

### 3 Figuring Documentarity

In the onto-theology of “the West,” revelatory unfolding is not just a rhetorical strategy in drama, but rather acts as the chief value index for the meaningfulness of human life and knowledge.

In the previous chapter, we saw the relationship between universal essence and particulars demonstrated in terms of two transcendentalisms: idealist reason and base materialism. These two moments of documentarity, brought into a dialectical relationship, also correspond to two forms of Kantian aesthetics: harmonious beauty and sublime excess. For Otlet, beauty is *illustrated* in depictions of pure reason, and in Bataille’s works the sublime is suggested in *photographs* of violence and excess. Their writings also symbolize these aesthetics: a writing of ordered statements and paragraphs, and a writing that at least in content is excessive in sex and violence and might therefore be judged to be pornographic. Despite their opposing epistemologies, aesthetics, and ethics, Otlet’s and Bataille’s writings share an assumption that empirical particulars are evidence of “deeper” metaphysical truths—reason or “primitive,” instinctual drives, respectively. Beings are signs of the general essence or truth of life in their total mode of being. Time plays little role in defining existence between particularity and universality. Even in Bataille’s works, where all being is movement and event, all movements and events are then symbols of a transcendental world of drives; “becoming” is an assertion of a type of being. Movement and event are canceled out as real agencies. Bataille’s novels display a becoming of excess in eroticism.

Most evidence, whether in literature or the sciences, however, appears through slippages between the real and categories of judgment, as mediated by experience or by methods and technology. What we see as the modern

category of realist “fiction,” for example, which is the result of the rise of the Western European and British novel of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is, as Erich Auerbach (2003) argued, part of a longer tradition or “style” in literature of opposing everyday, experiential accounts of particular, ordinary, individuals against the depiction of persons as belonging to social or other classes, particularly as viewed from an aristocratic conservatism of traditional or eternal values. This former “style” of the everyday I characterize along lines of weak documentarity built on a method of strong sense and the latter as having a strong documentarity built on a method of strong reference based in moral judgment.

“Sense,” in the manner that I am using the term, suggests a social or descriptive syntax—which in literature is developed through narrative or through rhetorical figuration or both—rather than dominantly through referential categories. The concept of sense as used here involves experiential doing and undergoing by an agent. It involves directionality and movement, not just through time, but also *as time* for an agent and his or her life and community.

In this chapter, I will prepare for the following chapter, as well (which deals with the modern category of literature as descriptive and performative modes of expression), by presenting two contrary modes by which information as a process of inscription and self-inscription occurs. I take it that the transformation of the sign into an index of meaningful positionality for an agent—that is, as an expressive inscription, rather than as a more “pure” representation or a mere symbolic referent—involves a greater emphasis on sense as a component of its signification.

The two cases that I will discuss in this chapter—aesthetic-religious on the one hand and modern scientific documentation on the other—are expansions and engagements with the juxtaposition of medieval iconography and modern documentation theory that John A. Walsh (2012) performs in his article “Images of God and Friends of God,” which discusses medieval religious iconography as indexical signs, using the work of Suzanne Briet (1951, 2006) as an explanatory device. I will argue that the medieval literary and aesthetic modes (at least in the “low” style that we will discuss, reaching at least as far back as the Christian Gospels) and the modern documentation-scientific modes of representation treat the indexical specificity of the particular in opposed manners, but they are both revelatory modes.

In chapter 1, I gave a general philosophical overview between strong and weak documentarity (signs as evidence of classes of universal essences and signs as evidence of particular powers) joined by inscription, and in the previous chapter we saw this mapped onto a theory of signs, still understood as largely referential (even when characterized by a totality of sense and becoming). In this chapter, we get a better understanding of documentarity as inscriptions, though one still tied to figurative uses of signs for theological or documentary-scientific ends. Here, indexes as *figures* of social, cultural, and physical positionality remain inscribed in semiotic documentarity, distinct from powers of self-expression (other than as revelatory expressions). And so, this chapter, despite appeals to empirical particulars, remains overall within the inscriptionality of the sign, rather than ontological powers of self-expression or even an entity's expressions under the constraints of experimentation.

### Erich Auerbach's History of Literary Realism

Erich Auerbach's 1946 book *Mimesis: The Representations of Reality in Western Literature* (Auerbach, 2003) is a canonical work that shows the transition from classical to modern literature's depiction of reality from the perspective of rhetorical styles. These styles are of three types: a high style taking the perspective of those from nobler heritages, a comedy or "low style" depicting those of lesser social classes, and most importantly for Auerbach's analysis, a mixed style, made up of realistic depictions of ordinary people. This last develops into modern literary realism. Auerbach's work proposes a historical understanding of literary realism from the perspective of the transition from universal classes of judgment to depictions of particular experience, and so it can help us understand the broader documentary inscriptions that we are tracing out in this chapter and book along a somewhat similar path as Auerbach's work.

From the very beginning of *Mimesis*, Auerbach presents the evolution of the realist style in literature as a break from the method or "style" of assigning particular people and events (particularly of lower classes) to categories or types. In the language of our present book, this is a shift from "strong" documentarity to "weak" documentarity, from reference to sense. Examining this textual history, Auerbach retrospectively reads it in terms of modern literary realism. And, since Auerbach begins his book by discussing

biblical and historical narratives along with poetic and narrative epics, the history of the representation of reality according to the modern genre of “literature” is this breakage of entities away from *a priori* categories within the classical tradition of narrative, regardless of modern genre identifications. In other words, “literature,” as a modern disciplinary or epistemic genre, historically emerges from a style representing powerful particulars that express their identities through experiential relations, whether in history, natural history, poetry, or fiction.

Auerbach (2003) traces the development of such a realism from biblical instances (particularly those in the New Testament Gospels) to the modern novel. Repeatedly, the contrast is between a strong sense of *a priori* categories of knowledge and judgment upon particulars and describing the empirical agency and expressions of particulars in their sensual and experiential lives. Auerbach writes:

It goes without saying that the stylistic convention of antiquity fails here [i.e., in the Gospels], for the reaction of the casually involved person can only be presented with the highest seriousness. The random fisherman or publican or rich youth, the random Samaritan or adulteress, come from their random everyday circumstances to be immediately confronted with the personality of Jesus; and the reaction of an individual in such a moment is necessarily a matter of profound seriousness, and very often tragic. . . . It goes without saying that, in the New Testament writings, any raising of historical forces to the level of consciousness is totally “unscientific”: it clings to the concrete and fails to progress to a systematizing of experience in new concepts. Yet, there is to be observed a spontaneous generation of categories which apply to epochs as well as to states of the inner life and which are much more pliable and dynamic than the categories of Greco-Roman historians. For example, there is the distinction of eras, the eras of law or of sin and the era of grace, faith, and justice; there are the concepts of “love,” “power,” “spirit” and the like; and even such abstract and static concepts as that of justice have assumed a dialectic mobility (Romans 3: 21ff) which renews them completely.

. . . Surely, the New Testament writings are extremely effective; the tradition of the prophets and the Psalms is alive in them, and in some of them—those written by authors of more or less pronounced Hellenistic culture—we can trace the use of Greek figures of speech. The spirit of rhetoric—a spirit which classified subjects in *genera*, and invested every subject with a specific form of style as the one garment becoming it in virtue of its nature—could not extend its domain to them for the simple reason that their subject would not fit into any of the known genres. (2003, pp. 44–45)

For Auerbach, the history of the representation of reality in Western literature is the story of the emergence of modern realism beginning with what he identifies as the “lower” style of literature—the style beginning with experience, not with categories of judgment—not only in literature proper, but also in religious, historical, and presumably even certain narrative scientific texts. In literature proper, this is characterized by the fictional representation of powerful particulars, independent of *a priori* “genera” or categories. For this reason, modern themes, such as spirit and power, are so important for Auerbach; they represent the innate powers of (and conversely the restrictions on) individual characters to express themselves and give themselves meaning, value, and truth. “Realism” names the power of particulars to name themselves in the narratives that they help create. In literary fiction of the nineteenth century, “realism” refers to the modeling of such particulars as social subjects within story frames.

How then did the experiential narratives of the New Testament become appropriated by the categories of Christian reason and truth in medieval theology? For Auerbach, later Christian church fathers assembled such by figural interpretations of the “realist” narratives, more directly linking prophecies of the Old Testament with New Testament experiential narratives. (Suggestively, “typology” is the name for this hermeneutic technique.) For Auerbach, this resulted in a message that wasn’t inherent to the Gospels, but rather, it fitted the needs of the early church in the face of the collapse of the classical order and its desire to impose meaning upon empirical events and their literary recording for institutional ends. The task was documentary in the old, “high-style” sense of classicism, though with an ecclesiastic inflection: to read particular powers as powers of the church’s transcendental truths by means of classical rhetorical figuration. Auerbach writes:

Rigid, narrow, and unproblematic schematization is originally completely alien to the Christian concept of reality. It is true, to be sure, that the rigidifying process is furthered to a considerable degree by the figural interpretation of real events, which, as Christianity became established and spread, grew increasingly influential and which, in its treatment of actual events, dissolved their content of reality, leaving them only their content of meaning. As dogma was established, as the Church’s task become more and more a matter of organization, its problem that of winning over peoples completely unprepared and unacquainted with Christian principles, figural interpretation must inevitably become a simple and rigid scheme. But the problem of the process of rigidification as a whole goes deeper;

it is linked to the decline of the culture of antiquity. It is not Christianity which brought about the process of rigidification, but rather Christianity was drawn into it. (2003, pp. 119–120)

Auerbach makes an important point that I will translate into the language of this book: the history of representation follows a general historical progress from strong to weak documentarity, with mixed styles throughout this tendency. The historical quest for the being of beings fluctuates between an emphasis on the powers of types and an emphasis on the powers of particular individuals, with an overall historical tendency toward this latter and toward empirical accounts as the grounds for truth. But typology often comes back to frame the practices of empiricism of whatever eras at their beginnings and their ends, through formal and informal ontologies and measurement parameters, and through practical and technologically produced judgments toward conclusions, as well as throughout in descriptive, “theoretical,” accounts. As in literary realism (e.g., narrative as story), the Platonic, that is, the representational, devices of rhetorical closure and philosophical idealism are difficult to escape, even in science or, as we will soon see, in the practices of documentation and its theory.

### Figuration and the Indexical Sign

In his article “‘Images of God and Friends of God’: The holy icon as document” (Walsh, 2012), John A. Walsh applies twentieth-century French documentalist Suzanne Briet’s (1951, 2006) concept of the *indice* (indexical sign) in documentation to medieval iconography. Following our discussion of Auerbach’s (2003) history of Western literature and the role of representation and figuration in it, a discussion of Walsh’s article takes on the importance of showing moments between the universal and the particular where each becomes manifest in the other and showing the rhetorical and experiential mechanisms by which this occurs. Medieval iconography per se is grounded in revelatory metanarratives, though of a strong type of documentarity (iconography as revealing God’s truth in the phenomenological world and documentary technique as revealing scientific truth in the phenomenological world). Other literary conventions in the Christian tradition, as Auerbach’s book shows, are a weak type of documentarity. In revelatory narratives, however, these are rather relative points on a scale, as it is the manifestation of eternal truths within human reality that

constitutes the semiotic universe of belief in this tradition, and literature and art genres merely vary across this scale in order to differently emphasize the causal agencies in life and the epistemic agencies in thought by which revelation occurs.

Despite their radically different time periods and domains of evidence, these two cases, of medieval iconography and Briet's modern documentation, share what Heidegger called an "onto-theological" foundation in both their ontological and historiographic modes of revelation. In Latour's language, inscription and documentary evidence remains at the level of "signs" in both cases: theological and documentary signs. Walsh's work provides an opportunity to consider the role of the indexical sign in documentarity across time periods and genres, from religious reason to a manner of scientific reason, based on documentary class or type construction as acts of evidence and proof.

Walsh's (2012) discussion takes as its starting point a type of figurative art where the nature of the figure is that of the *imago*: the icon. The icon introduces figuration into the medieval philosophical notion of truth as the correspondence between thing and concept, *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Religious figuration is more than simply a rhetorical or aesthetic function, for it must include experience. The viewer or reader must be brought to a revelation of the meaning of a concept through experience; they must be positioned as a believer of truth by figurative indexing between phenomenological and eternally true worlds. This role of experience distinguishes the functions of literature from those of analytic philosophy in the medieval period. The function of literature, and art more generally, here is to model this discovery of transcendental truth, just like ancient drama led to the discovery of tragedy and comedy in life. Despite their metaphorical functions, icons also involve metonymical trains of experience, particularly when they occur in allegorical rhetoric or symbols. Icons match or condense the phenomenological world to the claims of eternally true concepts and propositions using various metaphorical equivalences and metonymical scales, ending in a one-to-one correspondence between sign and concept.

First, as Walsh points out, as a certain form of allegorical representation, medieval Christian religious icons were created within the context of prototypes and established symbols and beliefs for their creation and

interpretation. The hermeneutic interpretability of such was stabilized by a *langue* or structure of interpretative referents. The stability of reference in icons at the level of imagery allows iconographic readings to end in stable interpretations. Walsh writes,

Artistic invention is not the aim of the icon, which is self-consciously imitating and reproducing from traditional models and prototypes—the Trinity; Mary, Mother of God; the angels; and saints. This faithfulness to earlier models and the prototype provides a stable language, across centuries, for generations of faithful. (2012, p. 186)

Walsh's article points us to an important question in documentary production: the use of figurative language toward producing universal "models and prototypes." As I am arguing throughout this book, the documentary indexes for being vary according to genres and rhetorical strategies, most of all in those worldviews dominated by semiotics. Medieval literature had a repertoire of rhetorical and aesthetic devices and genres that were inherited from classical rhetoric, which as we saw Auerbach suggest, were repurposed for upholding a theological empire, but also served to document the daily external and internal life of ordinary people. Theological arguments subsume the particular within philosophical and theological precedent texts and analytic categories based on assumed universal premises, so that little is left of the empirical other than as argumentative conclusions. And aesthetically, iconography as a tradition subsumed the image of the icon to canonical beliefs and scriptural texts by not only depicting, but also providing through education and the cultural environment, the interpretative meanings for icons. Within the philosophy of iconography, the focus was on the content of the icon as a referent for universal and transcendental meaning.

However, in remembering the experiential aspect of icons, we must also remember their performativity: they were meant to be read. Even the illiterate could "read" an icon; indeed, being broadly readable was central to the icon's function. Icons must also be understood to take on an extensional reference to experience, as well as intensional reference to canonical theological values. They just don't type an event; they must also aesthetically and rhetorically constitute an event by means of the internal correspondence of signs within and between signifying types and regimes. The semiotic economy of signs in and between icons must ultimately find an anchor in experienced life in order for revelation to occur. (Impending death being a convenient place of last resort for the theological, as there are little other



grounds for a dying person's hope for continued life than a faith in eternal life.) The document must index a present, as well as an eternal in this life-world of documentary evidence. The power of the Holy Trinity, for example, is in the various human personifications of such: in the body of Jesus, the appearance of his mother Mary, and the life paths of the saints. And after his crucifixion, Jesus is not found in the cave, because, by his death, he is now a presence among the living and must always be found there.

This can be seen even more when the distance between the signs or "world" of God and the signs or "world" of human beings are widened by further figurative distance than in the case of singular icons. For example, medieval allegory goes a step further than iconography into the world of empirical life and experiential temporality (both understood as being signs) by setting up correspondences between "the city of man" and "the city of God" that track these correspondences across time and experience. Medieval mystery plays, as live performances, went still further in grounding universals in particular experiences, by embedding the "city" of God within the "city" of human beings. Narratives of mystical experiences embed the universal—the "invisible"—within the particular and visual (or other senses).<sup>1</sup>

In allegory and mystery plays, as well as even in the elevated style of medieval romances, the point of view of God as manifested in the experiential body of Christ remains evident. Truth is revealed as a function of literary form—the Gospels—the eternal "good news" that is active in the present lifeworld. The index for truth is that of God's revelation within the lives of ordinary people, the metonymic appearance of the universal into the particular, and so with this, the awareness that particular human beings have a place in life as a totality. (This would be of particular value to those excluded from power in the political order.) Ultimately, even in the Catholic tradition, the Christian life has meaning through revelation. Without this faith, there is no access to permanence, to eternal life, and so all human life crumbles into finitude and relativism. In the onto-theology of "the West," revelatory unfolding is not just a rhetorical strategy in drama, but rather acts as the chief value index for the meaningfulness of human life and knowledge. "Enlightenment" is temporally progressive and culminating.

Walsh (2012) argues that icons function in networks of indexical signs that link the invisible and the visible, universal essences and visible manifestations of them:

Icons generate complex networks of relationships and indices. They depict relationships among the Persons of the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, the angels, the saints, and the faithful. . . .

The icon manifests and visualizes indexical connections to other documents. These connected documents can be other icons that served as a model or that share the same subject or motif. The referenced artifacts may be scriptural or hagiographic documents that provide a textual representation of the person(s) or events depicted in the icon. The documents indexed by the icon can be the divine or human prototype(s) who are the subject of the image. By providing access to these prototypes, the icon functions as a visible index to the invisible. . . . The invisible is not only referenced by the icon, but is made present in the documentary event, an active participant—with its own envisaging intentionality—in a conversation made possible by the icon. (2012, p. 191)

We can read Walsh above as suggesting not only that icons index the invisible as “documentary event[s],” but that they also perform this transformation of the invisible to the visible by making manifest by images the possibility of the entire medieval Christian worldview. In other words, what is important in the figures of medieval Christianity is not just the relationship of empirical events to biblical characters, events, and moral stories, but what is indexed by the icons most of all is the fact of revelation *in its worldly appearance*. What is historically significant about medieval icons and other figurative forms from a perspective of documentarity is that of revelatory evidence itself as a sign of truth. This occurs in a variety of genres of knowledge in and as “the West,” as we will continue to discuss in this chapter and book.

### Documentation Theory and the Indexical Sign

As I will now argue, there is also a revelatory understanding of scientific documentation and the practice of collecting and organizing such documents. This understanding of science and documentation has a historical, revelatory, character, not only in its rhetorical and technological manifestations of universal meaning from particular figures, but also in the entire “theology” of its professional destiny: social and epistemic progress through professional documentation (and today, “information” and “data”).

Let us return to Walsh’s theoretical grounds of his article in the epistemology of the indexical sign or *indice* in Suzanne Briet’s *What Is Documentation?*

to further examine how rhetorical figuration functions in Briet's theory of documentation. Briet, we may recall, was not only a librarian at the French Bibliothèque nationale and a founder of French documentation, but she was also a known biographer and theorist of the nineteenth-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Despite both these esteemed professional roles, however, neither one ostensibly crossed the other. In Briet's oeuvre, her literary research and research in documentation seem to have no intersections with one another. However, I will ask: can these two regimes be cross-indexed in her work through the figure of the indexical sign, taken as a technology for the transfiguration of knowledge as documentation and of documentation as knowledge?

The role of figuration in philosophical historicism is familiar to anyone acquainted with Hegel's philosophy of history, which gives a giant prefiguration to history by means of the logic of dialectic applied to a very selective and pejorative view of world historical events. In Briet's book, it is not, of course, the logic of dialectic that prefigures history and phenomena, but rather the logic of classificatory evidence—what I've called a "strong" notion of documentarity—and in particular, the figuration of indexicality, a figuration that takes a variety of forms which this current book traces in the form of social agency for evidentiary signs. Ontology, taxonomy, and classification are for Briet indexes of the real. Unlike in Otlet's work, however, where the indexical point is erased in a positivist epistemology of the correspondence of meaning between thing and document, in Briet's book the indexical point is reasserted as a sign created by techniques and institutions of documentation. In Briet's theory of documentation, the phenomenology of essential being lies in the application of the methods and techniques of documentation systems upon individual beings. This, itself, as Briet puts it elsewhere (Briet, 1954) is documentation as the science of science.

In *What Is Documentation?*, Briet writes,

Is a star a document? Is a pebble rolled by a torrent a document? Is a living animal a document? No. But the photographs and the catalogues of stars, the stones in a museum of mineralogy, and the animals that are cataloged and shown in a zoo, are documents.

In our age of multiple and accelerated broadcasts, the least event, scientific or political, once it has been brought into public knowledge immediately becomes weighted down under a "veil of documents" (Raymond Bayer). Let us admire the

documentary fertility of a simple ordinary fact: for example, an antelope of a new kind has been encountered in Africa by an explorer who has succeeded in capturing an individual that is then brought back to Europe for our Botanical Garden [*Jardin des Plantes*]. (Briet, 2006, p. 7)

In Briet's book, entities of the world become known as evidence by means of documentary techniques and institutions. These techniques belong to two means: primary or initial documentary techniques of ontologies, taxonomies, and classifications, and then secondary events (lectures, newspaper accounts, etc.) following from these that belong to institutional and popular cultures. So, for example, an animal is named as a new type of antelope through the application of zoological ontologies and taxonomies, and then it is discussed in academic lecture halls as this type of antelope, it is recorded as being the voice of this type of antelope, and its discovery as being this type of antelope is published in newspapers, and so on. Type belongs to a documentary ontology and beings are evidence of the existence of types and are proof of their factual existence. But such truths are products of cultural techniques, foremost, documentation techniques. For Briet, documentation is a *cultural technique*.

Recalling what we read in an earlier chapter of Latour's discussion of bird samples in an aviary (Latour, 1996, p. 27), this transference—indeed, to refer back to religious symbolism, this *transmutation*—of an existent entity into a universal figure of scientific ontologies and taxonomies (and the subsequent constellations of institutional and popular discourses from such), simultaneously makes possible and limits the expressive possibilities of the entity; this individual being must be understood as a *type* within a typology of species and genera. And so, Briet in the beginning of *What Is Documentation?* accepts the standard definition of documents as being evidence of a fact, but she then amends this in order to discuss documents as being indexical signs (*indices*). She writes:

Latin culture and its heritage have given to the word *document* the meaning of instruction or of proof. RICHELET's dictionary, just as LITRE's, are two French sources that bear witness to this. A contemporary bibliographer who is concerned about clarity has put forth this brief definition: "A document is a proof in support of a fact."

If one refers to the "official" definitions of the French Union of the Bureaus of Documentation [L'Union Française des Organismes de Documentation], one ascertains that the document is defined as: "all bases of materially fixed knowledge, and capable of being used for consultation, study, and proof."

This definition has often been countered by linguists and philosophers, who are necessarily infatuated with minutia and logic. Thanks to their analysis of the content of this idea, one can propose here a definition, which may be, at the present time, the most accurate, but is also the most abstract, and thus, the least accessible: “all concrete or symbolic indexical signs [*indice*], preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon.” (2006, p. 7)

In Briet’s understanding of documentation, the particular, empirical, ante-lope is not only symbolically absorbed, but it is also literally captured and enclosed within a cultural institution or institutions. Briet collapses philosophical and documentary notions of ontology and she can do this because the documentary notion *is* philosophical and it is practiced as a cultural technique, not just in the cultures of documentation or philosophy, but as she argues in her book, as Western culture in its social expansion in the world within the mandates of postwar progress and knowledge.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Day, 2006), in Briet’s book the animal is captured and brought back to a European collection. This is the professional culture of documentation. But then there is also the cultural destiny of documentation as science, which for Briet rides on the rails of earlier European colonialism, through the dominance of three European languages across the world. In Briet’s book, documentation is a professional culture, but it belongs to the metaphysical and political destiny of “the West” as a culture, which in the postwar years is characterized as world development and progress.

Besides the problematic of the documentary appropriation of beings, there is also the problematic that appears of the relationship between figuration and indexicality at the level of the rhetoric and the rhetorical genre of *What Is Documentation?* as a professional manual. For, as we see in the opening paragraphs of Briet’s book, the methods and techniques of indexicality are themselves prefigured in Briet’s text within the historical destiny of documentation and documentary institutions, as “scientific” institutions.

Documentation, as both a practice and a theory of science for Briet, puts representational limits on signs in their indexical signification in order to form referents of stable and known types, and it is this referential typology that leads to the erasure of figuration by documentary and data institutional processes (“*centres de calcul*,” as Latour [1996] uses this term). Figuration and calculation are intractably connected to one another

in the technical transformation of signs. In Briet's theory of documentation, through both *a priori* ontologies and taxonomies and then through secondary means of social documentation, the sense of beings is defined and transubstantiated by means of a method and set of techniques whose beginning and end is a referential ontology (and this is true, too, of documentation processes themselves, which are treated as unitary and socially and culturally purposeful).

It is this process of transubstantiation that leads to the transfiguration of the entity as a unification of individual being and universal essence; of turning entities into signs, and these signs into symbols of an essential and universal being. Entities are allegorized as signs of universal truth, emerging through processes of scientific revelation, led by ontological naming, whereby the entity gains its importance and value for truth by representing something other than its own particularity, a mode of generalized being that transcends particular entities and that appears through vigorous methods and techniques. The entity has been changed by naming, and again by not just being an inscription, but rather a symbol, of being revealed and made manifest through "rigorous" thought or reason. Briet's book describes the transubstantiation and transfiguration of an entity by science—"science" understood as a process of ontological naming mediated by documentation techniques, methods, and institutions. That is, "science" itself understood as documentation or, as Otlet had it, as bibliographic representation. European documentation forms a direct link between the representational tradition in bibliography and the notion of information in modern information science; books as containers of facts, documents as containers of facts, and the contents of those containers—the facts—being information. Science, in this sense, is synonymous with what Heidegger called the "ontotheological" tradition of Western metaphysics. It attempts to reveal the *logos* of all that is.

In this chapter, we have looked at the figuration of entities as evidentiary signs of truth within a medieval and a modern context. We have seen experience and particular empirical entities subsumed within semiotics of signs operating as revelatory mechanisms for truth. In the next chapter, we look at entities as represented social entities within the genre of modern literary realism. We will also look at the critique of representational realism by the modern literary and aesthetic avant-garde.

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