

[∞]The Romantic

by JUSTIN CARMEN

OOOOOO

Notes from the lecture inspired by the translations of HEIDEGGER, NIETZSCHE, and WITTGENSTEIN



OPUSCULE 02, v.02
THE ROMANTIC

1. I want to think on the romantic—not in the sense of dating/courtship—but more in the sense in which one *romanticizes* something. The sense in which one creates a story or a narrative—and not only as a reconciling of historical events. The romantic story embodies a projection of the future too. There must be something forever, or eternal, in a romantic story. And to be quite honest with myself and transparent toward you, if I hadn't wanted to carryover the romance comic book motif from my previous lecture I might have approached this differently—under the language of the *eternal* instead.
2. Now, to get an idea of the *romantic story* think on following statements,
3. "She told me what I needed to hear."
4. "I came full circle."
5. "There was only one true love for me."
6. "This is my punishment."
7. "I made a mistake"—and what does this particular story tell the listener? Well, to say "I made a mistake" makes no claim to understanding 'the mistaken' *originarily*. That is to say, it does not make a claim to understanding the event in its origin. Instead, the understanding remarked upon is the 'interpretation' as *mistake*. Of course, included in this present understanding is a story of an original understanding which allowed for the mistake. But this 'original' understanding is only part of the story and can only ever go to make up the present understanding as *mistake*.
8. Now, if anyone feels like they are getting hung up on the fact that you could, of course, hold open both an original understanding and a current understanding, then think on the idea that the earth is flat. Today, I think most of us tell a different story. But does this then mean that we are holding open two understandings—one which we understand as false and another we understand as true? Or is it instead that we have a singular understanding of the case, and that the false and true are two parts of it?
I mean, how could one today consider the earth flat? I guess it would mean that if you kept digging below you, earth would go on indefinitely. Or maybe there exists some end and flipside. Would understanding the earth as flat mean understanding it as a rectangle?—but then how does gravity work? How would we reconcile the photographs from space?—a

conspiracy? None of this seems to make sense. It takes too much effort to believe in this way.

9. In the case of the shape of the earth, we aren't in possession of two understandings—only one, which accounts for both descriptions of the shape of the earth, flat and round. This must be analogous to the case with the mistake of a person—a singular understanding allows us to feel negatively about 'the mistaken' and positively about our currently applied logic.
10. Now, if the romantic is generalized beyond the romanticized love story and made to include the statements of 2. though 7. the concept becomes more broadly applicable, and at the same time, much more specific in its meaning.
11. To continue developing this use of the concept first consider a translation of one of Ludwig Wittgenstein's notes as published in *Culture and Value*,

In Freudian analysis a dream is dismantled, as it were. It loses its original sense *completely*. We might think of it as of a play enacted on the stage, with a plot that's pretty incomprehensible at times, but at times too quite intelligible, or apparently so; we might then suppose this plot torn into little fragments and each of these given a completely new sense. Or we might think of it in the following way: a picture is drawn on a big sheet of paper which is then so

folded that pieces which don't belong together at all in the original picture now appear side by side to form a new picture, which may or may not make sense. (This latter would correspond to the manifest dream, the original picture to the 'latent dream thought'.)

Now I could imagine that someone seeing the unfolded picture might exclaim "Yes, that's the solution, that's what I dreamed, minus the gaps and distortions". This would then be the solution precisely by virtue of his acknowledging it as such. It's like searching for a word when you are writing and then saying: "*That's* it, *that* expresses what I intended!"—Your acceptance certifies the word as having been found and hence as being the one you were looking for.¹

12. What is important here? Take notice of the *qualification* or *certification* of the interpretation. "This would then be the solution precisely by virtue of his acknowledging it as such."
13. Consider the statement, "I found true love." One finds true love because one has made it so. It *is* the case, only by virtue of the current understanding—**no other criteria could qualify the truth of the statement.**

¹From Peter Winch's translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, page 68e.

Consider when someone has said “I found true love” only to revoke it later, saying something like, “I *thought* that was true love, but I was mistaken.” Here it must be admitted that the current ‘interpretation’ just *is* the truth.

14. Think on the conviction which one holds toward the truth of any understanding. There is something of a *feeling of reality* which resonates with the author and is ‘beyond’ the author himself.
15. What if I asked you, “Prove to me that *that* is a log” while pointing to a log which I am sitting on. You might be at a loss—not prepared for such a question.
16. To reply to my demand, you might go on to enumerate the qualities of a log, then compare the object before you to those qualities. But, after all, doesn’t this exercise feel wrong? It feels to me that those enumerated properties are not exactly what go to make up the object as *log* and the comparison will not satisfy a concern anyway.
17. It seems that *log* is accepted simply through the integrity of the author. Instead, you want to retort, “Well, isn’t it? What makes you doubt that you are sitting on a log?”—this reply feels more appropriate. Similarly, the shape of the earth is a conviction and if I asked you to prove it, you might find the task difficult. The only reply might be an appeal to authority: a scientist, pilot, or whoever.
18. Let us suspend consider of both the *certification of the story* and this *feeling of reality* for a moment. Consider also the *epiphany* which leads to your conviction.
19. Consider you are in a lab recording observations. You call your observations *virus*. *Virus* could mean either the recorded data or it could mean your expectation of future observations. However, it could mean the *observation* itself. And if you remove the *observation* from the *itself* your ‘observation’ becomes objective. Once your meaning is objective, the virus is eternal. What you want to say is, “I have simply discovered nature!” Then you read your virus backward into all of history. You now have an *object virus*—something which you can write from: the cause of an illness or death, for example.
20. There is certainly an appeal in entities which allow us to write the eternal story.
21. But consider for a moment what is going on inside of you at the moment of this ‘discovery’. Consider again the passage about the dream interpreter quoted from *Culture and Value*. The passage continues as such,

What is intriguing about a dream is not its *causal* connection with events in my life, etc., but rather the impression it gives of being a fragment of a story—a very *vivid* fragment to be sure—the rest of which remains obscure... What's more, if someone now shows me that this story is not the right one; that in reality it was based on quite a different story, so that I want to exclaim disappointedly "Oh, *that's* how it was?", it really is as though I have been deprived of something. The original story certainly disintegrates now, as the paper is unfolded; the man I saw was taken from over *here*, his words from over *there*, the surroundings in the dream from somewhere else again; but all the same the dream story has a charm of its own, like a painting that **attracts and inspires** us.²

22. Think of the epiphany which the dreamer experienced. Compare this with the epiphany of the *object virus*. Ask yourself, do you accept the alternate interpretation made by the dreamer after the pieces were rearranged? And then, do you have the same acceptance over the *possibility* of rewriting of the story of the shape of the earth?
23. Maybe you are thinking, "No. Not at all. The shape of the earth and a virus are so convincing

²From Peter Winch's translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, page 68e.

that they could never be unwritten—and a new understanding is quite inconceivable." I would guess that it is because a dream is a *subjective experience* and therefore is not *objectively true*.

24. But if you analyze further, I hope that you find that subjectivity and objectivity are not a part of your consideration. Instead, you simply have conviction to one and not the other—and the facts are not the *cause* for your conviction, but your *reason* for having them. Remember that the lover and the log-sitter are both quite convinced without need or ability to qualifying their conviction.
25. Let's finally put the feeling of the *epiphany* of a story aside. Consider another aspect, one which we have already touched upon in the conclusion of the passage from *Culture and Value*. Let us call this aspect the *evolution of a story*. And let us take an example which strikes with seemingly critical importance.
26. In 1905 a theory unifying Newtonian Mechanics and Special Relativity was proposed. *General Relativity*. This theory mathematically described previously unaccountable observed phenomena, the irregular rotation of Mercury around the sun. The mathematics were confirmed by observation, giving the theory weight. However, the theory also demanded

for something which was later named *blackhole*—a mathematically defined region of spacetime with such a strong gravitational pull that no particle can escape it.

27. Now, today we have observations which we correspond with the calculations for a blackhole. We say, "This collected data—this we identify as blackhole." But consider a hypothetical history. In one-hundred years from now might not this identification be laughed at? We might say "Isn't it funny that *that* is what we thought blackholes were. Now we understand them differently." In that case, we will use a different tool to measure. The blackhole will look different to us through the new tools. The observation will be different—but this only means that the phenomena *blackhole* is actually different phenomena. We just will have a different entity at hand.
28. Or another case. Perhaps something drastic: we don't have blackholes any more. It's not to say that our current phenomena *blackhole* could not be test with the same tools to record the same results. It's just that we might find it odd to call *that measurement* a blackhole. That is, maybe the mathematical theory becomes outdated. In that case we would have a different name for the same phenomena observed with a new mathematical logic.

29. In nearing a conclusion, consider the passage which has encouraged consideration of the romantic story embodied in numbers 2. though 7.—a translation from Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. This passage has become the single most important piece of philosophic writing for me—and it stands at the beginning of all subsequent thoughts in my philosophic activity,

...the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow **come into being**, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated.³

30. The example which the translation generalizes on is punishment—which is taken up as an interpretation of a natural and observable phenomenon—a physical phenomenon. When

³From Walter Kauffman's translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals, Second Essay*, section 12, page 77.

I read “obscured or obliterated” I think on 7. and the interpretation of ‘the mistaken’ and the understanding of the mistake at its origin. Also, I think of 8. and 9. and the understanding of the history of the shape of the earth. As well, I think on 27. through 28. and the hypothetical history of the concept *blackhole*.

31. In light of these considerations there is a distinction which leads to a conclusion. There is the *romantic*, and not only as an individual author, the *romantic*. We can also talk of the *romantic spirit* in which the romantic author writes. This has come forward in thinking on his product, the *romantic story*. What is appealing for the romantic is the eternal—that the story reconciles forward and backward.
32. Any story includes not only the story of the entities, but also the entities themselves, which go to make up that story. Both the story and the entities are bound up together as a **holistic understanding** or **description** of the world which resonates with the author.
33. The same spirit which writes the love story also writes any scientific entity. It all begins with a disposition toward an entity—a disposition which lies behind it. The proof of this lies in that a scientific entity could not resonate with an author unless a disposition toward that entity was not already there provoking him towards

it. The disposition lies behind every story and every entity within that story.

34. What I have offered for you here is only a few stories which resonate popularly today—science and its physical entities being the most striking and profound. Yet, there are others; consider the story of mankind triumphing over nature, or of man succumbing to his fate. The story of the misfit, the hero, the underdog, or the Don Juan. The story of pitying and the pitiful (e.g. animals, the cute, or the poor)? The sentimental story? Consider the factual or experiential story?
35. Everything which I have prepared here culminates to this: **I am interested in the types of stories which entertain you**. I am interested in theming the disposition which is prior to and which is entertained by the story. Consider the outlandish stories: the conspiracy theories. I want to ask, “Why doubt that which is popularly attested for?” And, “What would this alternative truth matter to my world or yours?” With the gossip of scientific discoveries, quite the same. “What world do you live in that this discovery provides you with anything?” After all, we are not practitioners, you and I, in that field. All we can do is gossip about it.

—Justin Carmien, 01.08.15

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, SUDDENLY...

ALL THE GIRLS FELL IN LOVE!



LEAST TWENTY!

I ALWAYS WANTED TO GO WITH AN OLDER MAN!

JS-210



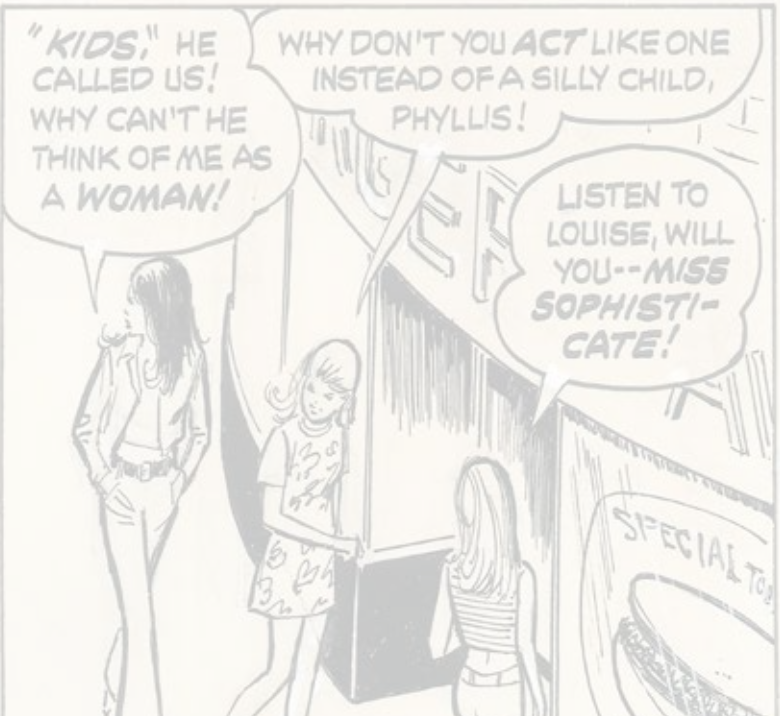
HI, KIDS...

HELLO...

HI...

BEAUTIFUL!

I LOVE YOU!



"KIDS," HE CALLED US! WHY CAN'T HE THINK OF ME AS A WOMAN!

WHY DON'T YOU ACT LIKE ONE INSTEAD OF A SILLY CHILD, PHYLLIS!

LISTEN TO LOUISE, WILL YOU--MISS SOPHISTICATE!

SPECIAL TOP



OPUSCULE 02, v.02
THE ROMANTIC

APPENDIX A: REFLECTION ON
THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT, INTEGRITY

Think on the romantic spirit as that which can occur in degree. In what person would you theme an extreme degree of expression of the romantic spirit? Surely, this person would write with unwavering commitment—as if no further evidence could convince them otherwise. Perhaps their extremity might appear delusional if it does not map neatly onto the logic of a science—perhaps as the behavior of the Abraham of *Fear and Trembling*.^{A1} That is to say, their behavior might seem “beyond human calculation”.

Today, there is hardly any tolerance for a ‘delusion’ in a faith in that which is “beyond human calculation”—and this is quite unfortunate. I say this degree of commitment should be admired.

Consider again the statement of 13.: “I found true love” and further the statement, “There is no other love for me.” This *could* be considered quite extreme. And while this story cannot be

refuted (after all, it is *their* story) I could question the author’s integrity. Consider someone saying “I found true love” only to revoke it later, coming again with something like, “I *thought* that was true love, but I was mistaken.”

Yet this damage to character should not taint every judgement surrounding the author. After all, it should still be possible to hold open a mixture of positive and/or negative feelings about the author, since in each case the entity having been judged is different. For example, while I may hold suspicion over the author’s *integrity*, I can still admire of the *commitment of the author* and submit myself to the *truth to their story*—that is, submit myself to the *authenticity of their story*.

—Justin Carmien, 15.08.15

^{A1}See Alastair Hannay’s translation of Søren Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.

OPUSCULE 02, v.02
THE ROMANTIC

APPENDIX B: REFLECTION ON
THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT,
BAD MEMORY, TRAGEDY

Consider a passage from a translation of Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*,

The advantage of a bad memory is that one can enjoy the same good things for the first time *several* times.^{B1}

With these themes in mind, consider the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Consider the moment when Dorian suffers following the incident which left Sibyl Vane with a broken heart. Consider Dorian in his gloom.

Where he went he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly-lit street, past gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by cursing, and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes.

^{B1}From R.J. Hollingdale's translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*, chapter 9, number 580, page 188.

He had seen grotesque children huddled upon doorsteps, and heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts.^{B2}

—All of this, but more: upon returning home, he *feels* a change in the expression of his portrait.

Take this character in this moment.

What I want is for Dorian to hide the portrait that very night. Whether his gloom had colored his interpretation of the portrait or whether it absorbed the consequence of sin, it does not matter to me. Yet, the reader is left in suspense. And the next morning, upon a hint of reflection, I want him to say to himself, "That mood is best left forgotten!" Now, in this version, with the portrait hidden—and with no cause to see it again—Dorian would never question his lack of pain over guilt. The portrait would not only steal the visual toll of sin, but the emotional as well.

This then would be the tragedy: never again would Dorian suffer from the pain of guilt as felt from that first sin. In this version, with the absorption of emotional distress, **the portrait would steal the opportunity of reflection.** Dorian would be cursed with a *bad memory*. He would never become indifferent, numb, weary or forfeit. That is, he would not learn caution toward that

^{B2}*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapter 7.

circumstance which lead to the breaking of Sybil Vane. He would never 'pay' for the breaking of Sybil Vane as one normally pays,

...one has to pay...in remorse, in suffering, in...well, in the consciousness of degradation.^{B3}

His romantic spirit would never tire and he would never become indifferent to the romantic story. He could enjoy *the same good things several times*.

If this were the story of Dorian Gray, I would not theme in him a horrible monster of seduction—there would have been no opportunity of decision for Dorian. In as much as every movement of the soul is a release of an overabundance of joy, or of an escape from depression, etc. his soul would never cease persistence. Instead, doubly cursed with youthful handsomeness and charm, and now with his suspended innocence, Dorian would be opportune to sin, again-and-again.

Contrast this to the memory experience of the omniscient reader exposed to the breaking of Sibyl's heart. Imagine the torment of the reader enduring that degree of pain night-after-night, girl-after-girl.

Of course, what this version loses is any commentary on temptation. And surely we would not be confronted with the possibility of enjoying the sins, as Wilde has written for Dorian,

^{B3} *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapter 6.

...he grew more and more enamored of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.^{B4}

This version is driven by a different ambition.

Here we are exposed to a certain type of tragedy. But there is no sympathy for the character of Dorian, and not because we lose touch with the character. Instead, the character falls out of focus completely and is replaced with an aesthetic theme. With this tragedy the reader confronts a certain "humility before the world" as Dorian is prevented from any decision at all. Ultimately this version culminates with *absurdity*.

I would say that to endure a persistence of pain equal to the breaking of Sybil's heart, night-after-night, is not possible. Perhaps in this tragedy, the pain is magnified. Dorian might be the origin sin, passing his corruption to others—they too then become numb and indifferent, now hosting the corruption. I have had experiences where an *exhausted laughter* fends of tears in the face of the absurd.^{B5}

There is another work of literature which arouses laughter in the face of the passions-made-absurd.

^{B4} *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapter 11.

^{B5} On the basis of this physiological experience, the *absurd* and the *epic* may be categorically related, in as much as both produce this exhausted laughter in the face of a humility before the world.

Consider *The Arabian Nights*, which paints a fantastic world in which its protagonists are subject to the devastation of the character of Time. Consider the tale of the third dervish within the tale of the porter and the young girls.⁸⁶ Consider as the dervish relates the story of the loss of his right eye. I get the feeling that the author is a mere puppet to Time—tossed from one *misadventure* into the next.

Where a story of a loss of an eye could provoke pity, all seriousness is shelved. The dervish pushes after his passion; yet, unlike with the story of Dorian no plot device is necessary, no bad memory needs explanation. In the world of the Arabian Nights the metaphysics are clear and a reader is simply driven to accept that passions runs amok.⁸⁷

What I mean is, in *my* Dorain, as well as the Arabian Nights, I am not made to feel bad about a seduction by curiosity or pleasure—whether at

the hand of the devil or otherwise. The character falls out of focus—is unimportant in the face of the enjoyment of the aesthetic theme.

This type of tragedy allows for an enjoyment of the pleasures and at the same time admits, “Yes, I did it and given the same circumstance I would do it again.” There is no story of mistake here. A relation of the aesthetic experience just *is* the ambition of the story.

—Justin Carmien, 15.08.15

⁸⁶See Hussain Haddwy's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Fifty-Third Night, page 138.

⁸⁷Consider the temptation of the third dervish in Husan Haddawy's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Sixty-Second Night, page 158,

“There remained only that one chamber to complete the hundred [chambers], and I began to feel obsessed and tempted with it, as **Satan urged me** to open it and cause my undoing.”

Or the temptation of Qamar al-Zaman in Husan Haddwy's translation of *Sindbad and Other Stories from*

The Arabian Nights, The Story of Qamar al-Zaman and His Two Sons, page 216,

“When Qamar al-Zaman looked at Princess Budur, the daughter of King Ghaiur, and saw her beauty and grace as she slept beside him, wearing a venetian shirt, without pants, a kerchief embroidered with gold and jewels, and a necklace inlaid with gems, beyond the means of any king, his reason was confounded, and the heat of instinct began to stir within him, as **God aroused in him** the desire to make love to her...”

OPUSCULE 02, v.02
THE ROMANTIC

APPENDIX C: REFLECTION ON
DESCRIPTIVE VS. ATOMISTIC UNDERSTANDING

In 28. I had said that rewriting a theory of blackholes was drastic. But why *drastic*? Well, because what I am suggesting here challenges what I have come to call *common cosmology*. When reflecting on the cosmos the popular way of talking about the world is one in which an objective and physical world is the foundation for our bodies, including our mind, mental processes, or 'mental' dispositions. Under this *atomistic understanding* one might say that we are all composed of some substances, and those substances combined in such a way to create the objects of our environment (chairs, arms, heads, brains)—and that those substances also combined to produce a mind or consciousness, which is then in a position to perceive the original physical matter.

However, when reading translations of Martin Heidegger this understanding is challenged—and whether it takes a year to read *Being and Time* (as my first reading did) or a month (my most recent reading) my everyday and common way of thinking is suspended for the entirety of that

read. During that time I live in an alternative which goes further, below a common understanding, with a more holistic ground which governs both the 'hard' sciences and, to use Richard Dawkins' language, the "warmer perceptions."

What are our most popular ways of talking about the world anyway?—the languages of the common cosmologies, as I have referred to them. Consider science and religion—both seek to explain the world similar to one another. Either it is with God or the Big Bang—both explain by means of a catalyst at the beginning of sequential time. And both describe a world which is common to everyone—*there is some objective substance which is common*. However, I am tempted to consider that which is not only prior to time and space, but prior to anything which we can mean. The fact that the translations of Heidegger provoke thoughts so contrary to what is popular makes the temptation all the more exciting.

Of course this *descriptive understanding* provokes the consideration of a new cosmology—that is, if the physical are not the most fundamental building blocks of experience then what is? Does descriptive understanding bring along with it an idealism?—solipsism? But here I want to say that descriptive understanding is not yet ready to make a cosmological claim.

—Justin Carmien, 01.08.15



I DON'T KNOW WHY I SAID THAT TO RICKY... IT WAS JUST THAT I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE. AND IMMEDIATELY I WAS SORRY.

WELL, I-I GUESS THIS IS MY DAY TO GET **GLOBBED!**

OH, WOW. THAT CINDY ISN'T **MUCH** OF A SNOB, IS SHE!

HOW COULD SHE BE SO **MEAN?**



WHAT BU...
IS IT OF...
ANYWAY...





OPUSCULE 2

www.terminusmechanicae.com

