

A NOTE ON REALISM

Stephen Rodefer

Realism runs through my work up to a point, and that point is usually a comma or a period, and then another realism begins.

Recently I realized in typing up my longest work how much it was in one way little more than a study of the caesura. Most people would of course say well that is not realism at all. But the street is as full of caesuras as it is of people and language, and those breaks are there to be measured, or realized. So I am a realist by virtue of my expertise in commas and periods.

The exclamation point and the colon are not a realist's marks, but those of an enthusiast or a logician, for the real world is nothing to get excited about and it certainly doesn't make sense. The realist work is written precisely to allow for these two absences in the real world, which can be said to correspond to content and to form.

If I do the real work well, as opposed to merely practising perseveringly in some way, then the power of those other punctuation marks will come to be between me and the reader or audience. The one who hears will say yes, and the listener's mind will be the extension of my writing: for a second the two will be one. The realist work will in its most excellent form make then an ideal world.

Now, I would also I think be a fool if I did not admit to understanding how this could be read as mystical belief, or impossible physics. I am about the only poet I know around whose interest in realism is mysterious, or mystical.

The earliest *thing* (the word that is the root of *real*) I can remember wanting to stand in front of work of mine was Wittgenstein: "The mind casts up of itself vague and redoubtable phantasies of the real". Hence in another sense only the mind is real, and anyone who can make the real work can be fairly said to be a realist.