alternative existential state of being, but it also postulates the concept of pluralism and alterable *parerga*. The notion of the “other” suggests that there are not single and authoritative answers and interpretations, but that everything in this world is manifested as a continual process of ouroboros in which the beginning is resumed in the end. The concept of “other” or a “split” in Being echoes the Nietzschean duality of Apollo-Dionysus. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1870-1871: 65), Nietzsche draws a definite line between the two personalities:

It is Apollo who tranquillises the individual by drawing boundary lines, and who, by enjoining again and again the practice of self-knowledge, reminds him of the holy, universal norms. But lest the Apollonian tendency freeze all form into Egyptian rigidity, and in attempting to prescribe its orbit to each particular wave inhibit the movement of the lake, the Dionysiac flood tide periodically destroys all the little circles in which the Apollonian will would confine Hellenism. The swiftly rising Dionysiac tide then shoulders all the small individual waves’ crests, even as Prometheus’ brother, the Titan Atlas, shouldered the world. This titanic urge to be the Atlas of all individuals, to bear them on broad shoulders even farther and higher, is the common bond between the Prometheus and the Dionysiac forces.[my emphasis] 30

Both the Romantic sensibility and deconstruction show similarities with the myth of Dionysus in its engulfing, transcendent character. Linking Prometheus and Dionysus further enforces the viewpoint that Romanticism is tied to the Dionysian myth. Many varied and contrasting forms of Dionysus as mythic personality or principle are

---

and the ‘spiritual’ ... he believed that politics included the realignment of the repressed human being with this original creative flow” (Sjöö and Mor 1987: 19).

30 In antiquity, Prometheus is presented as the great benefactor of men (S.S.C.D. 1937, s.v. “Prometheus”). He stole fire from heaven and was consequently punished by Zeus for teaching men all useful arts by chaining him to a rock. Prometheus was thus exposed to perpetual torture, since the eagle consumed his liver each day which was then restored each succeeding night. Hercules killed the eagle and delivered Prometheus from his ordeal with the consent of Zeus, the latter thus allowing his son to gain immortal fame.
encountered, such as in Kiefer’s *Chuwawa/Gilgamesch* (Ill. 10) of 1980.\(^{31}\) The *parergon* of myth which is erected around and found in the artwork, concerns such searching for the “other” self as a mythic being. In this work, the mythic personality, Gilgamesh, shows an obscurity in identity.\(^{32}\) Researching the myth of Gilgamesh, several differing interpretations and versions are discovered, but also several points of similarity, one of these being the tale of the Great Flood that is found in all of them. Metaphorically, the image of the Great Flood is an apt description of the condition of the *parergon*.

The central haloed figure staring out of the picture at the viewer may be seen as a faded metaphor for both the Romantic hero and the classical monumental figure. The *parerga* which may be constituted around the central figure interweave references to religious notions of the “chosen one”: the prophet, the spiritual leader, the shaman, Prometheus, or the visionary artist - all romantic notions. By placing the figure on a primitive “throne”, a cut-off tree trunk, and dressing the figure in a simple white frock, the Christian irony of a King in humble disguise is evoked.\(^{33}\) The figure is pathetic and unpretentious,

---


32 Mythologically, the title refers to the epic of Gilgamesh, the most prominent narrative in cuneiform from Babylonian times (for further reading the following sources are valuable: Fiore, S. 1965. *Voices from the Clay: The Development of Assyro-Babylonian Literature*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Saggs, H.W.F. 1962. *The greatness that was Babylon*. London: Sedgwick & Jackson. Saggs, H.W.F. 1965. *Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons; London: B.T. Batsford). The epic is representative of the spirituality of the time and comprehends a conglomeration of cosmico-mythico elements: Gilgamesh (in the epic) is presented as a mortal hero: half-man, half-god, king of Uruk. His dearest friend, Enkidu, dies and Gilgamesh is besides himself with grief. He questions the meaning of life and seeks the answer to immortality through undertaking various adventures. Utanapishtim, the god of the woods, who survived a flood, tells Gilgamesh about a weed growing on the sea-bed, the eating of which guarantees immortality. Gilgamesh obtains the weed, only for the serpent to steal it from him. Gilgamesh comes to the realisation that immortality is achieved only through the work of one’s hands.

33 Gilgamesh as an androgynous figure, a model of binary identity, represents such fragmented identity and designates both a deconstructionist and Romantic character. Androgyny is an ancient cosmic principle which is found in early alchemical thinking, later in the Middle Ages and again in the Renaissance. Its origins have become so diffused to modern artists, that, although being an accepted part of everyday modern life, androgyny is rather conceptually appropriated or repossessed. The androgyne is the symbol of supreme identity in most religious systems (Zolla 1981: 5), and it “stands for the level of non-manifested being, the source of manifestation, which corresponds numerically to zero, the most dynamic and puzzling of numbers, the sum of both aspects of Oneness: +1-1=0” (Zolla 1981: 5). Wherever there are signs of mystical thinking in the abandonment of the rational, this mode of thinking seems to resurface.
deconstructing the importance and centrality of post-Renaissance man. The figure has the arrogant posture of an authoritarian figure, yet the insecure expression on his face negates any such pretentions. A Romantic sensibility is detected in extending the barriers of identity, overlapping divisions of artist/model; German/Jew; male/female, ancient/modern. Being attains transcendent identity within cerebral boundaries of diffusion.

In *Gilgamesch*, a contrapuntal dissonance is created by the evocation of "a hidden conflict of values between modernity and more achaic views of nature" (Gilmour 1990: 151). There is a separation between archaic man's intimate involvement with natural forces and modern science's project of obtaining objectives that only invoke the domination of nature (Baudrillard 1975: 56). As Baudrillard (1975: 55) remarks, "it is by being sublimated and repressed that Nature becomes a metaphor of freedom and totality"; Nature thus becomes romantised. Kiefer's reference to *Gilgamesh* reveals several Romantic inclinations: the importance of the literary theme; historicism, in reference to the ancient times; rapprochement of opposites: nature and art, memory and presentiment, the divine and the terrestrial, archaic and modern; exoticism, by appropriation of the ancient source; the yearning to evoke the strange and unusual; preference for expression of states of mind through landscape; and the greater regard for emotional, mystical, symbolic and mythic imagery. The work shows a New Romantic "ambition to be complete, to repair the deficiencies of our present incomplete state ...." (Griffiths 1988c: 31). The Romantic notion of longing is apparent in the reconciliation of the self with the totality of things through ideas or references, also things greater than man. Imagination is the Romantic artist's privileged land, but it becomes the collective property of *Gilgamesh*, the artist and the spectator, via the use of suggestion. The land/the beyond is only suggested not rendered; it activates the viewer's imagination and boundaries are deconstructed.

The Romantic sentimentality is also found in Kiefer's reference to contemporary man's destruction of the German forests in *Gilgamesh*. The black broadly gestural forms become simplistically representative of falling logs, yet metaphorically referential to an apocalyptic worldview. The falling logs are also metaphoric of deconstruction by becoming falling bastions. Kiefer evokes feelings of fear and anxiety by placing the dark forms claustrophobically near the figure, metaphorically echoing the anxiety of human beings in an overwhelmingly man-made environment. Man's admiration for technical advancement has turned
into an anxious suspicion of the nuclear strategy, suggesting looming destruction and disaster. Narrative rhetoric has been abandoned here, however, in favour of a mixture of appropriation from the past with poetic equivalents and suggestion: characteristic ingredients of contemporary Romanticism (Beaumont 1988: 80).

Kiefer's deconstructionist artmaking process is evident in Gilgamesch in his use of a blown-up black-and-white photograph instead of a canvas, questioning traditional artmaking procedures in this way. He extends on the traditional ways of applying collage by reversing the process: paint, as collage, is applied to the huge "found material", the photo. As such, he equalises media, making collage as important as paint, instead of treating collage as an incidental or supportive element. Boundaries of art disciplines are fused and deconstructed through the medium of overpainted photograph. The painterliness of the paint, applied in such a way as to cover most of the photo, adds to emphasise human power (in the person of the artist), deconstructing and challenging the authority of technology and the technical basis of the work. The minimalist basis of Gilgamesch presents the story of Gilgamesh and its relevance to modern times in a cryptic manner, almost as a general repetition. It has been appropriated as a narrative alibi in order to comment on an age of consumerism, nuclear threats and technology. Kiefer thus identifies a need for the mystical, the spiritual and the religious in the impoverished contemporary identity, but also comments on the changes that identity underwent in the strong waves of feminism and liberalism, also deconstruction.

In revisionist mode, Kiefer imbues the myth of Gilgamesh with different metaphoric colouring: through the monotone greyness of the actual colour of the painted photograph, a certain spirituality of modernity and prevalent technology is evoked. Opposing traditional visions of a colourful tribal dance with the shaman as central figure or a glittering god in heaven, the colouring of this work solicits us into an alternative contemporary vision which does not necessarily nullify the former. It extends in relation to the former, it "lends visibility, definiteness, (and) intensity to the indefinite, much as figurative language is said to color, make visible, and intensify concepts that are difficult to grasp" (Culler 1983: 265). The invisible existing in the form of association, thus the parerga constructed around the images, become as important as the visible, the painting itself being a type of understructure for meaning, echoing the reversed medium of painted photograph.

A deconstructive reading of this work reveals complex ambiguities in alternative meanings and attitudes: the work is not the result of a total and governing attitude, but of a number of possible attitudes or intentions of the artist. Was there a narrative, symbolic, moral, political, religious intention? It doesn't matter; what is crucial is the fact that what the work was intended to mean, is undone by the way it means.
2.3 PARADIGMATIC MEANING AND ASSOCIATION

The viewpoints I have articulated so far are debatable, since I have argued the notion of arbitrariness, yet I make assumptions regarding interpretation and association at the same time. An ambiguous stance has been reached, since I set up relationships of similarity between entities based on suppositions, such as myth and Romantic "style". I even quote from reference works as if such sources are authoritative. Yet, in contemporary artmaking myth can occur, at the most, as a repetition, version, model or supplement. According to deconstructionists, myth is merely the revelation of (concealed) presence in another form, a kind of narrative alibi. Contemporary thinking has advanced to such a point that it declares a profound doubt on universal archetypes, yet they are not denied altogether. Myth thus functions as a kind of chain of presences which the artist assists in uncovering. My interpretation of the ladder, for instance, enters in dialectic with the numerous other forms that the conceptual underpinning of the image entails, just as the real event in Unternehmen "Seelöwe" I activates other associations.

What is important in this matter, however, is the fact that the parergon is dependent on the subjective associations summoned up by the viewer's imagination. In this process, intuitive cognisance alternates with rationalisation. This view converges with Ricoeur's "hermeneutic detour", concerning the retrieval of thought in symbol and the extension of symbol into thought (Kearney 1987: 93). As such, the artist takes possession of myth and symbol via association, which becomes meaningful to the subjective self. Such meanings are arbitrary, however, although they might cultivate an awareness of man as historical being, thus a sense of "comfort and care" in an "alien universe" (Comfort in Mellor 1987: 22). The parergon (also the mythic association) is merely a point of view, a meaningful frame (or "dome") which is temporally constructed around the artwork.

Such views emphasise the "polysemy" of meaning in association and a figurative multiplicity of meaning in terms of allegory, symbol, metaphor, myth and allegory (Kearney 1987: 98). The figurativeness and polysemy in association result in networks of possible meanings, continually vulnerable to alteration. Derrida insists that deconstruction is not "simply a nihilistic reduction of meaning to non-meaning", but "a radical emancipation of meaning into a play of otherness" - what he calls "alterity" (Kearney 1987: 125). The notion of alterity alternates with that of plurality, denoting the extension of meaning, denying that there is only one possible association inherent to an image. Deconstructive theory breaks with any authoritative ethics of association. "It affirms the irreducibility ... to any preconceived idea of authorial design" (Norris 1983: 106). The French Structuralist, Lacan, amongst others, has pointed out the diversity of meanings that lies behind the apparent unity of things; the "unified self" is undermined by "utterances of unconscious
desire which contain several contradictory or ‘split’ meanings” (Kearney 1987: 275).34

In deconstructionist borrowing, repetition and recurrence, it would seem, there is a spirit of synthesis which does not involve the “uniting of opposing viewpoints”, but “the removal of these through the creation of a new structure of concepts” (Maritz 1981: 59, my emphasis). Contradistinctions or paradoxes are comfortably accommodated when, in Derridaian terminology, “meaning determines (or precedes) reference” (Norris 1983: 157). It would seem that the world can no longer be taken for granted as a “universal given”; it must be interpreted as “an allegory with a complex of meanings open to a wide range of implicitly related readings” (Kearney 1987: 152). Yet, although textual meaning might be ambivalent and textual references incapable of resolving, the discourse continues in spite of the impossibility of finding final truth.

In Derrida’s language, to "restore" or see the “true, full, originary” meaning, the inner meaning and a multiplicity of external variations of interpretations and meanings, have to be constantly “unveiled” (Derrida 1987: 22). This would result in an interrogation of the vouloir-dire of the art object, a functionalist program of disclosing meaning. The “upright coffin” of unchallengeable information that imbues artworks with specific meaning, has to be ascertained all the time. In this way, centuries enter into dialectic, destroying hierarchy. Via the “coffins” in metaphoric associations, the spirituality of different historic times are intermingled. According to Heidegger, the mythical time is not a past time, but life in the present (Ijsseling 1964: 105). Fragments or local versions of old myths re-emerge in new guise; events in which myths serve as supplements to the present. Myth thus opens up avenues of possible meaning, “colouring” the parergon with narrative elements which may serve the purpose of enriching or illuminating the present.

Kuspit (1991: 100) argues that the “decadence of Postmodernism” means “the end of the debate between the old and the new ... they lose all peculiarity of time and place - and of being and meaning”, to become pieces in a game. The telling of myths becomes a ritual happening, a rite, as almost all cosmological myths narrate a passing in time: as such there is a presentation of creative powers (“een aanwezig komen van de scheppende krachten”) (Ijsseling 1964: 105). Repetition and narration of myths are loaded with creative power, on the grounds of the creation of a “space” (a referential structure in the artwork), in which primary events could “rehappen”. Artistic activity which includes such retelling

34 Lacan also introduced the concept of “flexible time” (Kearney 1987: 275), insisting that the unconscious operates in “synchronic” time (Kearney 1987: 276).
and rehappening of myth affirms the mythic concept of work and creation: the antonym of fixation. If there is no commemorating return ("herdenkende terugkeren") to mythical origins via artworks, there is "degeneration into regression" and fixation, according to Heidegger (Ijsseling 1964: 105). If a drifting position is attained in the midst of pluralism and arbitrariness, myth creates new possibilities, a truth-telling ethos. The artist has the power to adhere to such an ethos, even to demythologise.

In this chapter the parergonal and paradigmatic role of association has been pointed out. By illustrating the arbitrary, unpredictable and deviative nature of association in contemporary artworks, a permanent base for argumentation has been pulled out from under the feet of present scholars. Even myth, as a type of validation or grounding for knowledge seems to be unsure and undecidable. The relativity of ideas, even the temporality of ideas and knowledge, is what the debate is about. Consequently, the nexus of associations around the artworks, thus the parerga, are vulnerable to dismantlement.

The first chapter concentrated on the parergon as the point of view and the second chapter on the parergon as association. In the next chapter, the parergon as a condition or a Zeitgeist manifesting in artworks will be investigated.

35 Higgins (1978: 44) views boredom, the stationary, as having a useful function: as an opposite to excitement and as a means of bringing emphasis to what it interrupts, causing us to view both elements freshly. It is a necessary station on the way to other experiences. A well-known nineteenth century Romantic version hereof is the notion of ennui which the Romantic hero often suffered from.
CHAPTER 3

parergon and condition

Life is, in itself and forever, a shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms which is his reaction against his own destruction, is culture - a swimming stroke. [Ortega 1968: 136]

The previous chapters dealt with the notions of the point of view and association in relation to parergon. It has been pointed out that the nexus of parerga of the artwork are decodifiable as mental associations. In this chapter, the investigation regarding association will be extended by looking at the conditions for those modes of knowing, that is, as a reflection of a spirit of the time. The Zeitgeist of the late twentieth century will be examined as parergon in order to "lift" more "veils" in the interrogation of the conditions for undecidable interpretations and associations.
In the present age, the notions of manufacture and production models have become pertinent issues which need to be assessed in terms of their influence on artmaking. In this chapter, this technological "condition" will be measured against the notion of construct or structure which is prominent in a post-industrialist age. The notion of construct plays a decisive part in the make-up of the deconstructivistic sensibility, since the morphological analysis of the word "de-construct-ion" indicates a post-structure. The "constructed" painting is particularly applicable to works with layered surfaces and collage as a constructed medium. Such artworks entail special meaning which transcends its formalist underpinning.

The relationship of construct or technology to Romanticism will also have to be addressed in this instance, since it has been argued already that a form of Romanticism is encountered in the deconstructivistic aesthetic. Production and manufacture are, however, the antitheses of Romanticism. This ambiguity in determining a New Romantic spirituality will receive special attention. The entangling of the idea of woman with a culture of machine will be debated in support of the argument of the previous chapter in which the presence of the female archetype was detected in contemporary hermeneutics.

3.1 A CONDITION

The spirit or "general mechanics" of an age is like a cloud of energy particles that are not subject to serial laws, that are not organised into sets ... ." (Lyotard 1990: 15). It is a force which is "deposited" in the mind. According to Lyotard (1990: 16), this deposit is "dissipated, widely dispersed like a thermal state of the system ... ." An age is characterised by a consciousness, which may be seen as

... [a] flight, the feeling that accompanies it, which informs consciousness that there is something, without being able to tell what it is. It indicates the quod but not the quid. The essence of the event: that there is "comes before" what there is. [Lyotard 1990: 16]

The Modernist theorist, Ortega, describes the sensibility in Modernist art as an art avoiding humanistic content, declaring a taboo on "tears and laughter" (Ortega 1968: 26); the "gesture of beauty never pass[ing] beyond smiles, melancholy or delighted" (Ortega 1968: 27). He sees Modernism primarily as being premised on stylisation and a flight from the human person (Ortega 1968: 32), since, according to Ortega, to deform reality means to stylise and style involves dehumanisation (Ortega 1968: 25). The peculiarity of the radical stylisation or deformation of reality as encountered in twentieth century art, is a consequence of the post-nineteenth century world which is still "increasingly dominated by technocracy, the positive sciences and the
threat of totalitarian control over human intelligence" (Kearney 1987: 1), much more so than in any previous age.

Such dehumanisation has led to an alienation process of the self from its true being, which produces uncertainty. The twentieth century condition, according to Ortega, is essential uncertainty (Ortega 1968: 190).

History tells us of innumerable regressions, of decadences and degenerations. But nothing tells us that there is no possibility of much more basic retrogressions than any so far known, including the most basic of them all: the total disappearance of man as man and his silent return to the animal scale, to complete and definitive absorption in the other. [Ortega 1968: 191, my emphasis]

The Other, in Ortega's sense, is a collapsed Other, due to the fact that there are so many choices and options that no finality is ever reached and everything becomes subject to an everpresent doubt. This condition is a *fin de siècle* (end-of-the-century) state of despair and doubtfulness, centering the focus on the present, on the continual process of production and manufacture - a sphere within which deconstruction cohabits. If all certainty is lost in the postulation of a radical epistemological scepticism concerning mythic home-grounds, there is a further shift towards the present. According to Heidegger, the prevailing apathy to mythic origins is an end product of metaphysical man, "the *animal rationale*, who gets fixed as the laboring animal" and "collapse and desolation" takes place (Heidegger 1973: 86). Such a state is tied to, what Fehér calls, the merging of life and art by the theories of postmodernity.  

Pierssens decribes the situation as one in which

> Everything else can crumble, and does crumble. However, the perfect moment of the word suffices to put everything immediately back in order, time in motion, the world on its axis. Minute eternity, between two falls. [Pierssens 1981: 164]

The sense of collapse is a "formless mass" in Lyotard's words (1990: 17), indicating the same degree of anxiety as can be detected in the outlooks of earlier Modernists. Yet, Huyssen sees the Post-Modern condition as different from the above-mentioned positions. He views it as a

> ... playful transgression, of an unlimited weaving of textuality, a modernism all confident in its rejection of representation and reality, in its

---

1 These theories concern the aestheticisation of life and the abolition of the paradigmatic work of art (Fehér 1986: 66). The aestheticisation of life, according to Fehér, is a *fin de siècle* legacy of the avant-garde and postmodernity (1986: 66).
denial of the subject, of history and of the subject of history; a modernism quite dogmatic in its rejection of presence and in its unending praise of lacks and absences, deferrals and traces which produce, presumably, not anxiety but ... bliss. [Huyssen 1986: 209]

Such a condition recalls the *Immergleiche* in Adorno's language (1984: 339), which is tied to pluralism. The condition of pluralism refers to a playful production of interwoven texts around subjects or artworks, recalling Derrida's "coffin". The formless mass and equilisation process, which are direct consequences of mass-culture, are responsible for the continual collapse of the *parergon*, yet, it is not a traumatic collapse, since another *parergon* is produced the moment it collapses (recalling the beginning-in-end process which was mentioned earlier).

### 3.2 PRODUCTION

According to Baudrillard, it is through the "mirror of production that the human species comes to consciousness" (1975: 19). The Post-Modern condition, in its emphasis on technology and production has become characterised by a de-emotionalised attitude regarding the visual experience of the outside world, the Other. Operational behaviour, which concerns serial activity patterns of equivalence, has cultivated a sense of indifference. Technology has changed man "from the reflective being of the Classical age ... to the productive being" (Gilmour 1990: 50). Such predominance of intellectualism leads to a neglect of other human faculties, although theorists claim a return to holistic attitudes.

The consequences of autonomous production models and mass-production are evident in the nature of the *parergon* being constituted around the artwork. Just like any other consumer article, the artwork may or may not fall within the taste and understanding paradigm of the viewer, so that *parerga* are constructed and deconstructed in similar arbitrary fashion. Yet, as indicated earlier, the artwork defies authoritative, definitive interpretation being a mythic poetic object. Just as the poetic realms transcend exact rationalisation, in a consumerist society production models simply "are", without any need of justification outside itself. Such autonomy, which was especially eminent in Modernism, has roots in Marxism: "Like the rationalist philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Marx believed that human liberty consists in the systematic mastery of whatever resists human needs, whether in external nature or in his own wild and self-destructive passions" (Kearney 1987: 178). In deconstruction of such a view, Baudrillard (1975: 19) remarks that

... it is no longer a question of "being" oneself but of "producing" oneself, from conscious activity to the primitive "productions" of desire. Everywhere man has learned to reflect on himself, to assume him-
Baudrillard's radical deconstruction of Marxism attempts to articulate a critique of the political economy of the sign which he regards as the dominant form of advanced capitalism (translator's introduction, Baudrillard 1975: 6). Klinkowitz (1988: 3) describes the Post-Modern habit of thought (comparing Barthes, Rosenberg and Hassan and finding some common denominators) as a mode of perception which "strips the object of previously endowed meanings and makes it clear that significance is a quality not of the thing itself but of the human activity taking place around it".

According to all three above-mentioned writers, the artwork, as a cultural object, is an object of production, subject to the same degree of mobile consumerism (Klinkowitz 1988: 4). The artwork, or the text, in a flux of differences, becomes a product of construct, hosting a possible set of associations. Yet, it is the possibility of a single world that is posited, one of equivalence, almost like "a circuit on one of the grids of language" (Pierssens 1981: 164). Such a "single world" narrowly describes the parergon or the point of view. In the Post-Modern condition, imaginary solutions are endlessly put forward, solutions that are "the adoption of ironic postures by constricted discourses" (Pierssens 1981: 164). The encounter with the real has become a sophisticated network of symbolic productions.

Wolff (1981: 13) argues that, while being very "self-consciously aware of the productive process, art is always 'manufacture'".

The mystification involved in setting artistic work apart as something different from, and usually superior to, all other forms of work can be combatted by showing that all forms of work are creative in the same way ... [Wolff 1981: 13]2

The creative imagination which is operative in artmaking, then becomes a mutation of the general condition of production. This view is echoed in Ortega's opening words of The Mirror of Production (1975: 17):

---

2 Outside of capitalist structures, the artistic production is especially meaningful, often more important than the poetic message of the work. Novelty resides at the centre of the value system of commodity production and is an ideal of the defenders of the avant-garde (Gilmour 1990: 51); therefore its production models carry different value and meaning. In capitalist societies, creative labour is alienated from its commoditive value. Man - both as producer and consumer - becomes a passive participant in view of the laws of such an economy.
A specter haunts the revolutionary imagination: the phantom of pro-
duction. Everywhere it sustains an unbridled Romanticism of produc-
tivity. The critical theory of the mode of production does not touch the
principle of production ... leaving form intact. This form reemerges, ide-
alized, behind the critique of the capitalist mode of production.

The romanticism attached to the concept of the nobility of production is
the result of an ideology which coalesces with the twentieth century's
celebration of the sign. Klinkowitz (1988: 15) sees the production
principle being manifested in Action Painting, for instance, as a type of
sign-producing, "leaving the trace of a movement whose origin is never
fully revealed". "Sign", "trace" and "mark" conjugate in their being
"productive". In association, the parergon, as the production of a
"frame", falls into this category. Derrida even decodes the metaphor, as
a type of sign, in terms of production: "Metaphor must ... be
understood as the process of the idea or meaning (of the signified, if
one wishes) before being understood as the play of signifiers" (1976: 275,
my emphasis).

The productionist realms are inconceivable without the concept of
function. The artist produces images which signify meanings, in turn
producing meaningful parerga around artworks.

3.3 FUNCTIONALISM

Within the macro-cosmos of a certain age, every section of society is a
micro-cosmos, governed by a multi-level functional system of language
and codes (Givon 1989: 83). In an advanced technological age, the
importance of functional systems and consumerist practice is
tremendous, which in turn, must also influence other spheres of society,
such as culture. Van Peursen (1972: 11) typifies three phases in any
model of human culture: the mythical, the ontological and the
functional. The mythical phase is characterised by an attitude in which
man is taken possession of by surrounding powers - a participation
process. The ontological phase poses the question of what everything
actually consists of, thus of essences. The functional phase shows a
manner of thought and acting that is characterised by reference, that is,
relatedness instead of participation or distancing (Van Peursen 1972: 11).
Although culture patterns will probably contain all of these elements at
time, there usually is an overriding emphasis on one of the three
types.

An analysis of contemporary Western culture, shows emphasis on the
functional, although the mythical and ontological entities are also active.
Functional thought encompasses the realisation of relationships, that is, a
redefinition of isolated intellectual activity through which theory and
praxis become closely related (disclosing a deconstructionist character). If
there is an overriding emphasis on functionality and production in a
society, an acquired artistic skill might attain the character of an acquired skill in production or manual labour. This also links with consumerism; these factors must eventually have an influence on the content and choice of images, since there exists a mediating link between production as model and the iconicity in artworks.

The artmaking process as production process, possessing intrinsic value as an act of making, thus reveals a sociologically inclined aesthetics which propounds the functional.

3.3.1 hollow models and manufactured meaning

There are three main functional realms which need to be examined in a pragmatic and functional investigation of an artwork's *parergonality*: meaning, information and function (Givón 1989: 84). The idea of a “collapsing being” induces a sense of manufacturing meaning in a synthetic way. Manufacturing certain associations or references becomes functional in producing meaning when there is no universal nexus of symbolism, universal home-ground for myth or authority to which an appeal can be made. Meaning must then be created within this collapse. This condition in artmaking centering on the notions of production, manufacture and collapse, has radical implications for the *parerga* around the artwork, since it leads to a romantic “manufacturing” of meaning on the part of the artist in order to circumvent the neurosis of the time and to imbue artworks with a vision and a sense of hope. It could be argued that the apathy of the time has instigated a Romantic desire to recover the “lost land” of myth, the unknown that somehow seems to render a world of production and technology meaningful.

Kiefer's *Malen=Verbrennen*, (1974), (Ill. 11), signifies such sentiments of collapse and manufacture in the disintegration of form and image. In this work, Kiefer has reduced the rendering of the landscape to minimalist expressionistic markmaking recalling a Modernist aesthetic. As a result of the minimalist imagery, Kiefer synthetically produces meaning within the collapsed imagery by overpainting images and words onto the foundation imagery in order to open up meaning paradigms to the viewer. Words as non-poetic, “found” objects, so to

---

3 Psychologist, Dr. Viktor Frankl, an acclaimed successor of Jung, codifies the spirit of our time in terms of an emotional apathy which characterises the greatest neurosis of our time and has led to a loss of meaning in life. Apart from his numerous writings, this information was gathered during a lecture presented at the University of Pretoria in September 1990. A video of the lecture is available at the University.

speak, supply the viewer with information, like the nameplate on a motorcar. If such additional information had not been supplied in Malen=Verbrennen, there would have been a collapse of the work's full and inner meaning, since the imagery has collapsed into abstraction. The latent image of fire is extorted conceptually only through the inscription of the words and their semantic contexts, not through actual images. The imagery signifies meaning based on paradigmatic exemplars, that is, hypothetic cosmic events of burning or apocalypse, both of which are mere speculations. These conceptually Romantic images are empty, since they are no more than functional in rendering effective poetic compositions.

The semantic contexts of the words have the function of inducing the production of conceptual parerga around the artwork. Writing the words "malen=verbrennen" ("painting=burning") on the painting, Kiefer functionally codes certain socio-affective relations between the artwork and viewer by making the latter aware of a socio-personal point of view. He discloses a sense of extension of self in signifying a conceptual heritage harking back to American Abstract Expressionism and Modernist German Expressionism, thus functionally drawing in the socio-affective sensibilities associated with the periods. Art historically, Kiefer refers to the debate in the seventies and eighties on a return to a premodernist aesthetic of recognisable imagery and technical mastery, which, ironically, he both conceptually asserts and formally negates. It is Radnóti's view that in the emancipation of art in the twentieth century, artistic originality has become a "function of the artist's internal rules rather than external ones" (1986: 77). Kiefer's "internal rules" have produced synthetic meaning paradigms via formal means which generate parerga.

In a neurotic world of collapsing being, myth has become meaningless and synthetic, yet, within the context of the "internal rules" of the artist which are autonomous, it can become a romantic journey into the unknown of a mythic past. Associations are then singularised iconic copies, that is, posited as single, autonomous worlds. Such associations become multitudinal versions of mythic originals, of which we have no proof of truth (corresponding with Derrida's "white mythology"). Baudrillard (1983: 2) describes the Post-Modern condition as a "simulacrum", relating the condition to production models and manufacture. The simulacrum is premised as a structure of patterns or models. Baudrillard holds the view that contemporary conceptions of the real or reality concern coding processes we have invented ourselves

---

5 The word "simulacrum" denotes a likeness; it could be a superficial likeness or any image or representation of something (C.P. D. 1988, s.v.) "simulacrum".)
The term "simulacrum" is of particular interest for this discourse, adding a different content to the concept of association as described in the previous chapter. The word "simulacrum" correlates with both iconic copy and association in that a "likeness" is identified. These notions, in turn correspond with the "sign" in Structuralist language. In Graham Arnold's *A Remembered Summer* (1985), (III. 12), such a sentiment of "simulacrum" is encountered. Several amorphic and cryptic images from the twenties, the fifties, Classicism, Baroque art and Cubism, merge to create an overriding feeling or core of Romantic nostalgia. A conceptual approach is manifested in the eclectic imagery that evokes the sentiments of whole eras. In reviving connotative sentiments through association, a functional and faded reappropriation takes place. The imagery aspires to the poetic unboundedness of the metaphoric and symbolic realms in an effort to bridge distances between viewer and artwork, but the conglomeration of elements has led to an impasse: recognising the elements in their decontextualised Zusammenhang (relationships), evokes a feeling of contrivance. Although the fragmented imagery in this work is structured with great formal sensibility (Ovenden 1988: 51) and the edge between emotion and intellect is finely balanced, the expressive edge has been lost and the images become mere icons of bygone ages. In fact, it is so rationally put together that it becomes devoid of any "gut" feeling. The head of the Classical statue has lost its grandeur and it has been reduced to forced sentimentalism;

---

6 A certain coherence is detected in the notions of simulacrum, iconic copy, paradigm, and parergon, all being related to "model".

7 According to Barthes, signs imply certain relations: symbolic relations, that is, a relation of "reservoir" or organised memory therefore a paradigmatic relation, and a syntagmatic relation, a temporary association analogous to words uniting in a sentence (Sontag 1982: 211-212).

the references used for effect and convenience. The images have become emblematic in their revivalist form; simply iconic copies. The content attached to the stylistic conventions of the images in their original historical context, has been lost, due to arbitrary displacement. If the association or reference in current art is of a second-hand nature, as in *A Remembered Summer*, it must be an art of contrived sentimentalisation. This type of sentiment or consciousness could possibly be labelled as an art of marginalisation: the original or complete context of the image is subverted into partial or bracketed meaning.

The imagery in *A remembered summer* displays a Romantic symbolist tendency. The images as emblems, icons and symbols, function as metaphoric simulacra in this work, as perverse shadows of reality, a world of signs, not of substance. The metaphoric image becomes allegorical then; an emblematic fragment of the full associative meaning. According to Gilmour (1990: 52), "The shift toward the simulacrum might have the effect of producing indifference toward anything except momentary value". According to Fekete (1988: 35), such a radical, deconstructionist view is an obverse form of symbolism. The indeterminate character of deconstructionist signification deters the full articulation of the universality of symbolism, emphasising arbitrary symbolic relations, since it deals with the symbol in fragmented form. By stressing the validity of symbolic relations in local context, thus in the perceived traces of "presence", an arbitrary and indeterminate signification is met with.

Deconstructionist viewpoints in general do not foresee that universal or objective values will discontinue, but they question the validity of values as universal values [Fekete 1988: 124]. In Kiefer's *Wege der Weltweisheit - die Hermanns-Schlacht* (Ill. 13) a functionalistic aesthetic of manufacture is apparent in the use of an underlayer of woodcut collage in combination with overpainting. Art as an act is reflected in the time-consuming technique of the wood-cut, ambiguously combined with quick, loose, gestural painting, almost as if to demonstrate a change of mind or the artist's overruling or deconstruction of his own images. In this work, a hyperreal is created in which chronology in history is

9 Structural anthropology, for instance, has revealed through observation that there are differences amongst customs and myths but that what is constant, is not for instance a particular rule of marriage, but a pattern of such rules. Any variant will lend stability to a society by ensuring a cyclic order of exchange.

denied. An ambiguous historical “frame” is created, both asserting historical identity and negating historical authority.

In Wege der Weltweisheit, Kiefer has created a simulacrum to comment on a real event. Portraits of political figures, militarists, legendary figures and ordinary people are randomly and arbitrarily lined up, simulating the Jews who were lining up in the Second World War to be exterminated. On a personal level, the simulacrum may be meaningful to the artist, but it is lost in the broader context, because of the reliance on local information. To the uninitiated viewer, the associations embedded in the images are empty and nothing more than operational in creating interesting pictorial images. The images serve the function of being operational in terms of both meaningfulness and meaninglessness. The presentation of the figures in a nonchronological, serial manner does not render them meaningless, but in individual “otherness” and pluralist “togetherness”, that is, as German individuals, they are meaningless to the uninitiated viewer. The meaningfulness of the work is only located in its local value, the figures being well-known to the local viewer. Although it is possible to detect some universal given in the figures, their meaning as individuals in the broader universal context is deterred. Kiefer’s intentional Romantic use of mythological perspectives and historical materials in order to confront the limitations of modern man’s way of thinking, is so strongly imbued with local content that the viewer fails to grasp the full content of the work. Even in local context, the interpretations of the figures are indeterminate: the German poet, Von Fallersleben, for instance, can either/both be recognised for the political figure that he was, as poet or/and as private human being. In the painting, the strong dose of local content imbues it with a sense of autonomy.

Maybe within such poetic autonomy, the figures could start to function in “alterity”, that is, as models or allegories of being. It is Gilmour’s view that Kiefer resists the “equivalency valuation” and invests images “with supports falling outside the equivalency arena of industrial simulacra” (1990: 52-53). In this manner, Kiefer stresses the nobility of human labour, since he is obsessed with “recovery from a blighted history, ... artistic struggle ... and ... the dulling of perception and feeling that a mass-media, technologically preoccupied culture effects in us” (Loughery 1991: 72). The painting thus becomes a Romantic rebellion against the domination of technology. It functions autonomously in liberation as a poetic entity. Fekete argues that

... art’s praxis has become autonomised, consigned to a realm outside the centre(s) of societal production and reproduction, its praxis is a pseudo-praxis, a praxis that transforms without external societal effects. ... Their meaning is a semblance of truth without domination; their purposelessness is their form of resistance to exchange - a form that is harrassed and subject to defeat. ... The autonomy of art is the excess, the nonidentical, that allows identity thinking to continue unharrassed. [Fekete 1988: 110-111, my emphasis]
Yet, although the autonomy of artmaking is a form of Romantic rebellion against the domination of technology, it is an ironic form of rebellion, since in both *A Remembered Summer* and *Wege der Weltweisheit* the *parerga* as simulacra display a strong sense of manufacture and production. They have been created by an artist who is exposed to and part of the technologically preoccupied culture of the twentieth century.

### 3.3.2 the function of collage

To deconstruct presupposes a construct. Any deconstruction is subordinated to and preconditioned by the existence of certain structures. Collage as an established medium in twentieth century artmaking, confirms the triumph of technology in modern society; it is proof of the assimilation of technology into the products of culture and art. Constructed, "manufactured" surfaces are indicative of a conceptual, technological attitude. Collage is fragmentation in essence and thus a form of symbolic representation, since it reflects a macrocosmos within the microcosmos of the fragment.

The use of collage and fragmentation in my own and Kiefer's work is accompanied by an effect of confrontation, since it challenges traditional modes of coherent and logical representation. Incoherence violates the viewer's chronological sense of time and place and jars him/her into response. Tytell describes the effect of fragment on the mind as "a sort of linguistic shrapnel, a digressive explosion" (1981: 7). The use of collage as fragment introduces the notion of self-reference to the artwork next to other forms of reference and association. In an aesthetic of fragmentation, as in deconstruction, an idealism also surfaces, if only in conceptual idea. Black (1981: 194) remarks that the successful assimilation of partial samples of natural beauty into a composite whole as envisioned by classical and neoclassical theorists was subtly but radically revised by the Romantics, who located ideal beauty beyond the pale of the representable. This important shift vastly enlarged the scope of the function of the fragment. As wholeness itself was held by the Romantics to be unrepresentable, the fragment came to be recognised, especially by German Romantic authors such as Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, as the all-important representational form ... A characteristic feature of Romanticism, then, is its replacement of a composite by a fragmentary ... aesthetic in which wholeness can only be represented by a part, rather than by a combination of parts.

11 Although I mention only collage in this regard, other techniques, such as montage, are also relevant in this discourse. I prefer to use the term "collage" to designate all kinds of additions or attachments to the surface.
By undermining systematic relationships (Kuspit 1983a: 140), collage functions autonomously since it has a perspective and world of its own. This self-determining aspect suspends absolute value judgments and deconstructs logocentric systems, since it functions as an autonomous, metaphoric extension of naturalistic presentation, rebelling against such traditions.

In my work, in which deconstructivism is evident, collage plays a vital role. To strengthen the idea of structures of meaning in all the works, paint and collage are applied in such a way as to enhance the conceptual aspect of the work. Surfaces are built up with different materials, such as paper, canvas, cloth, glue, plaster of paris and others, to create a physical structure of layers of various depths. In much the same way as the Cubists started using collage, an almost sculptural construct of materials creates multi-layered meanings. Via tactile, excavated surfaces, the perceived pictorial reality of the artwork is extended. Paint is applied in various thicknesses so that the medium itself becomes a vehicle of metaphor for meaning and enters into dialectical relationship with the viewer. Collage engages the spectator by making surfaces more expressive and touchable, thus “enhancing” the canvas, but it also confronts the viewer more directly. A closer relationship between viewer, artwork and artist is consequently arrived at.

Collage as medium serves the function of extending the physical boundaries of the artwork, thus imbuing the parergonality with specific meaning as construct. Collage is an ambiguous medium since the painter denies the painting surface by adding to it. Just as deconstruction is primarily an intellectual consciousness, collage is also first and foremost a product of intellectual analysis (with transcending implications), although it adds more emotional or expressive content to the work. Especially as a product of conceptual thinking and intentional idea, collage, through its expressive qualities, engages the viewer into an alternative "constructed" reality or hyperreal, which may consist of several constituted realities.

The use of the black garbage bag as collage material in my work, Kraal (Ill. 14), is a literal reference to a “garbage” concept (of specific relevance in the historico-politico context of post-apartheid South Africa). In this work, there is a close interceding link between the function of collage, myth and culture. The synthetic bag is shiny and black, a self-referent material which is a manufactured product, but

---

which has become aesthetisised. Such an aesthetic is essentially Romantic, crucially so according to Kuspit (1983a: 140), since it deals with art's eagerness to share in the explosion of technique (characteristic of the Industrial Revolution). The boundaries between art and life merge when the black bag as collage is associated with a culture of “junk” and consumerism. Transforming discarded or “useless” materials into art, is often viewed with suspicion: in Kuspit's words, “the whole process is so patently a mockery of conventional conceptions of art-making - ... that it becomes hard to take collage seriously as art” (Kuspit 1983a: 124).

Yet, collage is not part of a reductionist strategy, but “signals an expanded sense of the possibilities and effectiveness of art” (Kuspit 1983a: 125-126). It emphasises the physicality of the artwork beyond the boundaries of customary usage, becoming a form of deconstructivism. The use of the black bag as collage reflects an ambiguous kind of fragmentation, since it continually “flutter[s] on the frontier between meaninglessness and deep metaphysical significance” (Shattuck 1981: 37).

The black bag has been overpainted, so that the viewer only recognises the black bag by close inspection. The fragmented use of the black bag imbues the form of the image with a sense of anti-structure, refusing a comfortable structural “fit”. Such a deconstructionist aesthetic displays an ethos of the “junkyard” (Shattuck 1981: 37), composing and decomposing from the ruins of society and manufacturing meaning from the ruins of a culture of synthetic production.

According to Rodari, the collagist is faced “with elements which are utterly alien to one another, mute amorphous elements, useless in their crippling isolation”, so that he/she “continues to exercise the privilege of setting off, simply by the choices he makes, the explosive charge embedded in each particle of reality” (Rodari 1988: 75). This emphasises the importance of each and every particle of substance when applying collage and features the issue of locality once again. The dried strand of glue, the torn paper, the spikily applied paint - all have inherent metaphoric qualities. In using the black bag, paper, canvas, cloth and plaster of paris as collage material, the “two opposed forces of control and lyricism” (Rodari 1988: 131) come together.

The colour black, already indicated as having strong mythic content, is one of absolutes, referring to strong political viewpoints, which tend to be absolute in character in contemporary South Africa. The black bag refers to both Black exploitation and Black ideologies that are currently found in South Africa. A sense of time is embedded in the concept of the bag of garbage - bought, used and discarded; or grown and cut off to become compost. The ouroboros concept of infinite recycling is applicable to a mundane object: the mythic in the everyday is revealed in an ironical way. A shiny black surface could also be related to the glittery black garb of rock band members, the dark atmosphere in which they perform and a numbness of senses which is produced by
the overpowering sound. All is equalised, nothing matters in such a
state of a dulling of the senses which is typical of the apathetic spirit
of our time. Rodari describes the collage in Futurist art of early
twentieth century as “loud and fast”, in order to “capture the rhythms
of modernity” (Rodari 1988: 47).

Bent on overthrowing the established order and ushering in a new age
of emergency, the Futurists viewed struggle, including armed struggle,
as a vital part of their moral and aesthetic philosophy. They saw war as
the supreme expression of dynamic forces, a jubilant explosion of ener­
gies blowing away the inertia of traditionalism. [Rodari 1988: 49]

The duplication of reality via the collage of the black bag, a piece of an
existing reality, to another reality(s), leads to synchronic meaning. By
“interruption” of the spatiality of the canvas, a continuation of truth in
synchronic time takes place. Synchronic time is a mythical concept and
as such collage can rightfully be described as an entity belonging to the
fourth dimension, abandoning “the old system of the single viewpoint”
in favour of “the virtually unbroken temporal continuum” (Rodari 1988:
9). The relativism involved in the relationships which develop when
collage is used, underlines the paradigmatic shift in twentieth century
manifesting as a rejection of direct representation (Craige 1983: 2). The
notion of the parergon probably hosts the ultimate form of such
rejection, being a space that is inscribed without being seen, yet without
any meaning being lost in the process. The relativistic stance is
pragmatic in essence, so that collage adds to the deconstructionist
viewpoint that no artwork has any fixed meaning; it is the viewer who
establishes the meaning. As Craige (1983: 5) maintains, meaning is
contextual (this viewpoint does not exclude the phenomenological stance
that an artwork has an autonomous meaning of its own which is
responsible for the possibility of revisionism).

The ambiguous combination of extremities as encountered in collage as
fragmentation, is typical of Romanticism, constantly moving on the edge
(exemplified in Jung’s well-known archetypal hate/love dualism, and the
Apollo/Dionysus duality). There is a further Romantic association in the
absolutism of both black and white as colours, an absolutism which
imbues them with mystic qualities and emotionalism, since they are the
colours that are often associated with boundary situations such as death.

Black-and-white is also typical of Modernist Expressionism. The heritage
of the technique of the early twentieth century black-and-white
woodcuts of, for instance, Munch and Kirchner, found its way into the
work of Kiefer in works such as Wege der Weltweisheit. In other works,
the collaged parts of black-and-white woodcut prints are substituted by
black-and-white paint, or black-and-white photographs. In the
black-and-white combination, Romanticism and Expressionism converge,
In *Dein Goldenes Haar, Margarethe* ([Ill. 15]), such an assimilation of extremities via collage occurs. In this work, Kiefer uses straw as collage, which he views as "a kind of manure, that is, a form of energy that provides warmth in winter" (Rosenthal 1987: 95). Various paradoxical associations are evoked via the use of straw: a barren dry landscape; feeding for animals; the romantic concept of love in the hay. Concepts of destruction (the barren landscape) are unified with concepts of generation/new creation (straw as fodder), via a potent metaphor.

Kiefer first used straw in a significant manner in his works from 1981-1982. The works are based on the Margarete/Shulamite theme, founded on *Todesfuge (Death Fugue)*, a poem written by Paul Celan in the concentration camp in 1945 and published in 1952 (Rosenthal 1987: 95). The poem is full of paradoxical images, as in the sixth verse:

```
Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at sundown and in the morning we drink
and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eyes
are blue
he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his pack onto us he grants us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and daydreams death is a master from Ger-
man
your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith
```

Margarete is the blond woman, of suspected Aryan identity; Shulamite is the Jewish woman, who has black hair owing to her race. Ironically, her black hair has been burnt to ashes, becoming "blond". Collage and

---


14 Kiefer's usage of collage material can be compared to that of Joseph Beuys and a loosely knit group of Italians of the 1960s and early 1970s, commonly known as *Arte Povera* (Rosenthal 1987: 95). These artists wanted to retain the results of the effects of time, and any visual or chemical change in the materials was absolutely accepted as inherent to the work (Rosenthal 1987: 95). According to them, the primary elements which underlie life, are fundamental to the art object and carry metaphoric meaning. Beuys used fat and felt as insulating material and as a metaphor of transformation.

15 A translation of the full poem is found in Rosenthal 1987: 95-96.
paint thus become vehicles of irony: the black hair of Shulamite is expressively painted in impasto, although it is burnt to ashes; Margarete's hair is the hair of the living woman, but it is presented in the form of collaged straw, that is, flimsy and disintegratory in character. Kuspit (1984: 84-86) has pointed out that in the poem the two women are inseparable, united by being objects of love - the typical Romantic concept of desire. 16

The deconstructive painting method in which both feminine images are partly idealised, partly deconstructed, is taken a step further in the other "straw" works of 1981-1982 in which straw is physically burnt to produce the ashen quality. In Margarethe (Margarete) (1981) and Nürnberg (Nuremberg) (1982), the two images of the women completely fuse, with Margarete's hair simulating the ashen hair of Shulamite. The ashes are incorporated into the landscape, suggesting their symbolic relations as sisters returning to the earth, their cosmic mother. The depictions of the two women fuse via manufactured conceptual similarities. They become simulations of exemplary models around which the artist's commentary is constructed.

The use of straw as collage is self-referential in that a real piece of the dry and barren landscape of the destructed region of Pomerania is included in the painting. The straw is both real and metaphorical at the same time: a new set of symbolic relations are hence set up, since the collage duplicates a "real" reality, evokes a metaphysical reality and represents a whole landscape via the fragment of straw. A flux or a continuum is created in which the created and perceived realities merge. 

In Aaron of 1984-85 as in Auszug aus Ägypten of 1984 (Ill. 16), the magical rod (as found object) is physically collaged onto the painting surface. 17 The rod, as functional, real manufactured object, converges with a nexus of possible mythic associations, also including the notion

---

16 This view echoes the Nietzschean concept of apollonian/dionysian. Shulamite, by virtue of her dark character, dionysian, is being glorified through a sentimental idealisation of her "suffering" as a Jew. Rosenthal (1987: 99) notes that Margarete may be considered the latest manifestation of the German image of womanhood, formed in part by Goethe. In Faust, Margarete, also known as Gretchen, exhibits a pure love for Faust and at first leads a completely ethical and religious way of life, but love leads her to be deceitful. Her life ends "tragically" when she is redeemed: she only regains her honour in death. Interestingly enough, she lies on a bed of straw in prison. Goethe's vision of Gretchen, like the tragedy of Brunhilde, is a model to which Kiefer often refers, yet his work reveals ambivalence in the two figures' implied purity (Rosenthal 1987: 99).

17 Anselm Kiefer, Departure from Egypt (1984). Oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac, and straw on canvas (in two parts), with lead, 379.7 x 561.3 cm. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Rosenthal 1987, Pl. 68).
of self-reference. The rod resembles a key, especially in the latter work, and associations of new ways/paths opening up, are made. It could also be associated with the rod of God with which He created the cosmos, and separated fire, water, earth, air. The rod also resembles the sword, used in works such as *Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater* (My Father Promised me a Sword) (1974) and *Notung* (Nothung) (1973). This powerful metaphor could be interpreted in several ways: the paintbrush/rod of the artist with which he transforms everyday reality; the sword of the Word (reference to Jewish religion; Romantic literary interests; semiotics in structuralism); and use of it in German folklore, for instance Siegfried pulling the sword from the tree to free Brunhilde (also in Wagner’s opera, *Die Walküre*) and the holy spear of Parcifal. All of these are phallic in character, potent like military weapons.

The use of such “raw” collage destroys the idea that “the imitation of nature is the basis of art” (Kuspit 1983a: 142). It also deconstructs the idea that life is a stable whole, since art and life are constantly involved in exciting and new relationships. The fragmentation in collage creates and renews the possibility of a creative flux by engaging the unknown as a permanent partner. Collage does not deter meaningful signification, since it hybridises the fragments to the point of their becoming symbols.

It would thus seem that the *parerga* induced by collage involve a radical questioning of the traditional relationships of art and life; by aesthetising the real and the mundane object via its incorporation as collage in the artwork, alternative forms of representation are created. The use of collage as manufacture acknowledges the dominating influence of technology in artmaking. Such *parerga* thus harbour metaphoric meaning in hybridised form, but in simulated form also, since collage simulates worlds via references. Single worlds are posited via collage, which deconstruct the stable process of the imitation of nature in artmaking as well as the stable, logical constructing of *parerga*.

Kuspit (1983a: 143) emphatically states that, according to him, collage is “the realisation of the Romantic principle in art”. The relationship between Romanticism and an aesthetic of deconstruction in the light of a culture of manufacture and production will therefore be examined in the investigation of the *parergon* as a condition.

---

3.4 ROMANTICISM AND CONDITION

The found objects that were chosen for this discussion are representative of raw technology and manufacture. MacFarlane (1988: 77) sees the triumph of Minimalism in the twentieth century being reflected in cryptic artworks and language; such untransformed materials contain "concealed" meanings and presences so that the found object functions as a veil screening possible meanings. The found materials or objects, as symbolic figurations, form part of an aesthetic which subverts the traditional viewpoints of art as the imitation of nature: the depiction of the "real" has become a symbolic act in which the real object is transformed in the imagination of the viewer via displacement. This sense of displacement is a fundamentally Romantic notion which is met with in the concepts of ouroboros, recycling and transcendence. According to MacFarlane (1988: 80), this "singularly non-aesthetic aesthetics combines 20th century romanticism with anti-art to a degree that would seem ironic outside the context of Deconstruction".

A sense of displacement has already been argued regarding the parergon in terms of continual subjective shifts in interpretation. Since the ambiguous parergon exists in unseen capacity, continually in a flux of manufactured constructions and deconstructions, it discloses a character of unboundedness, although consenting paradoxically to a description of "frame". The parergon is furthermore alterable and temporal, which induces the association of such a condition with the idea of a Romantic unknown.

3.4.1 manufactured sentiment

Rosenblum describes the eclecticism in New Romantic art as a secondhand consciousness: by means of its interchangeability, it has become "an [indifferent] imitation of past historical revisions" (Cumming 1988c: 10).

... [I]t's a kind of double revival, it's a Chinese Box situation, of now a revival of styles being a revival of that kind of eclecticism that characterised so much [nineteenth century] Romantic painting and architecture. ... There are precious few artists of any real interest today who claim for art some kind of spiritual and moral force in the modern world. [Rosenblum in interview with Cumming 1988c: 8]

The notions of neo-ism and revivalism signify a first "original" movement, but since the revivals are not the originals themselves, they only resuscitate the connotative sentiments of the eras. As such, they become copies of the originals, entering a flux of versions of unknown "firsts" and creating a condition of collapse and displacement. Although
collapse is evident in the unsure position concerning mythic origins in contemporary Romanticism, a condition of interplay of texts is also evident. Within the collapse, a state of arbitrary play of interpretations and references is reached in which hierarchy has been discarded.

In post-industrialist mode, Kiefer has opted for an over-painted photograph in Durchzug durch das Rote Meer (1986 - 1987), (III. 17), producing instant images of sky, earth and water via the photographic process. Kiefer makes use of an objective, seemingly apathetic copier of reality, the camera, to present traumatic Jewish history in revisionist form, which introduces alternative meaning to the events. In this series of photographs, the monotony of the black-and-white photograph evokes the spirituality of revivalism, of copy and recapture. Soft grey tones enhance the idea of an “end-of-the century condition in which shadows ... prevail” (Ashton 1988: 30), so that the same quiet spirit which inhabits libraries and books is evoked.

The fourth component of the mythic four elements of the earth, namely fire, is revisionistically included in a modern variant, the electrical cord and plug. It has lost its vigour, energy and drama to grey monotones with occasional white and black highlights, creating an understated sophisticated setting. Durchzug durch das Rote Meer thus displays a sentiment of revivalist Romanticism, reflecting a sense of anti-art, minimalism and the Ortegaian collapse of Being, since there are manufactured references in written language to the past, but the mode of the presentation is still cool, grey and machine-like.

Yet, Kiefer overrides such a de-sentimentalised form of presentation by overpainting and inscribing images and words onto the photographic imagery in order to imbue the lifeless imagery with meaning and to revive sentiments for a long lost past. The works may be seen as Romantic because of the evocation of an idealised past in order to restore the German collapsed pride; it is furthermore Romantic in the flight from the present into an unknown mythic past. Such a past, serves as model to resuscitate nationalistic sentiments. Since the work in totality is an effective depiction of the contemporary culture of machine, the contemporary reality of the artwork has become a narrative alibi via which the past is resurrected. Conceptually, the historic event signifies a

---


20 The myth of the Red Sea episode recalls a period in Jewish history during which the Israelites were constantly oppressed, pursued and murdered by the Egyptians. While being pursued by the Egyptian soldiers, the sea miraculously opened up in front of the Israelites to form a dry pathway through, engulfing only the pursuers.
passage from the old into the new. The historical references suggest a wish for shamanic renewal and the entering of a zone of "freedom", thus transcendence, similar to the strategies of deconstruction. The past is idealised in order to create a projection for the future. Yet, neither the old nor the new is portrayed, but the passage through the Red sea. Both the old and the new are present. As such the imagery subscribes to a Romantic vision of renewal and recovery from collapse.

3.4.2 a manufactured unknown

In Kiefer's *Durchzug durch das Rote Meer* a radical unknown is manufactured concerning both the past and the future. As a New Romantic, Kiefer is acutely aware of his historical boundaries, but an ambiguous interpretation of history is rendered. Besides the reference to the past, apocalyptic fears are expressed via the leadgrey use of colour which evokes associations of a nuclear age. As such, an existential fear of the unknown is expressed. By recalling both mythic and real history, intermingling the two, Kiefer does not express a preference or a boundary. An unsure position is reached, further enhanced by the fact that the real historic event which is referred to, might be completely unknown to some viewers. By enclosing both the real and the mythic in his references, Kiefer manufactures an abysmal mixture of historical certainties and uncertainties. In this manner, he gives credibility to hypothetical situations such as apocalypse.21

The deconstructionist state of uncertainty, play and collapse must be brought into relation with the Romantic notion of the "unknown", a state Romantics continually aspire to. The production of a Romantic sentimental spirituality surrounding the artwork, is in principle premised on uncertainty and hypothesis: the experience of a sense of collapse induces the wish for an idealised state of recovery. Yet, the ideal state is not defined; it is a suggested hypothetic consequence of the presently experienced state of collapse. It is thus an unknown state which is arbitrarily constructed and deconstructed, like the *parergon*. The artist cannot fully control the meaningfulness of his own creation, just like the viewer is confronted by an unknown which has to be discovered. Both are challenged by an unchallengeable, known yet unknown event.

21 In discussion with other artists, Kiefer warns that linear causal interpretation of history might validate possible future disasters. Events must rather be interpreted in a non-linear way (Burckhardt 1988: 157).
The resurgence of Romantic artworks, especially in the late twentieth century, may be seen as a desire to return to humanistic values. Maybe the Angst in view of the change of millenium (a historical unknown), also an existential crisis, could have cultivated the Romantic retrospectionist cult in late twentieth century - holding the breath to see what’s going to happen, taking stock of what has happened so far. Maybe the re-emergence of myth in artmaking is a Romantic attempt of retaliation from the domination of technology and dehumanisation. Nonetheless, in the present Romanticism, an attitude is detected which revels in the human reality with which the work deals (Ortega 1968: 11). At the same time, the present Romanticism, being post-industrialist and deconstructionist in nature, also displays dehumanisation, since the influences of the spirit of a time are unavoidable. Consequently, in accordance with John Griffiths’ view, the parergonality of New Romantic works may be regarded as never “pure and simple” (Griffiths 1988d: 53) and converges in many instances with deconstruction, since it ironically encompasses both a transcendental idealism and a sceptical attitude concerning other presences except the present ones.

3.4.3 production, woman and threat

It has been argued already that the parergon uncovers the technological underpinning in artworks in which the notion of manufacture is a determining component. In the technological context, there is a firm relationship between woman and the machine. In the contemporary world of film and comic strips, the idea of woman is often interlaced with technology as a kind of Maschinenmensch or robot (Huyssen 1986: 68). The concept of production is furthermore related to the woman in labour, the “workings” of the machine being allegorical to the actual process of giving birth.

It has also been debated that deconstructionists such as Derrida view rational structures and logocentric systems as constructs or tracings which are erected over abysses of nothingness. Such a conception is allegorical of the fusion of machine (construct) and woman (abyss.space). These notions correspond with the prominence of writing in deconstruction, as well as with the construction of parerga, as forms

22 I do not negate the firm relationship between man and machine here, which probably has a longer history than that of woman and machine. There is a difference, however, in that man is usually associated with power, strength and heroism in the robot, while woman is usually seen as a functioning machine, having great determination and perseverance. Examples here might include Catwoman versus Batman, or Supergirl versus Superman.
of production, being the production or manufacturing of signs onto a "blank space".23

The element of threat which is contained in both the notions of the machine and the Romantic unknown corresponds with the "blankness" or "unknown space" of the parergon. Threat and fear regard apocalyptic sentiments which are embodied in the metaphoric intermingling of woman and machine. According to Huyssen, digressing historically, nineteenth century visions of a blindly functioning world machine were the result of mechanisation. Previously, the android represented human genius, yet, after experiencing so many decades of the negative influences of technology and mechanisation, the machine has taken on nightmarish dimensions to the extent of threatening human life. In the world of mass-culture, there are many examples of woman as vampire or menace, which is an emancipatory definition of woman with strong links with technology.24 Huyssen (1986: 70) argues that there is reason to suspect that the pairing of woman with the machine is a complex process of projection and displacement (or deconstruction).

The fears and perceptual anxieties emanating from ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality, reflecting in the Freudian account, the male castration anxiety. This projection was relatively easy to make; although woman had traditionally been seen as standing in closer relationship to nature than man, nature itself, since the 18th century, had become a mesh of significations which all had one thing in common: otherness; by their very existence they raised fears and threatened male authority and control. [Huyssen 1986: 70]

In the above-mentioned quotation, the destructiveness of the machine is decoded into a symbolism of female aggression, which may be illustrated via Kiefer's Palette mit Flügeln (Ill. 18), in which such intermingling of woman and machine becomes manifest.25 The wings, a mutated metaphor for the androgynous angel, converges with the idea

---

23 "A writing that is sensible, finite, and so on, is designated as writing in the literal sense; it is thus thought on the side of culture, technique, and artifice ... " (Derrida 1976: 15).

24 Arguments such as Wolff's (1983: 23) which regard the absence of woman in the history of the arts as the result of ideological structures, may well be applied to see woman's equation with the machine also as a consequence of ideology.

25 Anselm Kiefer, Palette with Wings. Lead, steel and tin, 280 x 350 x 100 cm. Private collection (Rosenthal, Pl.73).
of an android bird. The feminine form of the palette as the central "body" of the bird, provides it with an overwhelmingly female character. In association, the flying palette corresponds with the aeroplane, also a "flying bird", but primarily a machine, surveying and watching over the action underneath. The scale of the work (280 x 350 x 100 cm), as well as the threatening spread wings, let it tower menacingly over the viewer. The visual weight of the lead wings evokes an ominous feeling and a tired, limp look, recalling the flight of Icarus who came too close to the sun in the process of which the wax on his wings melted and he plunged into the sea (Mayerson 1971: 319). In Huyssen’s language, the female principle becomes a “machine-vamp” or an allegorical “technology-out-of-control” (1986: 78). The latter suggests a mood which reflects Hall’s apocalyptic interpretation of Kiefer’s work: according to him, it is “rooted in the perception that the millenium is dawning over an age stripped of all millenial ambition” (Hall 1992: 283).26

In my work, Kraal (Ill. 14), an intermingling of the ideas of woman and machine also takes place. The “black bag” as collage is a manufactured, found material, dominating the rest of the images in terms of scale. It is smothering the rest of the imagery by means of its overgrown size. As such, it metaphorically conveys the idea that cultural life is threatened by the overriding influence of technology. The “overgrown” collaged image recalls the process of birth (a female preoccupation) which, in turn, revives the myth of ouroboros.27 As such, the notions of production, threat and woman become intermingled in the parerga around such artworks.

Some similarities between deconstruction and Romanticism have been pointed out in this chapter: both display an open-ended consciousness, with an overall inclination towards synthesis. Both are concerned with a negation of authority: according to Ricoeur (1981: 66), “romanticism wages its war on a terrain ... on which the role of tradition and authority in the process of interpretation are in dispute”. The main objection against a postulated similarity between deconstruction and Romanticism concerns origins and myth: deconstructionists raise doubts on both logos and mythos, resulting in an epistemological “unknown”, an essentially Romantic notion.

26 In the next chapter, the notion of apocalypse is discussed in greater detail.

27 Collage may be seen as a “feminine” medium, being a form of layering and fragmentation, thus creating mysterious veils in the presentation of the imagery. The technique of assembling and combining fragments of images in the form of collage, furthermore recalls the culture of craft, which is a traditionally female pastime.
Romantics are, however, also not always sure of what they will encounter in their aspiration to transcendence. Although deconstruction does not share the same enthusiasm for tradition as the Romantic, the deconstructionist cannot do without the historical past to deconstruct, deconstruction becomes pointless. The removal of set norms in deconstruction leaves "a vacant niche" (Gilmour 1990: 57), which the humanistic outlook found in Romanticism seems to fill by reversing to myth and history. Schwartz (1983: 120) maintains that the intense isolation and alienation experienced by twentieth century technological man/woman, renders the age even more "romantic" than the last. Manufacturing the "romantic" in the f'cool twentieth century, incorporating both images and materials in the process, increases its powerfulness, instead of reducing it to mere arbitrary iconic appropriations. The notions of the Romantic unknown and the poetic become much weightier within a realm motivated by production models premised on certainty and total control.

The twentieth century sense of collapsing Being, uncertainty and arbitrariness are consequences of the domination of technology and production. The construction of parerga around artworks comments about such a mode of thinking at a certain time and place. The nature of parerga reveals the persisting ideological veil of production. The artwork, as meeting place of maker and audience, becomes a mirror in which the viewers see themselves and their time. Although there is an awareness in late twentieth century that boundaries are debatable and alterable, exactly this awareness draws a specific characteristic paradigm around the "mechanics" of the age. The functional structures of the age differ from those in other ages: the Romanticism is different, the content of mythic images is different and associations have a certain "colouring", because of the spirit of the time. Deconstruction, as a radical measure to transgress and deconstruct boundaries, is still a form of "structure" or "construct". If deconstruction rebels against closed structures, it still functions in accordance with a certain ideology which creates structures.

It should have become clear in this chapter that artmaking in the late twentieth century is not a simplistic venture as the age reveals ironic and paradoxical structures of meaning. In images and references, the role of a spirit of the time is evident, as well as the altered function of association and myth. Codes of connotations are transgressed as the trans-historical journey of association is undertaken, influenced by a culture of production and manufacture.

The above-mentioned factors invoke the question of how the artwork, as a poetic entity, functions within such a consciousness. If the created object is nothing more than a testification to or indication of how it has been produced, even its meaning reduced to synthetically produced meaning, the poetic parergon is deconstructed to a very concrete realm. In the next chapter, the artist as alchemist, as forger, will be focussed
on, since such roleplaying closely resembles the productionist act of artmaking in the present age of technology.
Den Schmerz kann ich auch angesichts einer Landschaft oder eines Steins empfinden. ... ich versuche zu sehen, wo in der Unendlichkeit ich mich befinde, und versuche das, was um mich herumliegt, darzustellen. (Anselm Kiefer in Burckhardt 1988: 113-114)¹

In the foregoing chapters, a sceptical attitude was adopted concerning the nature of knowledge, interpretation and *parergon*. The sceptical mood that has been created, does not provide for certainty in truth or absolutism in interpretation. It was argued that it is impossible to arrive at final answers and single viewpoints, since another interpretation becomes possible the moment the hermeneutic circle is on the verge of closing. It has been argued that in the contemporary culture which is dominated by sophisticated technology, there is a collapse in Being as a result of an alienation from the true self.

¹ I can experience the pain also by looking at a landscape or a stone, ... I am trying to discover where I am in infinity, and to render that which surrounds me (my transl.).
Theorists writing about postmodernity seem to display an extraordinary awareness of boundaries, both tracing frameworks for arguments and contesting fixed viewpoints or interpretations: writers such as Ferenc Fehér, Peter Bürger and Suzi Gablik, argue a crisis in postmodernity, due to a condition in which there is a so-called end of the *avant-garde* in which all vision would be lost. This viewpoint is also reflected in the opinion of Elliott Schwartz (1983: 99):

[There are] ... virtually no certainties ... for the artist; the crossing of boundaries, confusion of categories, and redefinitions of limits that used to characterize the work of a few hardy, outrageously avant-garde souls are now familiar challenges (or problems, or crises) for us all. In that sense, the use of the word "relativism" in a discussion of contemporary art is apt. [my emphasis]

According to Schwartz, the notion of the *avant-garde* is lost, because Post-Modern style and deconstruction are about crossing boundaries which has become an accepted way of life in late twentieth century. A traumatic condition presently exists, an anxious drifting position like mythic Apollo on the dolphin's back on the waves in which the dismantling of traditional contentions is generally practiced.

In the past several events, philosophies or crises have radically altered the course of history. Certain phenomena occurring in history can accelerate or revolutionise the historical process; these might be called invasions. In this regard, Wiener (1973-1974: 592) quotes Jacob Burckhardt's view of crises, arguing that they may be regarded as "authentic signs of vitality". Crisis situations may thus be considered as proof of growth. Deconstruction as a radical revisionism of history, might be seen as such a crisis or a form of interpretation with radical implications, since crises usually imply a break in continuity (Wiener 1973-1974: 594). Romanticism as phenomenon also presents particular hermeneutic problems, thus also a crisis, as it defies precise historical bounding and appears in fragmented form in different historical periods. Both deconstruction and Romanticism as crises (in terms of interpretational paradigms) concern realms of "purified" states by envisaging existential growth via the injection of vitality.²

The position of artmaking in such a crisis situation in modes of knowing and Being will be investigated in this chapter. The artist will be interpreted as assuming the role of forger or alchemist as a kind of summarising closing for the dissertation. It will be argued that the

---

² Often in Romantic works, the experienced historical situation provides the artist/author with an existential crisis, such as war, death, alienation or suffering.
parergon is not pure or simple, but involves a complex process of fused associations in which the one is folded into the other.

4.1 FUSION

Parergon is an ambiguous synonym for construct which has positive connotations, lending itself to decodification as, for instance, replacement, displacement, adjustment, metamorphosis, transformation, recovering or alteration. In the manifold parerga that are simultaneously constructed around artworks, a fusion takes place in which meanings are merged. The associations that are evoked by the “coffin” of imperturbable information of the artwork, fuse so that the parergon becomes an intricate and complex construction of parerga which, in totality, are nearer to the “inner meaning” of the work than a single viewpoint interpretation. As such, deconstruction becomes a creative act which demolishes boundaries in its passionate reconstruction of a meaningless world in crisis.

Crises or boundary situations have often instigated poetic and imaginative responses from artists, since when hypothetical situations arise, the unknown is met, or poetic images are created, the imagination is stirred. The parergon is a consequence of the dynamic activity of the artist’s imagination. It is in the imagination that barriers between viewer and artwork are deconstructed and they meet; it is in the imagination that the self is extended into alterity. The imagination is the breeding place for parerga, since association is premised on imagination, connotation and inference and it is in the imagination that alibi and hyperreals are constructed to supplement the present and to resurrect the past.

In an age in crisis, Schwartz (1983: 103) sees performance, or the fusitive act of imaginative making, as the only form of certainty there is. Orchestrating different “voices” into one artwork, becoming a “pretext, mythotext, text, heterotext, context, metatext, posttext, and paratext”, leads to a triumph of multiple form” (Klinkowitz 1988: 122). As such, the creative ritual of artmaking, as a deconstructivism, celebrates and uncovers meaning in an expanded sense. This would not have been possible in a delineated closed structure.

In Kiefer’s sculpture Zweistromland (1985 - 1989), (Ill. 19), “a number of highly different levels of imagination are combined: what is close at hand (the studio, the brickwork) and what is remote (the Middle East); the present and the long-past; the dead and the living; transience and permanence” (Zweite 1989: 97). A radical fusion of texts occurs in this

work in which several parerga merge to create an expanded meaning structure. The two-part lead library, labelled “Tigris” and “Euphrate”, fuses the apparent mythic dualism in the foundation of the cosmos—the male/female. Religious connotations fuse as Eastern and Western Catholic beliefs intermingle in the reference to a sacred Mother, who is the initiator of “salvation” or “transcendence”. While acknowledging an earth-mother in the idea of a cradle of civilisation, long ago situated in the Middle East, the spiritual concept of a sacred goddess (a High Priestess) is celebrated, deconstructing patriarchal notions of a male God. The two rivers, the two sides of the library, are identical, like twins, stressing the metaphoric meaning of river/water as flux and fusion. Ironically, although reference is made to water, a feminine principle of life-giving, the library is presented in the lifeless, hard masculine material of lead, diffusing traditional divisions between the sexes.

In Zweistromland the mental horizon of consciousness is opened up to reveal insight into the modern human condition: the viewer knows that ancient Mesopotamia, now the Middle East, constitutes an important part of our history, but we have become oblivious of that history. It is so far back that we have to look it up in a book, but the lead Book is too heavy to open and it becomes inaccessible. We have lost a part of our heritage and are left with the present. A select few might make the effort to open one of the lead Books and, contrary to expectation, photographs of historic places are found which are unknown to the general public, such as the steps of the ruined Temple of Augustus at Samaria in Book 65 (which also inspired the painting of Osiris and Isis, Ill. 20) (Zweite 1989: 118). No answer is given and, one is left with an empty feeling. Yet, it is in the arbitrary arrangement of the Books, of history, that the imagination is stirred in order to make sense of both present and past. The ordered, structured arrangement of the Books on the shelves is transcended: the viewers can rearrange the Books in any order, even disorder them into a chaotic state. The viewers actively participate in the form and presentation of the work; as such they fuse with the work to become part of the parergon of the work via imaginative participation since they are engaged in the ritual of artmaking.
In the Romantic sensibility, the intellect seems to play a minor role in the face of imagination (Foster 1962: 90). The "visible" language of the artwork, activates the imagination of the viewer to such an extent that autonomous mental imaging takes place and logical or cognitive activity ends. In the imagination, associations, references and connotations fuse since the analytic activity of the rational and logical faculties is absent.

Foster (1962: 54), in his definition of the New Romantic sensibility, stresses the Romantic insistence on idealistic and humanistic rather than mechanistic or scientific explanation. The Romantic sensibility, as found in Zweistromland, reaches into the social realm, into a morality in which "meanings ... are not constituted by the self alone" (Kearney 1987: 95). Imagination is the breeding ground for Romantic humanitarian ideals as are met with in my own and Kiefer's works. The Romantic extension of the self regards an imaginary self, reflected in the historic event. By extending the self, a fusion of self, world and history, both mythic and chronological, is reached. The self is placed in a flux of being, incorporating present and past time in being. Although produced within the framework of the single consciousness of an artist, the "borrowing" of history mirrors the extension of the self into myriad parts, so that a fragmented complexity becomes emblematised. Accordingly, *parerga* may be seen as fused constructs of fragments, since the self is a fragmented self.

4.1.1 fragment and fusion

Kiefer's *Osiris und Isis* of 1985-1987 (Ill. 20) emits a spirituality of fusion and fragmentation. The central image in *Osiris und Isis* is a massive stepped pyramid, compiled of mastabas, metaphoric of multiple layers of collective meaning instigated by the fragment. A merging of the data of art and life takes place in this work, in which images of

---

5 In *Art and Illusion* (1956), Gombrich provided outlines for a linguistics of the visual image, a structuralist viewpoint in which the syntax and semantics of the image are construed into patterns (1956: 9). Such a view undermines the superiority of image to word. The politician and writer, Edmund Burke, already attacked such notions in the eighteenth century, denying that poetry or the poetical work could raise clear, distinct images in the mind of the reader/viewer (as encountered in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), edited by James T. Boulton, 1987. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.) According to Mitchell (1986: 50), Burke argued that the proper genius of language was found in invisible matters such as feeling, the sublime, the obscure, the mysterious and the incomprehensible, for which there are no words or language possible.


7 Also reminiscent of Beuys's building of the "cathedral" of synthesis in which life becomes
dismemberment and scattering evoke a deconstructive spirituality that is emblematic of a fragmented world. Pieces of broken crockery and string have been collaged onto the surface, overpainted with reddish tones to simulate blood and arteries. Kiefer "anachronistically combines pyramid and circuit panel" (Rosenthal 1987: 153) in this work, fusing fragments of cultures and transgresses barriers in time. Just as large quantities of water are necessary to make the nuclear reactor function properly, Isis’s tears fill and regenerate the Nile; while the blood pumps through the veins, time is ticking away. The concept of the cycle of life has been multiplied in fragmented form via the fusion of images of the connective circuit panel, the tidal ebb and flow of the river and the dialectic of death and monument.

The organic use of colour evokes a spirituality of decay, rubbish, compost and organic earth. A vast range of browns converge with black and white to create an amalgamation of cosmic, earthy elements and sophisticated technology, denied by the rendering of the image of a huge towering pyramid by strong perspectival means, surging up and away. In this work references are fused to achieve a holistic, expanded sense of time and place in parergon, thus also in meaning. The unified theme in this work is a suspicion of scientific advancement and a search for ancient roots, so that, within the boundaries of a single artwork, chronological time is thrown in a flux. The work fuses the restoration of a mythic past, the contemplation of the present and the anticipation of the future. Within a fragmented world, Kiefer attempts to extract spiritual meaning by searching for permanence and stability in the nonmaterial and mythical realms.

Hassan sees the incorporation of fragments in the act of fusion as a triumph of the greater sense of holism achieved as such (Klinkowtiz 1988: 122), echoing Eliade’s view on the participation process mentioned earlier. It has also been mentioned that collage is a primary form of fragmentation. According to Kuspit (1983: 145), collage as a construct of fragments “seems to center experience in the intensity of its immediacy” by being an amalgam of unresolved elements. In collage, as a primary form of deconstructivism, “the data of life and art - the fragments - indisputably exist, but there is no logic by which they can be ordered” (Kuspit 1983: 142). They fuse on the grounds of a corresponding iconic coding structure.

It is Margolis’s viewpoint that the “contemporary world has the distinction of believing (or, at least of harboring many who do believe) in the most unforced way possible, that the world is a flux” (1991: xii).
The word "flux" is another semantic inflection of the word "fusion", designating a subverted form of setting limits and indicating relativism. According to Margolis (1991: 147), relativism emerges in the deconstructionist project, since deconstructionists such as Derrida have to use the "various forms of logocentric thought and language so as to uncover, by internal subversion, evidence of a breach of the necessary, the originary, the closed, the privileged, the certain, the totalised, the invariant, which is to say, to enable our most comprehensive science to 'proclaim its limits'". The act of fusion in Post-Modern artmaking, concerns such relativism, which is linked to the concept of fragmented association. The imagery in Osiris und Isis is part of a "family" or nexus of relative issues, such as ancient alchemy, Egyptian myth, tragedy, fragmentation and nuclear warfare, which fuse in the theme of the work. The creative act thus concerns an amalgamation or flux of relative elements, the randomness of which is controlled by the vigilance of the creative consciousness.

In the ritual of constructing parerga around the work, a fusion of differing associations and interpretations occurs, setting up a dialectic between artist and viewer. The horizon of experience of the artist merges with that of the viewer as a result of the "coffin" of concrete references which have been built into the work. This fusion is similar to relativism in the sense of collecting disparate entities bound by similarities and entering them in close relationship. Lundin (1985: 25) sees the upward movement of the hermeneutic spiral of meaning as the moment when reader and artwork/text are joined as their horizons meet. These moments of fusion are indeterminate and unpredictable, however.

4.1.2 fusion as an alchemical process

The ritual of deconstructionist artmaking may be compared to an act of fusion which recalls a distillatory process, corresponding closely with the notions of alchemy and shamanism. Just like the artist is engaged

---

8 Prostituting the strategies of deconstruction to develop an aesthetic deconstructivism in this dissertation, is another form of Derridaian "blind" construct or flimsy logocentric network over an abyss of nothing. It is a temporal construct in which a relativism has been set up between deconstruction, artmaking and Romanticism, but which may be taken apart by anyone at any moment. Its limits have been set in order to produce its own dislocation.

9 In its primitive forms, alchemy concerns the behaviour of primitive man in which victory over death, disaster and temporality is gained through various acts and processes. The essence of alchemical practices is found in the desire to extract something beautiful, precious from nature. Eliade notes that: "On the plane of cultural history, it is ... permissible to say that the alchemists, in their desire to supercede Time, anticipated what is in fact the essence of the ideology of the modern world. Chemistry has received only insignificant fragments of the alchemical heritage. The bulk of this ... is to be found
with *prima materia*, that is, basic elements constructed and transformed into a meaningful statement, the alchemist forges a "post-mortem existence which [is] claimed to be indestructible" (Eliade 1956: 173). Alchemy, shamanism and deconstruction are primarily concerned with the concept of creation via the imagination, that is, creating new states of purified vision. Since the artist is primarily a creator, the artmaking process conjugates with alchemical and shamanistic processes, in which the outcome of such ritual processes cannot be precisely predicted.

The act of fusion is a form of ritual in which a transformation of profane space into transcendent space occurs when the real is transformed into alterity. According to Eliade (1954: 21), concrete time is then also transformed into mythical time.

Any ritual whatever, ... unfolds not only in a consecrated space (i.e., one different in essence from profane space) but also in a "sacred time", "once upon a time" (*in illo tempore, ab origine*), that is, when the ritual was performed for the first time by a god, an ancestor, or a hero. [Eliade 1954: 21]

Via repetition and participation, mythic and historic realities are taken possession of (Eliade 1954: 34) in artmaking. In the ritual act of imaginative artmaking, these realities fuse to reach a stage where past and present are abolished, restored and anticipated in the moment. In Kiefer's *Jerusalem* (Ill. 21), realities fuse in alchemical fashion, because of Kiefer's forging of materials and images in the painting. At closer inspection of the painting's encrusted surface it reveals multiple fragments and layers presented in the form of a relief. During an interview in December 1986, Kiefer explained his alchemical process of layering of fragmented materials in order to produce a deconstructed or reconstructed surface structure: he first created a landscape painting after which layers of hot lead and paint were added (Rosenthal 1987: 143). Several months later he peeled off parts of the lead, leaving patches, removing colours and textures and revealing others (Rosenthal 1987: 143). The excoriation of the surface regards a violent, obsessive, on-the-edge activity, treating the painting surface in a fetishistic way.

elsewhere - in the literary ideologies of Balzac and Victor Hugo, in the work of the naturalists, in the systems of political economy, whether capitalist, liberal or Marxist, in the secularised theologies of materialism, positivism and infinite progress - everywhere, in short, where there is faith in the limitless possibilities of homo faber; everywhere where the eschatological significance of labour, technology and the scientific exploitation of Nature reveals itself. [Eliade 1956: 173]

In Jerusalem, Kiefer's use of goldleaf is reminiscent of the refining alchemical process. According to Gilmour (1990: 132),

the process of alchemical transformation ... reflects a rigorous process of experimentation and alteration, which undermines the everyday understanding of reality, and it is unremitting in subjecting the materials under investigation to 'pulverisation', until something not otherwise evident may be made evident. This is what the metaphor of transformation into gold is suppose to convey.

This pulverisation of materials echoes the fragmentation found in many deconstructionist works, such as Osiris und Isis and Jerusalem, which leads to fragmented parerga being constructed around them. It is in the combination or fusion of the fragments that meaning or "gold" is extracted; it is also in the combination of interpretations or parerga around the "coffin" of information in the artwork, that the truth of the work may be discovered. According to Eliade (1956: 51-52),

The 'nobility' of gold is thus the fruit at its most mature; the other metals are 'common' because they are crude; 'not ripe'. In other words, Nature's final goal is the completion of the mineral kingdom, its ultimate 'maturation'. The natural transmutation of metals into gold is inscribed in their destiny. The tendency of Nature is to perfection, ... the alchemist ... assists Nature to fulfil her final goal ... to its supreme ripening, which is absolute immortality and liberty (gold being the symbol of sovereignty and autonomy).

11 It is Gilmour's viewpoint that in "associating the creative process with the positive potentials of alchemy, Kiefer reiterates an attitude toward alchemy shared by [the French dramatist Antonin] Artaud, who spoke of the Theater [sic] of Cruelty as an 'alchemical Theater" (Gilmour 1990: 131). "Artaud's understanding of the connection between the Theater [sic] of Cruelty and alchemy is that both address, 'on the spiritual and imaginary level', the transformation of 'matter into gold'" (Gilmour 1990: 131). Artaud challenges the classical mimetic theatre of the West and wants to eliminate the dominance of the author and the passivity of the audience (Gilmour 1990: 62).

12 In ancient alchemical procedures, an elixir was created which concerned the transmuting of base metals into gold, as the study of the origins of alchemy in Alexandrian Egypt shows (Ritter 1971: 150). This chemical prototypal procedure is allegorised into a mythos of life - death - new life in the alchemical aesthetic (Ritter 1971: 150), in which archaic sentiments are revived via the identification with primal and elemental forces.

13 Ancient cosmology often depicts an alchemical process in which dismembered parts, water or other substances such as blood are sprinkled into the furnace or over the fusing parts, imitating scattering sperm - impregnating, fertilising.

14 In ancient alchemical practices metal played a vital part, being associated with the origins of the cosmos. Metal ores are generated by the union of two principles, sulphur and mercury, and ores are seen as generative substances that are believed to be vital to the origins of life (Eliade 1956: 48).
4.2 FUSION AND THE SUBLIME

The alchemical aesthetic of fusion is tied to the notion of the sublime. The radical ambiguity which has been discovered in the conception of parergon is also a form of sublime, since the sublime of the parergon designates an animated state of continual signification.

The concept of the sublime which is attached to Jerusalem, is reflected in shamanic rituals which attempt to attain certain renewed states or to transcend the given reality. Likewise, the alchemist "takes up and perfects the work of Nature, while at the same time working to 'make' himself" (Eliade 1956: 47). The "new life" in alchemy is equivalent to a Romantic unknown. On the journey of discovery of the parergonality of Jerusalem, clues are discovered that let the realisation dawn that much more is at stake than a simple association of technology, alchemy, and artistic productivity. A fusion takes place in enclosing both Jerusalem's idyllic past, shattered contemporary state and potential apocalyptic future in the reference to the city. The idealised past is measured against the contemporary state of the city. The designation, Jerusalem, signifies

... the ultimate landscape in a Kiefer world, a holy city that has undergone thousands of years of struggle and change. Jerusalem epitomises a universal, eternal, religious ideal: as a pilgrimage site and promised land, it is a source of spiritual sustenance. The invocation of this name suggests the restitution of a perfect, paradisiacal state, which existed prior to the 'blemish'. [Rosenthal 1987: 143]

Consigning to a Romanticism, the goldleaf on the horizon line materially strengthens the metaphoric meaning of a holy unviolated state, of an empyrean realm or subliminal land inhabited by the purest of beings. Contrasting with the derelict and denuded land, the vision of

---

15 The seeking of the sublime, as a "purer" or "exalted" state (s.v. C.O.D., "sublime"), is an attempt to reconstruct the status quo or to discover the exalted in the ordinary. The word "sublime" can furthermore be used to describe the process of the change of a solid into a vapour, a semantic inflection of the word which has special implications for the understanding of the nature of the parergon, being the indeterminable "everything around" the artwork. The nineteenth century writer and critic, Edmund Burke, rationalised the sublime as that which lies beyond man’s control or comprehension, a pre- or post-rational activity, which effectuates feelings of repulsion, sorrow, terror, anguish or despair (admiration and exaltation could also be added to the list) (Vaughan 1978: 33). What seems to be consistent in both nineteenth and twentieth century viewpoints, is the fact that the sublime is manifested as a kind of recognition or experience in which the division between the cognitive and post-cognitive faculties is fused.

16 The similarity of the golden zone to the Valhalla of Wagner's Ring of the Nibelungen, and preceding that, the Twilight of the Gods of the Edda, attaches a religious slant to the unknown zone. The Edda, the source book of Nordic myths, has come in three
a subliminal golden zone in *Jerusalem*, although in *ersatz* form, moves the viewer to transcend elegiac feelings concerning possible destruction of the city. In this work, Kiefer’s use of lead and steel as media also evokes such subliminal connotations. Fusing references to both nuclear and ancient, alchemical ages, a sublime of mythic humanity is achieved. Lead, being a volatile substance, evokes mystical connotations. Two forged steel skis are collaged onto the surface of the work, placed with their upwardly slanted ends pointing towards the “golden land”. The forged skis form the top “layer” of the painting; they seem whole and inviolate as if representative of a new world, a golden zone, emerging from the debris of the old.

Such conceptions recall the sublime of deconstruction in which radical open-endedness is aspired to. Although the “closure” or accomplishment of such ideals can be glimpsed in the present epoch, it simultaneously runs the risk of never being established (Derrida 1976: 4). In the artwork, interpretational possibilities are opened up or made evident via the combination of images and materials, which can be compared to the consequences aimed for by the alchemist by mixing/combining natural texts (mainly): the oldest from 1090; the next from 1190 and the last version is the Prose *Edda*, drawn up by Snorri Sturlason in 1220. The stories of the Edda are independent of the great body of Celtic myth, although there are overlapping points, especially in the treasures (E.D.M. 1953, s.v. “Edda”). In Nordic myth, Valhalla is the name given to the great hall of the palace of Gladhsheim in Asgard (E.D.M. 1953, s.v. “Valhalla”). Although its dimensions and character have been exaggerated through the centuries, it is also an alternative for the mythic concept of heaven.

17 Gold is not only found in alchemical practices, it has been extensively used in religious and mystic renderings, where ever there is a high level of spiritual experience. In early medieval religious figures and in Byzantine works, gold was used to represent the sky and indicate spirituality; for the purposes of decoration; the painting of haloes and bookbinding. Especially until the Renaissance, a golden background was a common feature in panel paintings (O.C.A. 1970, s.v. “gold”).

18 Alchemically, ores and metals are classified in male and female, the mine is “compared to the uterus and ores to embryos, all of which are images connoting an obstetric and gynaecological significance upon the rituals associated with mines and metallurgy” (Eliade 1956: 33). The foundation of alchemy is constituted by a pair, “a union of opposites (Heaven-Earth, Male-Female, etc.), and at the same time [it presents] the image of cosmic totality” (Eliade 1956: 62). Alchemy concerns a homology between man and universe and from this conception emerges the “sexualisation” of the vegetable and mineral kingdom and the tools and objects in the surrounding world (Eliade 1956: 33); also the connection with astrology and the doctrines of micro- and macro-cosmos (Ritter 1971: 150, my transl.).

19 The upward/downward cycle indicated by the form of the skis recalls the Gnostic symbol of ouroboros. Ouroboros and the egg, as symbols of the androgenic polarity of man (the apollinian/ dionysian), are the primary alchemical symbols (ouroboros has already been tied to deconstruction in the previous chapters).
substances. These consequences can be controlled to a certain extent by the artist/alchemist, but there are unknown factors, as well as chance, that can alter the eventual outcome. As such the artmaking process is a kind of sublime in which the notions of the unknown and transcendence are prominent.

In my painting, *Kraal* of 1990 (Ill. 14), images with subliminal connotations are fused to arrive at a sublime of fluxed references. The castle, a typical Romantic image, belongs to an European age of riches and chivalry, which evokes associations of festivals and elaborate lifestyles. Within a contemporary recessionist climate this seems like a bygone age, unattainable and unrepeatable; an exquisite dreamlike existence belonging to fairytales and legends.\(^{20}\) Real history has shown, however, that the castle was a fairytale existence indeed.

The feudal rich had the illusion they could survive as islands of life surrounded by a rising sea of suffering and death. But not for long; in most cases the castles were broken into, and the privileged few dragged out to scream and die like everyone else. [Sjöö and Mor 1987: 415]

The destinies of nations have often been decided in such places. Individuals take political decisions with dramatic implications in metaphoric castles or in ivory towers, echoing the mythic Valhalla. In contemporary society, the individual is helplessly delivered into the hands of the politician.\(^{21}\) The castle is a metaphor for grandeur, the heroic; the ruined castle for the loss of that grandeur, a tragic state which is a Romantic form of the sublime. The ruin, symbol of something that has been lost forever, is a tragic image that evokes sorrow, “often the chosen expression of an approximation of the higher good” (Vaughan 1978: 33). The sublime dimension may be equated to

\(^{20}\) In discussion of the artists Beuys, Kiefer, Kounellis and Cucchi, Beuys notes that people have never before lived in such undignified conditions as today. According to him the dignity of the era has never been so low. This is related to an artistic consciousness (Kunstsinn); conditions in ways of living is one of the most elementary and important expressions of this consciousness, according to Beuys.

\(^{21}\) The sublime associations which are formed around the image of the castle, are also encountered in nineteenth century Romantic works. The castle is often found in a sacred place: high up on a mountain, as a ruin, or in the far distance, for example, in Martin Koch’s *Landschaft mit dem heiligen Martin* (1815); Caspar David Friedrich’s *Ruine Eldena mit Begräbniszug* (1830); Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s *Ansicht des Capitols in Rom* (1803); Heinrich Olivier’s *Der Petersfriedhof in Salzburg* (1818) and Constable’s Sketch for *Hadleigh Castle* (1829). The latter work is reproduced in Vaughan, W. 1978. *Romantic Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, p.207. The other works are from Glaesemer, J. (s.a.). *Traum und Wahrheit : Deutsche Romantik aus Museen der Deutsche Demokratischen Republik.* Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje.
an “out-of-the-ordinary” state; traumatic experiences, surrealistic visions or irrationalities would fit in here. In Romantic literature and art, existential boundary situations such as death and suffering, are often seen as sublimal entities.22

The sublime conceptually corresponds with a manufactured hyperreal, existing over and above the real. This is decodifiable into the parergonality of the artwork which exists over and above physical presence. The parergon around the artwork is the result of a conglomeration or fusion of images by the artist, arranged in such a way as to create a poetic reality. This poesis concerns a type of alchemical unknown, since the artist can plan and select images and forms, but cannot precisely predict the final outcome of the artwork.23

By deconstructing and fusing the potential meanings of the images in my painting Kraal, an attempt is made to give alternative and holistic meaning to the amorphic images: the castle is black and primitive; the snake looks more like a decorated rainbow; the figure could either be a black man or the shadow of a white man; the wings are floppy and the central image is unidentifiable. By creating a simulacrum and a contrariant simultaneously, antiphony results regarding current social and political systems in South Africa: either the black man or the shadow of the white man is upholding the “thing”, the “garbage”. The ambiguous imagery throws the ball of interpretation into the viewer’s court. The answer is unanswered and a certain rhetoric is created. The parergon retains its poeticness and open-endedness in its ambiguous, fused designation.

22 Also in Expressionism a form of the sublime is encountered, manifesting as an obsession with death and suicide. Levine quotes Jung in describing the road into the sublime of regression, whether into infancy or primeval beginnings, as a road into the mother’s body, even further than that into “the prenatal realm ... to the immemorial world of archetypal possibilities” (The Apocalyptic Vision 1979: 5). Meerloo argues that when life becomes too bothersome, man/woman regresses into a sublime of primitive being, to primitive magic ideas and expects to be reunited with mother earth in death (Levine 1979: 5).

23 These alternative dimensions are mythic ones that defy rationalisation and correspond with the notion of a scientific dimension of relatedness. The sublime is concurrent with the fourth dimension of relativity theory that signifies a higher dimension of space while at the same time accommodating differing proportions of geometry, mysticism, space and time (Henderson 1983: 341). The fourth dimension of relativity theory radically influenced thought in early twentieth century. The fourth dimension involves all other spheres except the logical three-dimensional one, and it includes artistic expression, imagination, belief, spirituality and, above all, subjectivity. The belief in a fourth dimension allowed artists to explore visual reality and to depart from it, even to reject it. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, such theories were of common concern to artists in nearly every major Modernist movement (Henderson 1983: 339).
4.3 FUSION AND SACRIFICE

The notion of sacrifice is a central one in alchemy, deconstruction and Romanticism. It is further relevant for this investigation of the *parergon*, since sacrifice implies suffering in the sense of allowing the death of something in order to create something else. *Parerga* are continually subject to "annihilation", since interpretations are never closed. In deconstruction logocentrism is "sacrificed" in order to attain a transcendent, sublimal state of truth. Referring to the notion of sacrifice, Ritter (1971: 31) notes that

It is important to grasp the significance of the novelty represented by the idea that creation is effected by immolation or self-immolation .... These kinds of cosmogony and anthropogeny ... have considerable consequences; the stage is reached where creation or fabrication [is] inconceivable without previous sacrifice.

Fusion, that is, synthesising opposites, is achieved by way of suffering: the artmaking process can be likened to a process of giving birth, creation through "suffering" and "sacrifice". The *parerga* "suffer" continually by "sacrificing" themselves in order to come nearer to truth. The sacrifice implicitly implies a certain suffering, which is related to the Romantic concept of *Weltschmerz*. This concept sees the poet/artist as an exile or outcast experiencing a sense of loss and oppression. Yet the suffering carries a certain charisma: "it is through the suffering of absence that the poet finds his way to the plenitude of creation" (Morse 1981: 237).

In my work, *Vlag* (Ill. 22), the naturalistic form of a table, a human figure and a heart form has been "sacrificed" in order to create specific meanings or *parerga*. The sacrificial components regard the deconstruction or discarding of certain elements and aspects of the conceived reality in order to create new combinations, fresh insights and new perspectives. In *Vlag*, the original flag form has been sacrileged via expressive means to accentuate the emotionality usually associated with the concept of national pride. In this painting, the landscape has been demolished and ruined to accommodate the shamanic concept of renewal, a concept brimful of political meaning in post-apartheid South-Africa. The *parergon* of victory which is found in the flag, mirrors the siege of the triumphant shaman or alchemist, reiterating the sacrifice of human lives needed for that victory.

24 Elfriede Pretorius, *Vlag (Flag)*, 1990. Mixed media on canvas, 123,5 x 89cm. Private collection.

25 In the mythology of alchemical metallurgy, the motifs of ritual union and blood sacrifice are often found (Ritter 1971: 31). According to Eliade (1956: 57), the ancient practice of
viewpoints and logocentric structures, “sacred” territory is entered. According to Eliade (1954: 99-100), suffering proceeds from

... breaking a taboo, from entering a baneful zone ... it arises from a personal fault ... [but] ... find[s] its explanation and justification in the transcendent in the divine economy.

Such “suffering” is for the purpose of a “higher good which is located in the embedded meaning of the fused and transformed images.

4.4 FUSION AND FIRE

In order to describe the process of deconstruction, the most suitable metaphor for me seems to be that of fire, representing the ideas of process, fusion, “end” and apocalypse. The fusion of concepts which occurs in deconstruction and Romanticism may be demonstrated by means of the metaphoric image of alchemical burning.26 Fire allegorises energy, but also death; it is destructive, yet contains the seed for renewal; above all, it implies process. A sense of time is implicitly embedded in the image of fire. In my work, Vlag, only a glow, a remnant, is left of the initial fire and an atmosphere of aftermath is created, while the “dream” is still hovering in the sky. Does the work depict time preceding the event which has led to the erection of the flag or following the event? Time is transcended and synthesised in the conceptuality of the work. In Met kronkelpad en sekelmaan (Ill. 6), the fire is still burning, simulating the burning fire of the mastersmith in the forgery, allegorising the creative process in the artist’s studio. In this work the image of fire in the landscape fuses the outer and the inner worlds: it represents both the macro-cosmos of the outer world and the heart with the essence of fire, the microcosm of the body. “The fire of the heart is red like cinnabar, and the water of the kidneys is dark, like lead” writes a biographer of the famous alchemist Lù Tsu (Eliade 1956: 116). The underworld of demons as well

smelting of metal is a sinister operation, displaying a demonic character in the sacrifice of human lives, such as children. The idea of the sacrifice of life is also a religious one, found in the well-known example of Jesus Christ as slaughtered lamb.

26 The concept of fire is one of the most complex symbols in human history, layered with multiple interpretations and applications, being a basic constituent of cosmic substance. Ancient cosmology compares fire and fusion in the mastersmith’s oven to the sex act (the idea of smelting being a form of creation); certain metallurgical taboos relating to sex are applicable as prerequisites for a “sacred” fusion and continence is practised (Eliade 1956: 81).
as the deities are associated with fire; gods are often portrayed as riding on chariots of fire in ancient mythology (L.D.S. 1990, s.v. "Feuer"), recalling the battle of Apollo and Dionysus. The two worlds are fused in the image of fire, associating with other cosmic elements such as the sun, light, lightning; also the colour red, blood and the heart.

In the works mentioned above a spirit of unsure impermanence has been strived for in which the specific time and place is indeterminable. A spirit of revolt against chronological time is created via the image of fire. Both the shaman and alchemist revolt against history, time and nature, they refuse to accept it and act against it. Fire is one of the means by which an attempt is made to exorcise history, being faced with a powerlessness "against cosmic catastrophes, military disasters, social injustices, personal misfortunes" (Eliade 1954: 95). The process of burning is an exorcising of the old in order to transcend to the new, even if it is an unknown newness. Allegorised to deconstructionist artmaking, the burning fire represents the artist's process of deconstructing and reconstructing impressions/images in order to make a poetic ("sacred") statement/artwork.

The burning fire is a metaphor for apocalypse as well, a hypothetic mythic event in which all entities will be fused in another "world". Apocalypse is conceptually tied to the notion of collapsing Being which has been argued previously. The collapse of logocentric assumptions which is assumed in deconstruction, leads to uncertainty in the midst of pluralism; in such pluralism, the notion of arbitrariness becomes prominent, since hierarchy is demolished. Such a condition leads to a state of anxiety and threat, decoded as hypothetic apocalypse, massive collapse or cosmological fusion.

In many works of Kiefer apocalyptic fears are suggested via the metaphoric use of lead as the metal of nuclear warfare. Lead does not only have ancient connotations, lead and steel are also the metals of the space age, of weapons of war and the atom bomb. As such, parerga of apocalypse, fear and desolation develop, predominantly via associations evoked by the quality of lead. In Kiefer's Jerusalem, the viewer

---

Einstein (1954: 166) has made several statements about the pursuit of peace in view of everpresent looming danger of war and destruction, especially regarding the age of the atombomb. "This road necessarily leads to war, a war which under the present conditions means universal destruction". Kiefer is acutely aware of the dangers of an atombomb war, metaphorically decoded in the medium of lead. He says, "Das mit der glücklichen Atombombe ist zu linear gedacht - gefährlich linear ... Jean Genet ... hätte bestimmt keine glückliche Atombombe produziert ... Er ist ein böswilliger Krimineller". (The lucky atom bomb is too linear a thought, dangerously linear ... Jean Genet has definitely not produced a lucky atom bomb ... He is a wicked criminal) (Burckhardt 1988: 155, my
experiences a tensive sense of premonition as insight and a path into the labyrinth are gained: the city of Jerusalem has been transmuted from a holy city to a scarred and degraded state, just as the world could be partly or totally destroyed by the atom bomb and we could lose everything we once possessed. Yet, lead is paradoxically the only metal that provides an effective screen against radio-activity; as such, apocalyptic drama is neutralised via the reductionist and understated referential use of metaphor.

Most of Kiefer’s works have monumental impact and are Romantically dramatic, but his ambiguous appropriation of the dramatic reveals another kind of drama: nineteenth century Romantic imagery of lightning, storms, ruins and wrecks, have now been transmuted into a silence both before and after destruction. Both the aftermath and the tensive waiting in anticipation of the unknown/possible destruction/disaster/apocalypse are conjured up. This silence is metaphorically illustrated via understatement and minimalism. There is a kind of stillness and neutrality attached to the raw material of lead. It contains neutral information, yet, its characteristic qualities provoke associations of fear. In the displaced and transformed context, meaning is projected onto the undifferentiated materials by the viewer, assaulting the premises of its visual presentation. Confronted by the shock of the new context, the viewer is forced into contemplation and the raw materials become aesthetised.

The burning fire, however, does not only propound apocalyptic sentiments; it also suggests a moral inclination of new beginnings, clean slates and fresh lands. Kiefer’s Emanation (Ill. 23), reflect a theme of both destruction and regeneration. The notion of renewal is central to this painting, being metaphoric of a purified state after the alchemist’s firing. Images of flames are incorporated in a cerebral way by means of small photographs at the bottom of Emanation. According to Rosenthal (1987: 138), this work implicitly contains the idea that the hot lead, descending from a devastated, flaming sky, will be cooled in the water. Through the concept of fire, a continuum is established. The creation of such imagery, illuminates art’s inherent potential to destroy and purify. The artist as visionary thinker can resuscitate and transform consciousnesses. She/he is “like the Promethean artist of the ‘Sturm und Drang’ tradition in German culture, ... run[ning] the risk of carrying fire to the earth” (Gilmour 1990: 91).

4.5 TRANSCENDENTAL POWER

Via the artist's burning process of creating potent imagery, the construction of *parerga* is initiated. The artist thus seems to have transcendental power to radically revise, revolt against and override certain conditions or modes of thinking via artworks. The artist can project visions for the future, reflect a condition of a time or articulate a certain *ethos* via the *parerga* of his/her artworks. Kiefer, for instance, seems to view the guilt-ridden German identity as a crisis. He reopens "the Nazi's concept of Modern art's degeneracy, which in general has become a kind of closed mine of understanding" (Kuspit 1986: 90). Kiefer's *ethos* as artist signifies

... an excavation of anguished memories, the forging of a new sense of self and nation, an unembarrassed anxiety about our spiritual lives ... Kiefer seeks ... to restore to painting its status as an inventive, sensual, and philosophical medium for commenting on our history and our pain; to make us accept its potential to be more than decorative, neatly geometric, ironic, or 'intertextual'. [Loughery, 1991: 73]

A moral purification process is necessary according to Kiefer, since "Der Sentimentalismus ist zur Zeit sehr schlimm, weil er zeigt, dass die Gefühle verschwunden sind". Kiefer laments a lack of spirituality and morality in contemporary society, that points to a de-emotionalised, *blasé* attitude: "Die Gesellschaft ist auch sehr untheatralisch geworden. Es gibt keine Höhepunkte ... mehr".

It thus seems that, notwithstanding the argued crisis, artists such as Kiefer attempt to change perceptions or conceptions. The notion of the *avant-garde* is not dead; it is a matter of taking possession of certain truths, believing in them and reworking them as poetic visions into artworks. Old truths and icons are borrowed or presented in new guises and new icons and myths are created. It is especially in the poetic and metaphorical realms that such autonomous, free-spirited or *avant-garde* viewpoints can be articulated. The notion of the *avant-garde*,

---

29 Art was in a crisis after the Nazis' labelling of all modern art as "degenerate" because, according to them, its latent content was too traumatic to view; art seemed to have reflected a set of social symptoms which the Nazis did not like. The sense of freedom of expression projected by the Modernist works were loathed and opposed by the Nazis. Kiefer evokes the same kind of Modernist sensibility of challenging modes of traditional presentation, but imbibes his works with a Post-Modern sense of morality.

30 The sentimentalism of our time is very bad, since it reveals that feelings have disappeared (Kiefer in Burckhardt 1988: 55, my transl.).

31 Society has also become very untheatrical. There are no more pinnacles .... (Burckhardt 1988: 54, my transl.).
being located in the crossing of boundaries, is still possible by transcending contemporary modes of thinking via defiant autonomous viewpoints even though parerga are alterable and temporal. The primary locus for such transformation, resuscitation and instigation of new growth, is the imagination.

Kiefer likens the transcendental power of the artist to the image of the palette in several works. In his *Palette mit Flügeln* (1981), (Ill. 24) the palette has been endowed with wings, floating above the ground. Thin strings/wires connect the flying palette to the ground like a kite, so that the flight is interrupted and inhibited. The wish for transcendence becomes impaired, impure, which, according to alchemical processes, perfects the process. The flying palette/kite, held steadily in the wind by means of a cord, is controlled by the flyer. The artist, via power at his disposal, can “control” the transcendence through manipulation of effects and images. A double paradox, or repeated paradox, is found here: the artist aspires to transcend, and does, but is bound, limited so that a bounded freedom emerges. Yet, freedom is experienced within the contained space, so that godlike qualities emerge - like the image of every man beneath his own dome of heaven.

The palette is also hovering above the landscape in *Nero malt* (1974) (Ill. 25) and *Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe* (1976) (Ill. 26). By placing the palette in a detached, subliminal position above the landscape, Kiefer indicates a belief in the crucial role of the artist who judges and “surveys” events; because of this “the palette lives high above the land where it can, in effect, look, depict, measure, interpret, and transform” (Rosenthal 1987: 60). The landscape confirms the mortal, earthy roots of the artist - conceived and embraced by mother earth, from the earth and returned to the earth (the ouroboros concept, as the free circling outline of the palette suggests). In *Nero malt* though, the original landscape is negated through destruction of the land and the burning palette, burning bridges to a new spiritual land. In *Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe*, three tree trunks are rooting from the palette, branching out into space, and it becomes metaphoric of the basic given of creative power that enables the artist to transcend. Kiefer thus expresses the belief in art’s power to change.

---


attitudes. Through resuscitation of history, such changes maybe could be realised.

4.6 FUSION AND IMPURITY

In alchemical and shamanistic practices, an element of "impurity" is added to perfect the process, or to manipulate the eventual outcome (Ritter 1971: 150); likewise, dogmatism towards stylistic purity proves inadequate (Ovenden 1988: 51), since the adding of another discordant note to the basic harmonic triad in music, for instance, endows it with "colour" or "character". An analytical approach searches for the pure essentials, a synthetic attitude accepts the discordant impure totality. In articulating a vision or a point of view, the artist adds her/his own "discordant note" to the basic mythical understructure of reality/the triad, a metaphysical act of transcendence. The rod of Aaron is the sword/palette knife/brush/metal rod of the alchemist/artist, imitating the orchestra conductor, directing the disparate members parts/elements into play, after hearing the song of Orpheus. The artist's "discordant note" is therefore a necessary element in both artmaking and interpretation, thus in the constructing of parerga. The spirit of the late twentieth century has been called "decadent" (Kuspit), "substanceless shadows" (Baudrillard), "drift" (Barthes) and "mise en abyme" (Derrida). Such conceptions are counteracted, however, in the notion of the "discordant note" and in ideas such as Derrida's view of the artist: he/she "aspires to render the invisible visible, not to avoid it but to embrace it, even to claim to be its creator ... ." [Kelly 1991: 103].

In my work, the "discordant note", decoded as my intentions or point of view, has resulted in a particular characteristic "style" in which the myth is taken possession of. In images such as the magic rainbow, the ladder and the snake form, my creative power as artist has been asserted via the resurrection of myth, whether rationally postulated or not. The "discordant note" is also manifested as personal sentiment: a nostalgia for both European and African roots has been expressed via images such as a Romanesque tower, an African kraal and bits of collage illustrating the nineteenth century Boer-Zulu and Anglo-Boer wars. I have attempted to mirror my position as a white South-African who is an implicit part of Africa, yet whose heritage evokes ambiguous sentiments, since I also have roots in Europe. A sense of confused identity is illustrated in images such as the flapping, flagging wings.

The "impurity" of my fusitive artmaking process holds pluralistic and fragmented parerga together. It reconciliates by way of deconstruction and reconstruction in revolt of the cultural and intellectual ruins which have been created by logocentrism. In my deconstructivism as an artmaking process these ruins are both asserted and lamented. Yet, in ambiguous, post-cognitive way I override the deconstructionist spirit of
the time, deconstructing it in order to express the belief in myth and the power of myth, the premises of which are questioned by deconstructionists. I purposefully create open-ended *parerga* which may confer mythic associations onto the images.

4.7 ALMOST CLOSING THE FRAME

I have tried to demonstrate via this investigation that the *parergon* concerns associations; intentional ideas; a condition or a *Zeitgeist*; and materials or media. Regarding these elements, subjectivity and locality are important, that is the person, the time and the place of the *parerga*. The *parergon* that I have created around the notion of *parergon* is not closed; it may be deconstructed or reconstructed by another interpreter at another time or place.

Several of the metaphoric images which have been discussed in this discourse, such as the dome, the flying kite and the kraal, symbolically represent the *parergon*, the frame (the window) or the point of view. Without closing the view on the *parergon*, it is my viewpoint that the latter must be interpreted as a powerful entity which exists in unseen capacity around the artwork and also predetermines certain issues in the making of the artwork. The artwork is not merely a representation of the world; it is the cultivation of a viewpoint which aims to change the world. The purifying action of the deconstructionist attitude seems to be necessary in order to restore the “original” form of things. The construction of *parerga* is not an arbitrary exercise. The very act of painting is a powerful transcendental act in which the process and the rendering of the image “transcends” barriers of time and space in order to comment on issues.

The viewpoint of the artist is conveyed in a sublime or poetic form. It is an almost sacred form, since immortality and infiniteness are achieved within a mortal and finite state of existence. The artist thus assumes the attributes of a god, by being able to create potent images which may lead to *parerga*. His/her godlike powers are limited, however, since the artmaking process remains only a copy, a repetition of the *grande première* of creation. The power of the artist is an ambiguous form of sublime which does not exist “somewhere”, or “outside”, but is located in the inner self. Accordingly, Derrida (1987: 132) sees the sublime as “… not in nature but only in ourselves, because the colossal which derives from it proceeds only from us, the analytic of the sublime is only an appendix [einen blossen Anhang] to the aesthetic appreciation of natural finality.”

The poetic power of the artist creating *parerga* springs from the imagination, located in the inner self. A *parergon* of sublime is also constituted around the artwork by the interpreter via imagination, being
a reiteration of the inviolate sublime found in nature. According to Derrida (1987: 110), “[i]magination is the faculty of presentation”. The subliminal power of the artist, accordingly, exists in the force of her/his imagination. The imagination is, furthermore, the locus of the fusion of ambiguities. It is the source of poetic constructive activity and of intellectual deconstructive rationalisations. Spectacular recoil from established values, whether in poetical or critical discourse, is the outcome of imaginative engagement with traditional viewpoints and produces manifold and sometimes turbulent responses. Still, any theory or parergon, as the product of both imagination and intellect, is speculative: “free inventions of the human intellect” (Einstein 1954: 272). Heidegger harbours a similar viewpoint:

Niet het denken is de meest aanvankelijke, maar het is het zijn zelf dat in sekere zin bron en oorsprong, aanvang en ‘oerzaak’ is van het denken en van het zijnde. Het zijn als Differenz is het meest oorspronkelijke en daarom is en blijft het denken wezenlijk een ontvangen en een vragen. (Ijsseling 1964: 141) 35

Late twentieth century artmaking and discourses are identified by irony: they display both a figurative desire to return to roots, mythical structures, previous historic times and spaces, and a logical scepticism regarding those roots. Yet, the mythic unknown has always been an unknown, a product of the imagination by being a fictive hide-away which is the natural habitat of dreams and fantasies. These visions and wild fantasies of the artist are constantly tempered with the reality of the laborious technical process requiring unlimited hours of hard work. Capitalist performance principles constantly demand newness, pressurising the artist in “delivering the goods” which does not leave much room for poetic inspiration. The uncreative routine of the everyday leads to a mental stasis requiring radical disjunction from time to time and instigates a desire for the new and unknown. A constant recycling is thus reached; a pattern in which there is a constant repetition, albeit in alternative form each time.

This condition recalls the premise of Gadamer decoding the inviolable flux of being as a constant dynamic state of Romantic becoming, a movement “in and out of presence” (Schweiker 1990: 180). The inviolable flux is reflected in the never-ending spiral of parerga which are continually erected around artworks, differing from viewer to viewer, from century to century, a mimetic reflection of the window

---

35 Human thought is not the original, but it is being itself that is in a sense source and origin, beginning and primary cause of thought and being. Being as difference is the most original and, therefore, thought is essentially a receiving and questioning. (my transl.)
symbolism found in Romanticism. Ouroboros seems unavoidable, since a cyclical pattern of turn and return, of constant revision is continually reiterated. An infinite spiral exists, continually spiralling up, up and away ...

Suddenly a familiar feeling of fear starts rising in the contemplation of the infinite, the boundless - a fear that is experienced by imagining the years going on and on, the turn into another millenium, in hearing about wars and nuclear weapons, sensing a massive possible disaster, such as total destruction, or the apocalypse. A sense of loss of control develops, a spirit of hysterical disposition in which the screams of terror echo and echo away into the infinite ...

Nevertheless, if deconstructionist thinking produces an effect of entanglement, it also induces exciting visions of fresh, new lands, a golden zone in thinking. Revivalism, as found in contemporary artmaking, indicates a conceptual fatigue or exhaustion, a type of decadence in which a blasé, déjà-vu attitude is found; yet, decadence is also a "time when the old fundamentalism is dead", a time in which "the new one waits to be born - ... a desperately divine moment in itself" (Kuspit 1991: 100). Barthes decodes this divine moment as

... spread out in time, subject to a movement, like that of sprouts on the same stalk: the regularity is a delusion, life directs the funerary system, terrorism is not bookkeeping but vegetation: everything is reproduced and yet nothing is repeated; such is perhaps the meaning of this Tac­litean universe, in which the brilliant description of the phoenix ... seems to construe death symbolically as the purest moment of life. [Sontag 1982: 166]

Thus the dead were addressed when they died ...
Awaken, already the sky is tinged with red,
Already the dawn has come,
Already the flame-colored pheasants are singing,
The fire-colored swallows,
Already butterflies are on the wing ...

[Argüelles & Argüelles 1977: 82, a song from Teotihuacan, Mexico]
BOOKS


Bosanquet, B. 1886. The Introduction to Hegel’s Philosophy of Fine Art. Translated from the German, with notes and prefatory essay by the author. London: Kegan Paul, Trench.


De Vleeschauer, H.J. (s.a) *Geskiedenis van die Wysbegeerte in die Weste Band I: Die Wysbegeerte van die Klassieke Oudheid*. Kaapstad: Nasou.


REFERENCE WORKS


MAGAZINES

Bell, J. 1984. "What is German about the New German Art?" *Art News* 83. (3, March): 96-101


Loughery, J. "Back to Matter: Recent Constructed Paintings by David Geiser and Thomas Nonn". *Art Journal* 50 (1, Spring): 71-75.


(b) Bennington, G. 1988. "Deconstruction is not what you think": 6-7

(c) Griffiths, J. 1988a. "Deconstruction deconstructed": 9-18


(g) Crowther, P. 1988. "Beyond Art & Philosophy: Deconstruction & the Post-Modern Sublime": 47-52

(h) Griffiths, J. 1988b. "Deconstructionist Tendencies in Art": 53-60

(i) Benjamin, A. 1988. "Kitaj and the Question of Identity": 61-64


(m) MacFarlane, J. 1988. "Jean-Francois Lyotard on Adami, Buren and Arakawa": 77-80


(b) Greenhalgh, M. 1988. "Romanticism: A Definition": 20-27


(d) Yorke, M. 1988. "English Neo-Romantics": 36-41


(g) Griffiths, J. 1988d. "New Romantic Artists": 53-60


EXHIBITION CATALOGUES


REVIEWS


illustrations
Ill. 2

Carl Gustav Carus, Fausts Traum (Faust's dream) (s.a.). Charcoal on bluegray paper, 59,4 x 43,8 cm. Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett.

Ill. 3

Anselm Kiefer, *Ausbrennen des Landkreises Buchen* (Cauterisation of the district of Buchen), (1975). Oil, charcoal, and glue on twenty strips of burlap, bound, 60 x 42 x 8cm. Private collection.

Franz Marc, *Tiger* (1912). Oil on canvas, 111 x 111.5 cm. Städtische Galerie im Lehnbachhaus, München.

Ill. 5

Elfriede Pretorius, *Sjamaan (Shaman)* (1989). Mixed media on board, 183.5 x 122.5 cm. Private Collection.
Ill. 6

Ill. 7


Ill. 8


Ill. 10


Ill. 12


Ill. 13


Ill. 14

Ill. 15

Anselm Kiefer, Dein goldenes Haar, Margarethe (Your golden hair, Margarete) (1981). Oil, emulsion, and straw on canvas, 130 x 170cm. Collection Saunders, Amsterdam.

Ill. 16


Ill. 17


Ill. 19

Anselm Kiefer, Zweistromland (The High Priestess) (1985 - 1989). Installation piece of approximately 200 lead books in two steel bookcases, with glass and copper wire, c. 430 x 800 x 100 cm. Collection unknown.

Anselm Kiefer, Osiris und Isis (Osiris and Isis) (1985 - 87). Oil, acrylic, and emulsion on canvas (in two parts), with clay, porcelain, lead, copper wire, and circuit board, 380 x 560cm. Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.

Ill. 21


Ill. 22

Elfriede Pretorius, *Vlag (Flag)*, (1990). Mixed Media on canvas, 123.5 x 89cm. Private Collection.
Ill. 23


Ill. 24


Ill. 25


A collection of visual forms and shapes which articulate the space of human experience: other variations on the mountain-to-temple and the womb-to-dome models of which the ladder is one alternative.
Temple of the Inscriptions. Palenque, Mexico, 8th century. Cross-section indicating passage to great crypt.


Chapel of Neak Pean or lotus mountain tower growing from lake. Angkor Thom, Cambodia, 12th century.

Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, 2nd century B.C. Cross-section.

Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, 2nd century B.C. Ground plan.

Neak Pean or lotus mountain tower growing from lake. Angkor Thom, Cambodia, 12th century.

Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, 2nd century B.C.


Dome of the Rock, so-called "Mosque of Omar." Jerusalem, Israel, 7th century.

Deigo-ji pagoda. Kyoto, Japan, 12th century.


Dura temple. Aihole, India, 8th century.


Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, 2nd century B.C.

Neak Pean or lotus mountain tower growing from lake. Angkor Thom, Cambodia, 12th century.

Great Stupa, Sanchi, India, 2nd century B.C.


Dome of the Rock, so-called "Mosque of Omar." Jerusalem, Israel, 7th century.

Dome of the Rock, so-called "Mosque of Omar." Jerusalem, Israel, 7th century.