

# LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



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**ON**

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Edited by **FREDERICO PEREIRA**

**Arezzo (Italy)**

June 26 | July 1 ♦ 2002

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# P A P E R S

# **(Im)possible love and erotic (non)representations in two Russian films, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979) and *Gods' Envy* (2000): What does the Other have to do with it?**

YANA HASHAMOVA (\*)

Igor Kon, a prominent Russian psychologist and sexologist, writes: «For many decades Soviet society hypocritically portrayed itself as utterly asexual, even sexless; it eventually even convinced itself of such drivel.»<sup>1</sup> Communist ideologists saw sexual relations as disruptive for people who needed to give their whole lives to the only goal of human existence: the bright future of communism.

However, this bright future never came and the collapse of the Soviet system commenced, among numerous other changes and social challenges, a sexual revolution. While the transition period after 1991 certainly affected attitudes towards sexuality, scholars of sexuality and pornography in Russian society all agree that the sexual scene in Russia has continued to drastically change over the last ten to fifteen years since the beginning of this sexual revolution – though they differ in their opinion on the degree of this change.<sup>2</sup> How were sexual relations represented on the screen at the end of the Soviet period and how are they represented today in Russia?

This paper studies erotic and sexual representations (or their absence) in Menshov's hit *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears* (1979) and his most recent film *Gods' Envy* (2000) and examines how the perception and representation of sex has changed in post-Soviet cinema. More

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<sup>1</sup> «Sexuality and Culture», Igor Kon (ed.) *Sex and Russian Society*, Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1993, 15.

<sup>2</sup> See Eliot Borenstein, «About That: Deploying and Deploring Sex in Post-Soviet Russia», *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, Spring 2000, 51-83; Igor Kon (ed.) *Sex and Russian Society*, Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1993; Paul Goldschmidt «Pornography in Russia», *Consuming Russia*, Adele M. Barker (ed.), Durham: Duke U P, 1999, 318-338.

importantly, I pursue the questions of whether a sexual relationship in general is possible and whether the sexual act can be represented in cinema – not only in Russia but anywhere. I have no intention of surveying all recent changes in the representation of the erotic in Russian culture. Rather, I focus on the impossibility of the erotic screen representations before and after the sexual revolution as I attempt to uncover the different reasons for this impossibility.

Sexual passion was only silently and shyly suggested on the Soviet screen. In *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears*, the director, Menshov, turns out the light when Katya kisses the TV journalist and viewers soon realize that this «kiss» does not end there and does not exactly result in prosperity for the two. Katya becomes a mother before she has become a woman. After this disappointing beginning, she dedicates her life to her job and her daughter. Katya rises to the head of a chemical factory but for years continues to humiliate herself via questionable affairs with married men. Her destiny changes when she meets Gosha, a man who brings new meaning to her life. Her situation, however, in this new relationship is still complicated. She is forced to hide her professional success, for Gosha firmly believes that there cannot be a healthy family, in which the woman makes more money or holds a higher position than the man. Gosha is very good at his job but he is a mechanic. The film suggests the growing concern in Soviet society of men's emasculation and their purported sexual identity crisis, which for the last ten years was supposedly being addressed and restored as many popular magazines claim.<sup>3</sup> Even emancipated to some degree by her occupation, the Soviet woman is still forced to feign inferiority in her relationship with men.

In addition to these problems born by the ill-achieved social equality – or rather, inadequacy – the intimate scenes between Katya and Gosha are again deprived of sex and eroticism. For example, only a disheveled bed signals their sexual engagement and they jump up at the sound of the door key afraid that Katya's grown up daughter might see something that she very well knows exists. This scene reminds viewers of the well-known and frequently quoted remark of a Soviet citizen at the 1987 Soviet-American «space bridge» in which she announced that there was no sex in the Soviet Union, «u nas seksa net». Such remarks and the lack of eroticism in Soviet film and literature justify Igor Kon's harsh judgment about the hypocrisy with which Soviet society portrayed itself as utterly asexual.

This film's representation of sexuality is not much different from the Hayes Code in Hollywood when even indirect references to the sexual act were prohibited from the 1930s to the late 1950s. Zizek points out that, «Under these conditions of severe censorship, the only possibility was to use, in a reflective way, the very hole which signaled the absence (and thus at another level, the presence) of the act.»<sup>4</sup> One, however, has to see beyond the hypocrisy, Kon suggests, to be able to imagine the presence of the sexual act.

But the absence of sexual representations in *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears* reveals more than the hinting at a sexual relationship. In the scene in bed the characters are talking about their incidental meeting, about pictures from her childhood, and about his sleeping habits. The topics of their conversation jump unexpectedly from one to another, but the calm and affectionate mood of these utterances suggests a spiritual union and love. Lacan writes: «It is in relation to the parabeing that we must articulate what makes up for (*supplee au rapport sexuel*- supplement...) the sexual relationship qua nonexistent. It is clear that, in everything that approaches it, language merely manifests its inadequacy. What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love.»<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, the absence of sexuality and sexual engagement in this film imply the presence of one and even hint at a loftier experience, that of love. Such a representation answered

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<sup>3</sup> See Helena Goscilo «Style and S(t)imulation: Popular Magazines or the Aestheticization of Postsoviet Russia», *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, Spring 2000, 15-51.

<sup>4</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *The Plague of Fantasy*. London: Verso, 1997, 174.

<sup>5</sup> *On Feminine Sexuality. The Limits Of Love And Knowledge. Book XX. Encore 1972-1973*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998, 45.

the demands of ideology and censorship, which promoted a spiritual love that would suppress individual desire in favor of the collective good. The hypocrisy of Soviet society presenting itself as asexual actually well served ideological purposes or was fed by Soviet ideology which propagated pure love, spirituality, and assigned only procreative functions to sexual engagements.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, Lacan's argument is different and addresses the nature of the sexual relationship in relation to the para-being, but his conclusion appears similar to the situation in Soviet society: love makes up for the sexual relationship.

The weakening of censorship during *glasnost*, however, dramatically changed this picture. Russian films (beginning with *Little Vera* (1989) directed by Pichul) showed nudity and sex acts with shocking frequency. This suggests a number of factors influencing the sexual revolution, including the «rehabilitation of flesh...», a reaction against asceticism of the still recent past.<sup>7</sup> I will not engage in a discussion on the reasons and manifestations of this sexual revolution, since they have been studied and the format of this paper does not allow for such expansion.<sup>8</sup>

Now more than twenty years after *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears* and more than ten after the sexual revolution which constructed a new perception of sexuality in Russia, Menshov shot his fifth film, *Gods' Envy*, with Vera Alentova again playing the main female role. One would expect to see a different representation of the erotic in this film. Menshov said in an interview: «u menia byl zamysel eroticheskogo otkrovennogo filma...» (I had the idea for an erotically honest film.) And perhaps even more deceptively, early on in the film, he sets the audience's expectations of the erotic by having the main characters participate in a risqué, private screening of Bertolucci's *The Last Tango in Paris*. It seems the director was impressed by Bertolucci's exploration of sexuality, which scandalized Western European viewers.

Naturally the viewer's curiosity to discover Menshov's hidden 'vice' is aroused. Interestingly, the *Tango* scene is immediately preceded by scenes from the TV studio of *Vremya* (Soviet era news program) and documentary footage presenting the achievements of the Soviet Union: Soviet leaders' speeches, scenes from the arts and sports, and parades. After this setup come the Bertolucci's *Tango* scenes which alternate with shots of enormous stone heads as monuments and façade decorations watching over everyone and all. The most intimate moments of human life are exposed to the omnipotent presence of Soviet power.

*Gods' Envy*, again, tells a story about woman's self-discovery and her late awakening to sexual passion. The film is set in the early 1980s, when Sonya is in her forties. She is married to a famous writer and has an adolescent son. With the authorities' permission she invites a French pilot to her home, and he arrives accompanied by a French journalist. The journalist, Andre, is instantly taken by Sonya's beauty and does not hesitate to pursue his desire. Sonya is very much troubled by the sensual feelings which she recognizes for the first time, but she is also cognizant of her neighbors' judgment, her son's opinion, and her mother-in-law's curiosity. New feelings and old fears come together in Sonya's mind and psyche. A passionate and impossible affair begins between her and the journalist.

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<sup>6</sup> With exception of the brief absence of sexual restraint immediately after the revolution of 1917 when Alexandra Kollontai and Clara Zetkin dared to openly claim that the question of the relations between men and women was important for the Soviet society, it is well known that the former Soviet Union and ever before it the Orthodox church long had a decidedly prudish and puritanical attitude towards sex. Religious bigots condemned almost all sexual relations (even marital) for going against the religious dogmas and communist ideologists saw sexual relations as disruptive, for people needed to dedicate their energy to the future of communism.

<sup>7</sup> Irina Levi, «Igra v kotoroi net pobeditelei», *Molodoi kommunist*, 1990, #4, 96, quoted in Lynne Attwood «Sex and the Cinema», *Sex and Russian Society*, 64.

<sup>8</sup> See Igor Kon (ed.) *Sex and Russian Society*, A. M. Barker (ed.) *Consuming Russia*, and Helena Goscilo *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Having placed the story in the early 1980s Menshov is bound to address the necessity for secrecy in such an affair unfolding under the watchful gaze of Soviet authorities. Sonya accepts Andre's invitation to meet, which happens first on a crowded street in front of an enormous Dzerdzhinsky monument (Dzerdzhinsky was Lenin's minister of internal affairs and the founder of the KGB). With fear Sonya looks at the statue and signals Andre that they better meet in the underground street crossing, away from Dzerdzhinsky's glance.

Viewers are gradually exposed to erotic scenes as Sonya awakens to her own sexual desire. At the beginning she is so shocked by some such scenes in *The Last Tango* that she walks away from the screening and even refuses to talk to her husband about what they saw, but later with Andre she discovers the pleasures of her body. Sonya and Andre meet with great difficulties: they 'escape' in the country in the back of a truck, and later rent an apartment together.

There are couple of erotic scenes, in which Menshov actually invites viewers to an unusual voyeuristic experience of arousal and frustration. Viewers' expectations were set high and the director teases them. In the truck-scene Menshov directs the camera to the characters' entangled bodies, but before showing too much the gaze moves askance. And he repeats this technique twice. The owners of the apartment, which they rent for their secret meetings, are away and have covered the beds and furniture in plastic. Sonya and Andre's first rendezvous there quickly ends up in a bed of which viewers see very little since the characters, while making love, pull over the plastic sheets and cover themselves. Viewers can perceive the silhouettes of the excited bodies but not much nudity. These scenes present incomplete revelations, and this is no accident. This technique blends aesthetic censorship with censorship in Freud's sense. The point of these scenes is to gamble on the arousal of desire and its non-fulfillment. The camera bars the look, ends the 'seen,' and invests in the 'un-seen.'<sup>9</sup> It seems to me the sexual representations in this film are not only moving away from trivial and all too explicit appearance, but are marked by a concern for control and expectation. Clearly the erotic in Russia, at least exposed in this film, is more reflective and literate in desire than many sexual representations immediately preceding it.

The above interpretation of the erotic in Menshov's film dwells on Christian Metz's argument about the psychoanalytic qualities of the cinematic medium, but Zizek's ideas about the sexual act in cinema are more intriguing. They take the correlation between Lacanian psychoanalysis and cinema a step further and suggest another interpretation of this scene. He writes: «With the liberation of the 1960s, when at least oblique references to the sexual act became admissible, we obtain three modes of this reference: comicality, perversion, pathos.»<sup>10</sup> Zizek connects these three modes to the three types of object found in Lacan's schema (graph) in *Encore*. The graph presents a triangle: the three angles of it stand for the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real; *Jouissance* is situated in the middle of the triangle; there are also three objects on the sides; they present the three ways in which *Jouissance* can be tamed; S (A) is the signifier of the barred Other which marks the inherent inconsistency of the symbolic order; *a* stands for the *objet petit a*, the partial object which sets desire in motion; and the capital Phi is the captivating image which represents the impossible *Jouissance*. Zizek claims: «The matrix of these objects accounts for the modes of depicting the sexual act: comicality, perversion, pathetic ecstasy».<sup>11</sup> According to him the sexual act is in fact unrepresentable and it can be rendered on the screen only through these three modes. The comic mode emerges from the signifier of the barred Other. Comicality appears to separate the sexual act from the every day reality as well as serves as a defense against the dimension of the traumatic

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Metz calls this cinematic technique «extension of the fetish proper in the very text of the film». (*Imaginary Signifier*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1977, 77.)

<sup>10</sup> *The Plague of Fantasy*, 175. Zizek argues that these three modes of representation of the sexual act are applicable only to feature-films and not to pornography in which the detailed representation of the sexual act breaks the flow of the story and abides by different rules.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Real which pertains to the sexual act; in perversion the focus is placed on the partial object which stands in for the impossible act; and in the pathetic ecstasy one can construct a fascinating image destined to render the pathos of the act.

It seems Menshov's film presents the act in a comic mode, in which a dissonance arises between the representation of the intensity of the act and the representation of the impassive and grandiose landscape of everyday life. To the external observer there is something comic in the alternating shots showing the characters' passionately fused bodies and the miserable interior of the truck with the small truck window opening a view of a magnificent landscape. The use of the plastic covering the fused bodies produces the same comic effect and serves to reduce the pressure of the traumatic Real.

Unlike *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears*, *Gods' Envy* represents the sexual act, but its comic mode implies unrepresentability, which at a different level hints at the impossibility of a sexual relationship. *Gods' Envy* manifests this impossibility with the relentless presence of the big Other. The Law is that which permits desire. This is why I mentioned Menshov's situating people's intimate experiences in the context of the omnipresent and all-powerful eye of Soviet authorities. In this impossible relationship between Sonya and Andre the third party is actually not her husband (or even Andre's wife) but Soviet power. Sonya is afraid that Gods can become envious of people's happiness, and they do. Andre is deported from the Soviet Union for a critical article he wrote about a Korean plane carrying civilians downed by the Soviet military. It appears, in this film, Gods blend with Soviet authorities. «The good old God of all times», as Lacan calls him, is a reification of the Other. This Other is the condition of sexual difference and love but at the same time it paradoxically dooms any sexual relationship, any attempt of the two sexes to fuse in One through love. Lacan insists that sexual relationship is impossible: the Law always intervenes between a man and a woman. There is always a certain *ménage-a-trois*, in which the third party is the Other. The obstacle to love, seemingly external, is also internal, which means that this film's representation of a physical impossibility of love hides a psychological impossibility too.

These are merely a few thoughts on the sexual scenes in Menshov's *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears* and *Gods' Envy*, which suggest that sexual relations in these films are impossible (either repressed by ideology or the Law in the Lacanian sense) and their representation on the screen are unrepresentable except within a certain mode: comic or perverse or pathetic. No doubt, this paper oversimplifies some aspects of the subject in question. Many other facets need to be taken into consideration for a more complete examination, such as Menshov's cinema stylistics from the 1970s and 1980s, his nostalgia for the past, and of course his age, which is twice the age of many present day Russian viewers. But the propositions of impossible love and the unrepresentable sexual act require attention and invite further exploration.

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# Patient or doctor?: A study of the analyst/analysand positions in André Breton's *Nadja*

GAY RAWSON (\*)

My paper entitled «Patient or Doctor?: A Study of the Analyst / Analysand Positions in André Breton's *Nadja*» examines the double role that André, the narrator, plays. He is first, an analyst, a psychiatrist who claims to base the narrative on medical observation. The 1928 novel, in fact, can be read as a transcript or case study of Nadja, the patient, and her «talking cure». André analyzes several significant moments in the course of their «therapy». But significant for whom? After further examination, these moments reveal more about André and his preoccupations than those of the purported analysand. I argue that the writing actually functions as a self-styled therapy through which André hopes to relieve himself of his obsession with the «patient» and of guilt for actions he knows to be suspect.<sup>1</sup> The act of writing, what I call the «writing cure», initially achieves minimal success in this case. Therefore, in 1962, still plagued by the «failed» therapy (both hers and more importantly his), André recasts the text in an attempt once again to work through the situation. The analyst this time more clearly becomes the analysand as he reads over his case notes in the form of his novel, his remarks, and his actions while attempting once again to write away his guilt. The ultimate success of this therapy remains unknown as he dies but four years later. I however doubt its ability to cure as André continues to justify acts he knows to be suspect without accepting responsibility. He never openly admits to his role in Nadja's demise.

Before delving into the argument or revealing what actually happens to our «heroine», let me first explain that I am a literary specialist, not a psychologist. Also, in the interest of space, I will not be contextualizing today's presentation within the argument's original framework. Indeed, I can only focus on the narrow but rich topic of André's multiple roles. I hope that this sliver will offer a

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<sup>1</sup> For this entire paper, read words like «analyst», «therapy», «madwoman», and «patient» in quotes. These words are redefined in this novel to the point that they become unconventional and perhaps even debatable.

glimpse of my larger work<sup>2</sup> and an interest in reading Breton's text on your own. To help situate this paper, I will begin with some biographical background information and a brief description of the novel. I will then proceed to the case studies of Nadja and André.

As earlier stated, this novel can function of a case study of the narrator by the narrator (even though the claim is otherwise). This reflective aspect, present in the form and narration, is often hidden as the narrator also clinically evaluates the case of another character – here Nadja.

[...] le ton adopté pour le récit se calque sur celui de l'observation médicale, entre toutes neuropsychiatrique, qui tend à garder trace de tout ce qu'examen et interrogatoire peuvent livrer, sans s'embarrasser en le rapportant du moindre apprêt quant au style.

[...] the tone adopted for the narrative models itself on the tone of medical observation, above all, of neuropsychiatric observation, which tends to keep a trace of all that examination and interrogation can deliver, without hampering itself by bringing it the least affectation with regard to style. (Translation mine.)<sup>3</sup>

The character André chooses to analyze reveals the central conflict and source of regret – not coincidentally his personal source of regret – which drives the narrative.

It is important to note that the narrator's name, André (no last name), matches the author's first name, André (last name Breton). At yet another level, Breton may write in order to resolve personal struggles. That gives us now three potential levels of case study; Nadja (N), André (A), Breton (B). One might envision them as follows: B [ A [Nadja] A ] B . There are strong biographical elements that should not be ignored, although I will not explicitly analyze the Breton level of case study and writing for this presentation.

So, this text functions as a type of autobiography labeled as a novel. In this case, where the name of the narrator is the same as the name of the author, Philippe Lejeune states that the text cannot be a fiction, although it can be a lie.<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to distinguish fact from fiction, scholars have traced many historical details in *Nadja* and parallels between André Breton and his fictional narrator. Breton had the same friends as the narrator, knew a woman like the character, she reportedly drew the pictures included in the book, the cafés existed, and so forth. Biography will be partially mentioned in my study because of these connections but also because Breton's background informs this text.

André Breton (1896-1966), the eventual founder and «pope» of surrealism, began with a career in medicine in 1913, which he soon abandoned to study poetry. However, the medical aspect interests me greatly. While Breton worked as an assistant in a neuropsychiatric clinic at Saint-Dizier during World War One, he treated a soldier suffering from a psychotic break. Hal Foster sees this experience as fundamental to subsequent surrealist notions:

There he tended a soldier who believed that the war was a fake, with the wounded made up cosmetically and the dead on loan from medical schools. The soldier intrigued the young Breton: here was a figure shocked into another reality that was also somehow a critique of this reality. But Breton never developed the implications of this origin story of surrealism, and the usual accounts of the movement do not mention it. For these accounts present surrealism as Breton wanted it to be seen, as a movement of love and liberation, and this story speaks rather of traumatic shock, deadly desire, compulsive repetition.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gay Rawson, «Self, Language and the Body: Literary Case Studies from Flaubert to Ernaux», Diss., The University of Iowa, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> André Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 6. All citations will be from this edition unless otherwise stated. Subsequent references will be parenthetically inserted into the text.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1975, 1996) 30.

<sup>5</sup> Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) xi.

This early experience of downplaying formative and often traumatic events is repeated in *Nadja*. Nadja parallels the soldiers as she too lives in an alternate reality, perhaps due to a shock or trauma. André seems to deny Nadja's importance and any guilt he might feel over his actions. Ellipses and changes in style disclose the dense nature of a narrative whose breaks or holes suggest that something is being held back. He even admits to being selective in the following quotation:

Je ne veux plus me souvenir, au courant des jours, que de quelques phrases, prononcées devant moi ou écrites d'un trait sous mes yeux par elle, phrases qui sont celles où je retrouve mieux le ton de sa voix et dont la résonance en moi demeure si grande:

‘Avec la fin de mon souffle, qui est le commencement du vôtre.’

‘Si vous vouliez, pour vous je ne serais rien, ou qu'une trace.’ (137)

I no longer wish to remember, as the days go by, any but a few of her sentences, spoken or written spontaneously in my presence, sentences in which I best recapture the tone of her voice and whose resonance remains so great with me:

‘With the end of my breath, which is the beginning of yours.’

‘If you desired it, I would be nothing, or merely a footprint.’<sup>6</sup>

André abandons Nadja and allows her to be incarcerated even though he knows her to be sane. The fact that he recasts this 1928 narrative in 1962, thirty-four years after the fact and four years before his death, attests to its continued importance. The shock, desire, and guilt live on.

Breton's medical study and tour at the Val-de-Grâce hospital introduced him to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, especially Freudian notions of dreams and Charcot's hysteria, strongly influences his literary agenda and his conception of surrealism. The Surrealists took Freudian concepts, such as the «talking cure», and applied them to literary works and to the process of writing. Following Breton, they valorize hysteria as a «supreme vehicle of expression» and look at «creative madness».<sup>7</sup> Enter Nadja.

These lay interpretations of psychoanalytic concepts and their subsequent application to writing alter the integrity of the concepts. Nevertheless, in a manner similar to my project, Breton views literature and literary works as kinds of case histories revealing psychological disorder or traumas. He causes the lines between clinical case studies and literary case studies to blur. He is not alone. *Nadja* was even discussed at a 1929 meeting of the «Société médico-psychologique» where they accused Breton of inciting the mad to murder their psychiatrists and of insulting psychiatry in general (Roudinesco, *Histoire* 27). The literary work of art was so closely woven to medicine and medical practices that some medical professionals called for sanctions against the publisher.

Let us now examine this scandalous text. *Nadja* might be divided into three parts. The beginning of the text deals solely with André. Nadja enters on page 69 which is not numbered in the Folio edition and which might carry possible sexual undertones. She exits before the end of the book and the final pages are devoted to André's analysis, abstractions, philosophy, and writing. In Breton's text, it is always André's perspective and one never directly hears Nadja's voice. He cites her and explains her actions but she never speaks for herself.

Due to its form and content, the novel does not present a linear plot or traditional actions. *Nadja* presents psychological therapies such as free association (87), art therapy in the form of

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<sup>6</sup> André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1960) 115-116. Subsequent references will be parenthetically inserted into the text.

<sup>7</sup> Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Company*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) 6-7. This translation covers only the second volume of the two-volume French version: Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* (Paris: Fayard, 1994). The French work was originally entitled *La bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1986). Quotations in French will be from the Fayard edition. Subsequent references will be parenthetically inserted into the text.

drawing then interpreting and describing her pictures (138-157), discussion of her visions (98-102), and the talking cure. Most of the middle section of the novel consists of André's retelling of Nadja's words and her associations. She reportedly talks to André as one would talk to an analyst.

As she reveals her past secrets – talking about her father, mother, and daughter, past loves, abuse suffered, her family life, drug trafficking, and eventual prostitution, Nadja resembles many battered, abused, or confused women who leave home and are forced to make a life for themselves. She rarely presents these past stories as «problems» but the way she weaves them in her conversation and changes the subject when mentioning them attests to the trauma or conflicts she continues to feel. She tries to hide these emotions and even seems to have left these miseries behind. Her reported dialogue approximates psychoanalytic sessions where the patient talks, moving away from and returning to the repressed subjects of conflict. She may not realize the effect these stories still have on her. Her actions suggest that she attempted to put it all behind her (she changed her name to Nadja, the beginning of the Russian word «hope», etc.). Nadja's stories of her past are intermingled with a narrative chronicling her daily activities and strange visions. André normally saves his analysis for the end of the novel where he suggests, despite seeming evidence to the contrary, that she is not insane.

Instead, the so-called «madwoman», Nadja, acted in ways deemed inappropriate by society especially with regard to sexual openness and financial frivolity. Nadja's outlandish behavior, in addition to her social class and chosen profession of prostitution (although the word is not used), allow her to be labeled insane and incarcerated.

On est venu, il y a quelques mois, m'apprendre que Nadja était folle. A la suite d'excentricités auxquelles elle s'était, paraît-il, livrée dans les couloirs de son hôtel, elle avait dû être internée à l'asile de Vaucluse. (159-160)

I was told, several months ago, that Nadja was mad. After the eccentricities in which it seems she had indulged herself in the hallways of her hotel, she had had to be committed to the Vaucluse sanitarium. (136)

She was officially locked up for «eccentricities» in the hallway of her hotel. The combination of the illicit action and its public forum work together to convince others of her madness. Examples of her eccentric conduct abound but, in the interest of time, I will not go into them other than to list four important scenes for André: 1) working briefly in a bakery where she refused to accept a living wage, 2) routinely spending the day riding random metro lines and «surprising» the unconscious thoughts of metro workers into consciousness, 3) approaching strangers on the street to read their past lives and 4) refusing to pleasure a man because of her whim. She thought he was «too low» for her and he beats her because of her refusal.

Il m'est arrivé de réagir avec une affreuse violence contre le récit par trop circonstancié qu'elle me faisait de certaines scènes de sa vie passée, desquelles je jugeais, sans doute très extérieurement, que sa dignité n'avait pu sortir tout à fait sauve. Une histoire de coup de poing en plein visage qui avait fait jaillir le sang, un jour, dans un salon dans la brasserie Zimmer, de coup de poing reçu d'un homme à qui elle se faisait le malin plaisir de se refuser, simplement parce qu'il était bas – et plusieurs fois elle avait crié au secours non sans prendre le temps, avant de disparaître, d'ensanglanter les vêtements de l'homme – faillit même, au début de l'après-midi du 13 octobre, comme elle me la contait sans raison, m'éloigner d'elle à jamais. Je ne sais quel sentiment d'absolue irrémédiabilité le récit assez narquois de cette horrible aventure me fit éprouver, mais j'ai pleuré longtemps après l'avoir entendu, comme je ne me croyais plus capable de pleurer. Je pleurais à l'idée que je ne devais plus revoir Nadja, non je ne le pourrais plus. (134-135)

Sometimes I reacted with terrible violence against the over-detailed account she gave me of certain scenes of her past life, concerning which I decided, probably quite superficially,

that her dignity could not have survived entirely intact. A story of a blow in the face that had drawn blood, one day, in the Brasserie Zimmer, a blow from a man whom she gave herself the sly pleasure of refusing simply because he was low – and she had cried for help several times, though not without taking the time, before disappearing, to bleed all over the man's clothes – this story, when she was aimlessly telling it to me, early in the afternoon of October 13, almost managed to alienate me from her forever. I don't know what sense of absolute irremediability her rather bantering account of this horrible incident inspired in me, but I wept a long time after hearing it, cried as though I could no longer cry. I wept at the notion that I shouldn't see Nadja again, not that I couldn't. (113-114)

Indeed this scene greatly upsets André and presents one of the many moments where his so-called clinical observation is colored by his personal reactions. He refers to this scene and its effects on him more than once.

Certes je ne lui en voulais aucunement de ne pas m'avoir caché ce qui maintenant me désolait, bien plutôt je lui en savais gré mais qu'elle eût pu un jour en être là, qu'à l'horizon, qui sait, pointassent peut-être encore pour elle de tels jours, je ne me sentais pas le courage de l'envisager. (135)

Not that I was angry at her for not concealing what was now distressing me, indeed I was grateful for that, but that she might one day reach this point, that – who knows – such days might dawn again for her, I didn't have the heart to imagine. (114)

He does not say that she is «mad» but, in these four examples, struggles to understand who she is. Overall, Nadja is presented as an extraordinary woman who does not fit into society's accepted parameters. This marginalization is seen as a mental illness. Unfortunately, as with the novel, Nadja will be moved to the margins of this presentation as we now focus on André and his case study.

The character of André plays the double role of narrator and analyst (and I might add patient) in *Nadja* as he discusses the case of a troubled woman. Roudinesco explains the relationship of the analyst to the story of Nadja and the role of case studies to literary novels:

Freud a souvent remarqué que ses histoires de malades ressemblaient à de véritables romans. Or *Nadja* est l'histoire d'une cure dans laquelle un narrateur occupe la place d'un psychiatre qui ne parvient pas à guérir sa patiente. Il renonce alors violemment à la psychiatrie pour s'identifier à la femme folle; celle-ci devient le sujet d'un récit autobiographique par lequel le narrateur accède à son identité. *Nadja* est un roman d'initiation à la manière de la fameuse *Bildung* des romantiques allemands. A travers lui, Breton décrit son refus de la psychiatrie dans les termes d'un défi lancé à Satan: littéralement il renonce «aux pompes et aux œuvres» de l'aliénisme comme à une tentation. La femme folle lui permet d'accéder à son désir d'écrire et de faire passer en acte cette beauté convulsive dont il a rêvé en contemplant l'iconographie de la Salpêtrière. [...] *Nadja* n'est pas seulement le récit d'une cure «ratée», c'est aussi l'histoire de l'analyse «réussie» d'un narrateur qui trouve dans la démence d'une femme les modalités d'un nouveau genre romanesque.

La fiction ressemble tellement à la réalité que les aliénistes de l'époque prennent l'aventure de Nadja pour une véritable histoire de cas. (43)

Freud had often noted that his case histories resembled novels. Now *Nadja* is the story of a therapy in which a narrator occupies the position of a psychiatrist who cannot manage to cure his patient. He then renounces psychiatry in violent terms and identifies with the madwoman: She becomes the subject of an autobiographical narrative through which the narrator accedes to his identity. *Nadja* is a novel of initiation in the manner of the famous *Bildungsroman* of the German Romantics. Through it, Breton describes his refusal of

psychiatry in terms of a defiance hurled at Satan – he literally gave up the «rituals and works» of mad-doctoring as he would a temptation. The madwoman allowed him to attain his desire to write and to achieve that convulsive beauty of which he dreamed while contemplating the iconography of the Salpêtrière. [...] *Nadja* is not only the tale of a «failed» therapy; it is also the story of a «successful» analysis of a narrator who finds in the insanity of a woman the modalities of a new novelistic genre.

The fiction so resembled reality that the «alienists» of the day took *Nadja*'s adventure for an authentic case history. (27)

The above citation explains the importance of this novel and its lasting impact on both literature and medicine. This novel so blurred the lines between literary fiction and medical science that the «alienists» believed it to be real. The word «alienists» dates to 1846 and refers to doctors specializing in the treatment of «aliénés» or people incarcerated for mental «alienation». The word «alienist» emphasizes the estranged or «alienated» aspect of these people who, by definition, seem outside the norm or separated from it. Despite real of imagined aspects of this narrative, *Nadja* presents a failed medical treatment that has the positive outcome of leading to a new literary genre and notion of self for the narrator. *Nadja* has a double function as the case study of a madwoman (a «failed therapy») and that of the narrator, which, for Roudinesco is a «successful analysis» in that he finds in her madness a new literary genre. I argue however that André does not characterize *Nadja* as mad. While agreeing with the literary success and innovation of *Nadja*, I find the idea of André's personal successful therapy debatable and see another level.

So let us now look at André. Although André was an analyst, what *Nadja* and André share cannot be considered formal analysis. It is unconventional at best. For example, they meet in coffee houses or on the street instead of in an office. However, due to his training and their conversations, their relationship became a type of analysis for both of them. André analyzed himself after the failure of his attempted analysis of *Nadja*. Perhaps he meant for *Nadja* to conform to society, to live in the «normal» world, to deal with past conflicts and move beyond them. These goals were not achieved and treatment ended, in failure. *Nadja* returned to her life of indiscretion and «abnormal» behavior and was eventually labeled «mad». These words are put in quotation marks as they are defined by the society of the time. Her behavior seemed «abnormal» because most people did not act as she did. She proceeded to live in a way that society deemed unacceptable, and did not try to hide her differences or amend them. Despite a form of treatment from an eminent figure, she persisted in her ways, and was therefore deemed «mad» and «alienated» or locked away. The ultimate failing of her analysis provoked his own self-observation and his rejection of the science of psychoanalysis. Indeed, he claims at the end that he did not inquire after *Nadja* because he so detested psychiatry, its rituals, and its works (167). He dared not find out what they did to her. He knows only too well that inside the asylum walls, one cannot even speak of treatment, let alone cure.

Étant donné l'enfance extraordinaire et tardive de la psychiatrie, on ne saurait à aucun degré parler de cure réalisée dans ces conditions. Au reste, je pense que les aliénistes les plus consciencieux ne s'en soucient même pas. (165-166)

Given the extraordinary and retarded infancy of psychiatry, we simply cannot speak of cures effected under such conditions. I suppose that the most conscientious psychiatrist is not even concerned with cures. (141)<sup>8</sup>

His guilt deepens as he states unequivocally that, had *Nadja* been rich and treated as the rich, he believes she would have recovered (167).

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<sup>8</sup> The French word «cure» means «treatment» (as in a course of treatment) and does not translate directly as the English word «cure». So, in this translation, the word «cures» should read «treatments».

To quell his guilt and in order to relieve some stress, he writes the story of his relationship with Nadja. A case study of her and a chronicle of the events in his life surround their meetings. He begins his case study (the novel) by asking:

Qui suis-je? Si par exception je m'en rapportais à un adage: en effet pourquoi tout ne reviendrait-il pas à savoir qui je «hante»? (9)

Who am I? If this once I were to reply on a proverb, then perhaps everything would amount to knowing whom I «haunt». (11)

An identity crisis begins this case study. The unique aspect is that, for André, knowing who he is requires knowing whom he haunts. The word «haunt» is set off by quotation marks and he even comments on it in the next passage:

Il dit beaucoup plus qu'il ne veut dire, il me fait jouer de mon vivant le rôle d'un fantôme, évidemment il fait allusion à ce qu'il a fallu que je cessasse d'être, pour être *qui* je suis. (9)

Such a word means much more than it says, makes me, still alive, play a ghostly part, evidently referring to what I must have ceased to be in order to be *who* I am. (11)

This word, «haunt», reveals more than he wants to say. He explains how part of him still may act as a phantom, haunting others even after he no longer plays an active role in their lives. This evokes Nadja who, as the reader will learn, was separated from him but whose phone calls from the asylum attest to André's continued importance in her life. André also alludes to his own personal crisis as he explains, in an eloquent usage of the imperfect subjunctive, that some parts of him had to cease to be so that he could be who he is today. Is he referring to his abandonment of psychiatry? This story with Nadja certainly seems to be formative to his changing identity and future plans. As a practitioner, he could not help an important patient and he saw her condemned for life for acts that he would hesitate to label «insane».

Je n'ajouterais, pour ma défense, que quelques mots. L'absence bien connue de frontière entre la *non-folie* et la folie ne me dispose pas à accorder une valeur différente aux perceptions et aux idées qui sont le fait de l'une ou de l'autre. (171)

I shall add, in my defense, only a few words. The well-known lack of frontiers between *non-madness* and madness does not induce me to accord a different value to the perceptions and ideas which are the result of one or the other. (144)

He states in this passage that the barrier between madness and non-madness is not defined. One must note that he does not use the word «sanity». It is madness and «non-madness». Being too difficult to tell one from the other, he precludes himself from judging the value of acts from either side. This refrain from judgment contradicts earlier statements about Nadja's behavior. He had made some judgments but he never labeled her as «mad». He sought to understand her «eccentricities». Even more importantly, Nadja lived some of the surrealist ideals – flâner, automatic writing, hypnotic sleep – and went further into that realm than André dared to go (87).

This may be the driving truth that André cannot admit. He is jealous of her and her ability to live as she wants despite society's condemnation. He values those traits but is not willing to go against normative rules. Even as he admired her, he separated himself from her as she became more extreme and he failed to help her in her time of need. He defends himself, as the above passage illustrates, by saying that he would not judge acts of madness or non-madness, that the line between them did not exist. Yet, Nadja lives incarcerated and he lives free. The confession or constructed defense that he gives is meant to convince the reader and justify his actions. He admits

at one point that he should have done things differently but then quickly follows up with reasons why he did not and could not foresee the outcome (169).

André talks about writing a text and the tribulations involved. He plainly discusses the writing, publishing, rereading, and correcting of the text. He is conscious of his audience. Even years later, he feels a need to go over this moment, rewrite it, and retell it to his listeners. The talking and writing cures are combined in a rare psychoanalytic moment. André recognizes how distance and time aid his analysis and self-understanding (175-176). The time lapse may effect the memory and faithful recounting of the event but he does not change what he wrote in 1928: he only adds to it. He goes over the conflict again and again but still does not seem ready to own his responsibility and continues to make excuses.

*Nadja* presents an entire novel that functions as a case study, indeed as several case studies, and accounts of various psychoanalytic methods of treatment. This text is the story of Nadja and her failed treatment on one hand and the personal account of the therapist on the other. On one level, the text focuses on the mental stability and adventures of a young woman whose perceived illness reflects societal notions of self and also reveals insights into the narrator's own manias. André's inability to effect a cure and his subsequent rejection of psychiatry lead him to consider writing. In addition, the continued guilt felt over his inaction and abandonment drive the narrative. The case study of André reveals his obsessions and his moments of «bad faith» where he hides or tries to justify actions he knows to be suspect. *Nadja* illustrates how the talking and writing cures were meant to work – even if, in this case, their success is doubtful. This novel reveals the impact of psychoanalysis and the changing state of medical treatments in light of changing notions of self.

# Fred's shoes or hysteria as spectacle and the freudian subtext in John Huston's *The Night of the Iguana* (1964) (\*)

GEORGIANA M. M. COLVILE (\*\*)

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more...

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*: V, v, 24-26.

Tennessee Williams's three-act play *The Night of the Iguana*, first performed at the New York Royale Theater in 1961, was published in 1963<sup>1</sup> and adapted for the screen by John Huston in 1964. Freudian psychoanalytic theory was fashionable in the US at the time. Roman Polanski was quite taken aback when New York critics interpreted the knife in his 1962 *Knife in the Water* as a phallic symbol<sup>2</sup>. Both Williams and Huston were quite conscious of their Freudian subtext and Huston had shot *Freud: The Secret Passion*<sup>3</sup> two years before *The Night of the Iguana*.

An interesting slippage occurs from Williams's text to Huston and Veiller's script and becomes apparent in their respective gendering of hysteria. Both play and film are centered on the male protagonist Shannon (Richard Burton), a defrocked Episcopalian minister turned tour guide,

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(\*) John Huston, «The Night of the Iguana», USA, 1964, adapted from the play by Tennessee Williams, screen play by John Huston and Anthony Veiller, 118 min. Distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer; int.: Richard Burton, Ava Gardner, Deborah Kerr, Sue Lyon et al...

(\*\*) Université François Rabelais, Tours, U. F. R. Lettres et Langues, 3, rue des Tanneurs, 37041 Tours Cedex, France.

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Williams, *The Night of the Iguana*, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Other Plays*, New York & London: Penguin Books, 1976, first published by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd (UK), in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> See Roman Polanski, *Roman*, Paris: France Loisirs, 1984, p.227.

<sup>3</sup> John Huston, «Freud: The Secret Passion», USA, 1962, 120 min., Prod. Universal Pictures.

struggling with his n-th nervous breakdown on a disastrous trip to Mexico. Williams's misogynist undertone defines Shannon as outnumbered and victimized by the female protagonists. Huston made the minor male characters more important and changed Maxine Faulk (Ava Gardner) from a castrating man-eater into a caring woman capable of saving Shannon. Huston told Rui Nogueira and Bertrand Tavernier: «Tennessee and I argued a lot. I accused him of hating women. And Tennessee said to me: “You may be right!”»<sup>4</sup>. Williams's dry, witty «theatre of the absurd» becomes a more human parade of hysterics of both sexes in Huston's tragi-comic movie, although the latter's take on «butch» Miss Fellowes (Grayson Hall) could be read as homophobic today.

The film opens with a prologue, a ten-year flashback to the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon's<sup>5</sup> final sermon, degenerating into hysterics and putting his congregation to rout, in the Virginia church he was to be locked out of for «fornication and conduct unbecoming a man of the cloth». Then the credits appear, over close-ups of an iguana. The next sequences accompany an intoxicated, feverish Larry Shannon on the road in Mexico, with a busload of old maid schoolteachers from a Texas Baptist Female College and one over-sexed but under-age student, Charlotte (Sue Lyon). The girl's fierce chaperone Miss Fellowes soon catches her in Shannon's room and threatens to have him fired and arrested. In desperation he drives the bus off the agency's route to a ramshackle, picturesque inn on a hill overlooking the Costa Verde, owned by his friends Fred and Maxine Faulk. Shannon parks the bus and runs uphill to the hotel in a panic, clutching his last power emblem: the distributor head. He is welcomed by Maxine, learns that Fred has died and collapses into a hammock. Later, Shannon's angry charges follow and a strange couple appears: Hannah Jelkes (Deborah Kerr), a New England spinster artist and her grandfather Jonathan Coffin alias Nonno, «the world's oldest living poet». The hotel is closed for the summer, but Maxine agrees to accommodate them all for the night.

Chaos escalates. Maxine, in love with Shannon, detects «vibrations» between him and Hannah, whom she first insults and then befriends. Shannon retires to his room with a bottle; Miss Fellowes calls a judge in Texas and triumphantly announces Shannon's dismissal; Maxine's beach boy employees catch and tie up an iguana; Charlotte continues chasing Shannon; he melodramatically walks barefoot on broken glass, before throwing her out of his room; Miss Fellowes rants and raves at the girl's subsequent disappearance; Hank the young busdriver finds her drunk and dancing wildly at a beach bar with the Mexican boys, who defeat him in a farcical fight; Charlotte then adopts the beaten Hank as her «hero». A fish lunch is served on the terrace, Hannah and Nonno perform, the boss from Blakes Tours calls to officially fire Shannon, the latter retorts with drunken panache, while Charlotte and Hank retrieve the distributor head from his pocket, so the group can depart. On the way to the bus, Shannon urinates on Miss Fellowes's bag, she explodes at him, Maxine barks at her, calling her a dyke, Shannon defends Fellowes and rebukes Maxine. Finally the bus takes off without Shannon.

The long «night of the iguana» then begins. Shannon's «spook» (or Angst) drives him to drown himself. Maxine's boys fish him out and she ties him to the hammock; Hannah calms him with poppyseed tea and a talking cure. Later she unties him and persuades him to free the iguana. Old Nonno finally finishes his last poem. Shannon and Maxine watch as he dictates it to a tearful Hannah, wheels himself onto the verandah facing the sea, and dies.

A time ellipsis follows. Nonno has been buried and Hannah is about to resume her travels. Shannon tentatively proposes to accompany her but she refuses. Inside the house, Maxine is hysterically trying to pack to return to the US and throwing things around. She emerges, offers

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<sup>4</sup> «Rencontre avec Rui Nogueira et Bertrand Tavernier», in *John Huston*, Paris: Dossier Positif Rivages, 1988, p. 44, my translation.

<sup>5</sup> The protagonist's pompous utterances of his full name and title could be a tongue in cheek reference to T. E. Lawrence played by Peter O'Toole in David Leane's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Hannah and Shannon the run of the hotel and half the profits, then rushes back inside in a huff. Shannon gives Hannah his gold cross and she departs. He then agrees to stay with Maxine as her personal and professional partner. She weeps for joy and suggests a swim.

The baroque plot in itself emulates hysteria. That condition is referred to three times in Act I of Williams's play. Before their party climbs the hill, Hank says about Charlotte: «The kid has gone into *hysterics*» and Shannon answers with the hackneyed disease of the womb theory:

Hank, *hysteria* is a natural phenomenon, the common denominator of the female nature. it's the big female weapon, and the test of a man is his ability to cope with it, and I can't believe you can't (240).

The spectator perceives the dramatic irony of Shannon's *own* inability to cope. Shortly afterwards, he is described as:

... on the verge of hysteria, he makes some incoherent sounds, gesticulates with clenched fists, then stumbles wildly across the verandah and leans panting for breath against a post (246).

Some of the stage directions simply hint at hysteria: Charlotte «rushes like a teen-age Medea towards the verandah» (261) or Shannon «falls into the hammock, panting and twisting» (266); even the iguana is designated as «a wildly agitated creature» (271).

The play makes several vulgarized references to Freud and phallic symbols punctuate the film: Shannon shouts at his hostile congregation to get out their tomahawks and scalping knives, Hannah shows virile potential by hacking off fish heads with a machete, later used by Shannon to cut the iguana's rope; Nonno's cane drops to the ground twice, during a small stroke and when he dies; the distributor head is passed on from Shannon to the younger Hank, and Maxine's prancing beach boys constitute live sex symbols, constantly waving phallic castanets. Two analyst figures emerge in both texts, first the late Fred, Shannon's former confidant, whom he calls out to on the way to the hotel. In the film, Maxine tells Hannah: «People with troubles used to come and spill'em to ole Fred». In the play, she repeats Shannon's earlier confession to her husband from the couch/hammock:

... You told him that Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you was ready to sleep – so you practised the little boy's vice, you amused yourself with yourself. And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside with the backside of a hairbrush because she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you for it harder than she would (290).

Quite a configuration of clichés: Maxine the new mother figure reformulates Shannon's explanation of his hysterical relation to both religion and women. She pursues:

... You said you loved God and Mama and so you quit it to please them, but it was your secret pleasure and you harboured a secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls (ibid.)

The only difference between Fred and Freud is (yo)u. Maxine's second person discourse involves Williams' spectator or reader. Huston replaces her speech with visual elements. The cinematic apparatus reflects the psyche, as Christian Metz has shown<sup>6</sup>. Shannon's physical behaviour proves eloquent enough.

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<sup>6</sup> See Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, Paris: Union générale d'Éditions, 1977.

The other analyst figure is Hannah the travelling artist, who draws and draws out Shannon during a long night on the hotel verandah in both play and film. She also plays a maternal role, by making Shannon tea, helping him unclasp the chain of his gold cross, trying to fasten his frayed dog-collar etc... She embodies a small boy's fantasy of a virginal, untouchable mother. In the stage directions, she appears:

remarkable-looking-ethereal, almost ghostly. She suggests a Gothic cathedral image of a medieval saint, but animated (238).

In the film, her sexlessness fascinates Shannon and their therapeutic conversation helps him regain his sanity. She is also a fellow hysteric, whose parents died in a car crash during her adolescence and whose «Blue Devil» matches Shannon's «Spook».

Freud pinpoints two opposite but frequently simultaneous sexual sources of hysteria:

... The hysterical character shows a fragment of *sexual repression*, which reaches beyond the normal limits. It is an exaggeration of the resistances against the sexual instinct which became known to us as shame and loathing (...)

This feature, so characteristic of hysteria, is not seldom concealed in crude observation by the existence of the second constitutional factor of hysteria, namely, an enormous development of *sexual craving*<sup>7</sup>.

Huston's protagonists divide accordingly into cases of «sexual repression» (Hanna, Nonno, Miss Fellowes and her colleagues) or «sexual craving» (Maxine, Charlotte and the beach boys). Shannon combines a guilty rejection of sex with strong physical and affective needs. His hysteria grows out of that contradiction and causes him to be cruel to Maxine, whom he desires but fears, and kind to Hannah, who reassures him. And yet he advocates that only lunacy and death are worse than chastity. Shannon's sexual ambiguity reflects his fluctuating religious faith: on one hand he fears God's judgement and on the other he wants to dismiss him as a «senile delinquent»<sup>8</sup> or inadequate father figure, like Nonno. Indeed, the Beckett-like Hannah and Nonno project a harmless parody of Shannon's Mama-and-God superego, as did the Fred and Maxine couple (he was twenty-eight<sup>9</sup> years older and impotent, hence her beach boys).

Huston's opening shots indicate Shannon's religious confusion and strong sexual drive, by panning up his former church's phallic steeple to the tune of offscreen hymns, cutting to Reverend Shannon walking up the female space of the central aisle and into the pulpit. A graphic and diegetic match opens the next sequence with an identical pan up a Mexican church tower to the sound of bells, but this time tour guide Larry is well outside the building, dozing on the ground against a wall.

The characters are meticulously positioned and framed. After the pulpit scene, Shannon is rarely seen standing. He slouches in his bus seat, at the hotel he mostly lies in the hammock or on his bed or sits at a table writing and is often filmed in high-angle shots. «The kneeling position turned into a reclining position», is how he describes his seduction of a young woman parishoner, for which he was barred from his church. Now, after being sacked by several travel agencies for similar offenses, Shannon is on probation with Blake's Tours and «There's nothing lower than Blake's Tours». His horizontal position is the degraded man's, contrary to the preacher's verticality, the analysand's and the lover's. The latter role causes his initial downfall but saves him in the end. Shannon's attraction to water (an obvious womb symbol) and the horizontal position of the

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<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, «The Sexual Instinct of Neurotics», in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, Dr. A. A. Brill (Ed.), New York: The Modern Library, p. 574. My emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> Williams: pp. 268-269. This passage, during which Shannon tells Hannah about his failure as a minister, is included in the film.

<sup>9</sup> Only ten years in the play.

swimmer, also proves double-edged. During the bus trip, he enjoys a swim, but the female element brings trouble when Charlotte joins him. Later, his desperate dive into the sea to «take the long swim to China» constitutes a back-to-the-womb death drive. A third swim is announced at the end of the film: Maxine will lead Shannon down to the beach, to consummate their new bond, turning Thanatos into Eros, hence the double-entendre of her phrase: «I'll always get you back up, Baby». Huston also emphasizes Shannon's animal alter ego, the long, low and lowly iguana. In various folklores lizards are seen as lazy, familiar or ornamental creatures, symbolizing the soul's humble quest for light, contrary to a bird's soaring flight<sup>10</sup>. Shannon is destined to become a mild lounge and hammock lizard...

Astute framing defines personal relationships, beginning with Shannon's loneliness in the pulpit, in shot/reverse-shot with his disapproving congregation and later with the women in the bus. During the credits sequence the iguana is similarly isolated in the frame. The close-ups or medium shots of individuals struggling with their hysteria (Shannon, Miss Fellowes, Maxine, Hannah) are contrasted with frequent framing of pairs and potential couples. Shannon appears framed with Charlotte, Miss Fellowes, Hank, Nonno, Hannah and Maxine, yet only the shots with Maxine connote a couple. Either a space is maintained between Shannon and the other person, or one of them is pulling away – he from Charlotte, Hannah from him, sometimes a pair is not centered or suggests a different relationship: enmity with Miss Fellowes, male bonding with Hank, filial solicitude with Nonno. Maxine is often positioned close behind him, leaning toward him, or he behind her, so that the camera-angle can create an optical illusion of her head resting on his shoulder. Such shots prefigure their future couple, visually adapting Shannon's admission to Hannah in the play: «I could do it with Mrs Faulk (...) but I couldn't with you» (318-19), and correcting an earlier statement to Maxine: «I don't want any, any (women) – regardless of age» (239). Here body language and the star system intervene<sup>11</sup>, as Burton and Gardner's «beautiful people» icon caters to the spectator's desire.

Hysteria has long had a reputation of «showiness» and «theatricality»<sup>12</sup>, known in Charcot's days as «simulation», hence all the meta-histrionics in *The Night of the Iguana*. Huston's diegesis falls into a series of nineteen hysterical scenes:

- 1) Shannon's hysterical sermon and breakdown in the pulpit.
- 2) Miss Fellowes screaming and sobbing on the beach, as Shannon and Charlotte emerge from the sea together<sup>13</sup>.
- 3) Fellowes after discovering Charlotte in Shannon's hotel room.
- 4) Shannon taking over the bus and driving like a madman.
- 5) Fellowes charging uphill in the heat and screaming at Shannon.
- 6) Shannon and Charlotte's dramatic duet in his room: both walk on broken glass; he bodily throws her out, she screams and kicks.
- 7) Shannon feverishly trying to don his priest's garb.
- 8) Hannah taking deep breaths to calm herself.
- 9) Shannon and Maxine quarrelling and angrily shoving the drinks trolley at each other.
- 10) Fellowes rushing about shrieking over Charlotte's disappearance.

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<sup>10</sup> See Jean Chevalier & Alain Gheerbrandt, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, Paris: Laffont/Jupiter, 1982: pp. 567-568.

<sup>11</sup> For such considerations regarding character analysis in film, see Hans J. Wulff, «La perception des personnages de film», *Iris* no. 24, Automne 1997, pp.15-32.

<sup>12</sup> Martha Noël Evans, *Fits and Starts/A Genealogy of Hysteria in Modern France*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991, 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> It may not be deliberate, but that shot is remarkably like a well-known 1937 photograph of Picasso and Dora Maar, walking out of the Mediterranean on the Riviera.

- 11) Collective hysteria at the beach bar: Charlotte dancing and drinking, the bartender shouting at her to go home, Hank's clownish fight with the Mexican boys etc...
- 12) Charlotte jumping up and down, shrieking «I hate you!» to Shannon, after retrieving the distributor head.
- 13) Shannon, drunk, causing havoc by relieving himself on Fellowes's bag.
- 14) Fellowes yelling at Shannon.
- 15) Maxine barking at Fellowes.
- 16) Shannon raving about his «spook» and rushing into the sea.
- 17) Parallel and alternate montage of the iguana pulling at its rope and the tied-up Shannon's convulsions in the hammock.
- 18) Maxine yelling at Shannon and then leaving him to Hannah.
- 19) Maxine's violent theatrics while attempting to pack.

Shannon throws seven fits, Miss Fellowes five, Maxine four, Charlotte three, Hannah, Hank and the bartender one. Huston makes hysteria look commonplace and undercuts the old tradition of its being a woman's disease by extending it to Hank and the bartender, in addition to making Shannon its main recipient. (Male hysteria was first recognized in 19th century industrial workers and then in WW II soldiers<sup>14</sup>. Shannon's laziness and trauma from the «war of the sexes» make him an obvious caricature).

The performance effect is further achieved through costume: first as a professional label: Shannon tries to retrieve his priest's identity by donning his old clerical collar, which significantly no longer fits; Hannah wears «an artist's smock, picturesquely dabbled with paint» when showing her sketches; the Mexican gigolos go about half naked. Clothes also provide personality clues: Hannah hides her body in a high-necked, long-sleeved white dress, a hat and a scarf. Maxine wears dark sensual clothes: tights with a loose, low-cut top or a sundress. Charlotte is mostly seen in shorts, a bathing suit and a mini-nightgown. Fellowes's narrow, below-the-knee skirts hamper her movements; Shannon still wears his cross as a tour guide, under a casual, open white shirt. Nonno's costume is a 19th century gentleman's. A recent statement by Stella Bruzzi posits the film as ahead of its time:

Discussions of costume have tended to exclude men and masculine identities, as if an attention to dress is an inherently feminine trait, despite the recent debates around masculinity and the eroticised male image in the cinema (...) or some recent psychoanalysis-based studies of men and cultural/social identity (...)<sup>15</sup>

Shannon clings to his symbolical church garb and fears to wear Fred's shoes, pointedly given to him by Maxine:

Maxine: Fred's estate included one good pair of shoes and your feet look about his size.  
 Shannon: I loved ole Fred, but I don't want to fill his shoes.  
 Maxine: You could do worse, Baby.

The shoes could connote the analyst's position, Fred's impotence or Shannon's becoming Maxine's lover, which is what he, she and the spectator are expecting...

In the film, most hysterical fits have an audience and can be manipulative. Even Hannah hyperventilates in front of Shannon, who never loses track of his effect, as he walks on glass, goes into convulsions, or sasses his boss on the phone. Charlotte makes a spectacle of herself at the beach bar and Maxine hopes to detain Shannon with her packing antics. The only hysteric with serious symptoms is Shannon himself. According to Maxine, he has cracked up regularly in the past, given in to panic (the Spook) or to suicidal tendencies (the swim to China). He nevertheless

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<sup>14</sup> See Julia Borossa, *Hysteria*, Duxford: Icon Books, 2001, pp. 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1997: xv.

remains the most theatrical, referring to himself as «The Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon», «playing God» or wallowing in self-pity.

Huston's Hollywood happy ending – Shannon saved by Maxine, who provides stability: a sex life, a home and a job – is built on a complex Freudian subtext. Hannah's name echoes both Anna O's, Freud's first hysterical patient's and Anna Freud's, his analyst daughter's. She presents Shannon with a model (her own victory over the Blue Devil), a mirror (his wild-eyed portrait), and a talking cure unhampered by sexual attraction, which is why Maxine can't calm him – she physically sits on him, her hair around her face like Medusa<sup>16</sup> and shows her own panic by threatening him with the «casa de locos». Hannah, however, helps him cut his umbilical cord with God, by ridding him of the dog collar and the cross, and ironically calling his convulsions in the hammock «a glamorous, almost voluptuous crucifixion». She gets him to shed his mother's influence by redefining Maxine as vulnerable, not indestructible, and as needing the beach boys to keep her own anxiety at bay. Hannah restores Shannon's sense of purpose by accepting his assistance with Nonno and his gold cross for her fare back to the States. Parting with that last religious tie sets him free. After Hannah's departure, Shannon seems less narcissistic. In an upright position at last, he sees Maxine cracking up and offers her the same comfort she had offered him when he arrived: a rum coco. Her spontaneous tears upon hearing that Hannah has left, confirm the latter's parting remark to Shannon: «You were building your nest and didn't even know it». There is no romantic kiss, Shannon admits to being too drunk to get back up the hill. Huston leaves plenty of room for skepticism...

«Fantastic!» is, as Hannah points out, Shannon's favourite word. He explains to her that «we live on two levels, the fantastic and the realistic». He diagnoses his own problem as «living on the fantastic level and trying to operate on a realistic one», at which point the «spook» intervenes. Several Freudian theories come to mind: the struggle between the superego and the id, the pleasure principle versus the reality principle and the reversible meaning of the word *Unheimliche*, the uncanny: both familiar and/or incomprehensible. Shannon operates within the mythomaniac's schizophrenic structure, like Walter Mitty. On the fantastic level he is the respectable Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, and on the realistic level Larry Shannon, defrocked, a lazy inefficient tourguide and small time crook, who rakes little profits off old ladies like Miss Peebles, an alcoholic and a passive seducer, taking advantage of naïve young women. Everyone but Miss Fellowes is affected by his Irish charm.

Film is the fantastic medium par excellence, the projection of fantasies onto a screen, a «mindscreen», as Bruce Kawin calls it. François Truffaut wrote:

I am the happiest man in the world; I make all my dreams come true and get paid for it. Making a film means improving life, rearranging it as one sees fit and perpetuating one's childhood games»<sup>17</sup>.

Here the jubilation is Huston's and the spectator's, not Shannon's, whose guilty conscience clashes with his mind's projections and throws him off balance. In «The Poet and Daydreaming»<sup>18</sup>, Freud draws a parallel between the child's imaginative «lets pretend games», the adult's day-dreams and the poet's creative production, all means of escaping reality through phantasy.

Tzvetan Todorov bases his definition of the fantastic in literature<sup>19</sup> on the hesitation and ambiguity occurring between reality and the imaginary, inciting the reader to believe in a fictitious

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<sup>16</sup> In «Medusa's Head» (1922, in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone Edition, 1997, pp. 202-203. Freud uses the petrification caused by the mythological creature, as a metaphor for man's simultaneous excitement and fear when confronted with the female sex.

<sup>17</sup> François Truffaut, *Le Plaisir des yeux*, Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1987, p. 245. My translation.

<sup>18</sup> Sigmund Freud, «The Poet and Day-dreaming», in *Creativity and the Unconscious*, New York: Harper & Row, 1958, pp. 44-54.

<sup>19</sup> See Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970, pp. 28-45.

hero's world. Huston's spectator believes in the hopeless Shannon's redemption, while hating his virtuous persecutor, Miss Fellowes. We enter into Shannon's «fantastic» world and enjoy his rudeness to her: «virtue is triumphant, Miss Fellowes, yours of course» he says, as she catches Charlotte in his room. His peeing on her bag (a symbol for femininity) provokes laughter at her expense. Star system aesthetics operate again: as Judith Fellowes, the little-known Grayson Hall is made to appear unattractive, frustrated in her homo-erotic desire for Charlotte, prudish, nagging, self-righteous etc... Opposite her, the weak, childish, unstable, self-indulgent Shannon, because embodied by the gorgeous star Richard Burton, has the audience's full sympathy. Fantastic, but in keeping with daydreaming and film work. Huston also reverses Laura Mulvey's theory<sup>20</sup> by making the gaze female (except behind the camera), and its object male.

Yet another Freudian model shapes Shannon's fate: «The Theme of the Three Caskets»<sup>21</sup>. Like Shakespeare's Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shannon must open the right box to obtain the right woman. The fair-haired Charlotte brings him a yellow flower, «copa de oro» (cup of gold) and offers him a wealthy marriage, but Shannon turns down her illegal gold casket as too much trouble. Hannah, dressed in white, talks to Shannon in the moonlight, hers is the silver casket. Instead of *his* finding *her* portrait, *she* draws *his* and *she* turns *him* down, except for a «one-night conversation». Maxine is Shannon's Portia and her lead casket her tough manner, dry laughter and quick temper, which hide warmth, kindness and sensitivity. *She* knowingly chooses Shannon, warts and all. The theme is parodied since Shannon merely submits to his destiny. The happy outcome uniting Shannon and Maxine, would also be Freud's solution to their respective hysterias, just as he thought Herr K. was Dora's; today some people beg to differ<sup>22</sup>... Maxine's anxiety about remaining an attractive young woman and needing a man to attend to the women guests, counterbalances Shannon's needs. Fred's shoes are also the lead casket.

Maxine's name, which Shannon keeps repeating in the closing scene, begins like «Mama» but ends differently. Having graduated to an adult relationship with a post-oedipal mother substitute, he makes ready to reintegrate and regress to her maternal and erotic element, the sea water. I'd like to conclude as I began, with Shakespeare. Shannon's ultimate silence, as language dissolves into desire while Maxine loosens his tie, recalls Bassanio's speech, after winning Portia:

Madam, you have bereft me of all words,  
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins;  
And there is such confusion in my powers,  
(...)  
...every something, being blent together,  
Turns to a wild nothing, save of joy,  
Express'd and not express'd...<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Laura Mulvey, «Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema» in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1989, pp. 14-26, originally published in *Screen*, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> See Sigmund Freud, «The Theme of the Three Caskets» (1913), in *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, New York: Harper and Row, 1958, pp.63-75.

<sup>22</sup> See in particular Patrick Mahoney, *Freud's Dora. A Psychoanalytic, Historical and Textual Study*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, II:ii, 175-184.

# A kinder, gentler Volumnia in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*? (\*)

MARVIN B. KRIMS (\*\*)

Caius Marcius Coriolanus is one of Shakespeare's least likeable characters. Plutarch, Shakespeare's source for the play, describes Coriolanus as «churlish and uncivil, and altogether unfit for man's conversation» (North's translation). Although he was a fearless and effective leader in battle, he was completely impossible as a person and thus earned only the respect but not the love of the people of Rome. When he was required to show his war wounds to the people to gain their votes for Consul, he arrogantly refused. The citizens, already antagonized by his patrician attitude, then wasted little time in forcing him into exile. Enraged at being rejected, he then turned his fury against his own country.

Men of this ilk are not uncommon in the sociopolitical landscape – then and now – and we may to wonder what formative childhood experiences shaped the personality of these difficult, although at times necessary leaders. On the surface, Shakespeare's words seem to provide us with a simple, direct answer – at least for Coriolanus: the text directly informs us that Coriolanus's difficult personality is attributable to the way his mother, Volumnia, brought him up. And we hear this from Volumnia herself, as she proudly and stridently declares in her own words that she deliberately raised Coriolanus to be a bloodthirsty warrior. But I intend to argue that the text also contains some indications that the history she provides is incomplete and that there is still another factor entirely independent of Volumnia's influence that also determined her son's development: Coriolanus's own inborn, constitutional nature. Although the very idea of inborn or constitutional differences among children violates our precious democratic ideals that all children are created equal, the reality is that children simply are not the same but vary greatly in the psychological equipment they bring to the world. In the reading I propose, Coriolanus's own constitutional nature made his childhood far more challenging and difficult for Volumnia than her callous declarations would have us to believe.

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## THE READER'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO VOLUMNIA

On the surface of the text, Volumnia openly invites us to join her in the belief that she bears complete responsibility for her son's personality. For example, when Virgilia, Coriolanus's wife, worries that her husband has been wounded in battle, Volumnia crows:

Away, you fool! It more becomes a man  
Than gilt his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba,  
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier  
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood  
At Grecian sword, contemning.

1.3.39-43

Instead of trying to comfort Virgilia, Volumnia flaunts her joy at the prospect of her son having been gloriously wounded in battle.<sup>1</sup> Her invocation of Hecuba nursing Hector also contains a possible backward glance to the time that she suckled Coriolanus. She suggests that, along with her milk, she infused an equal measure of thirst for blood – for others' and his own. This notorious «breasts of Hecuba» speech, along with others like it, is usually read as a reflection of Volumnia's cruel and pathological attitude toward Coriolanus when he was a child. This attitude, she tells us, he then incorporated into his personality and this formed the basis of his love of violence. And she seems to take enormous pride in what she did with him! Many modern readers, at considerable distance from the cult of Roman militarism and with its vastly different attitudes toward war, cannot help but feel deeply troubled, indeed repelled by her attitude.

Perhaps it is also the utter lack of shame with which she stakes her claim, the cold-blooded effrontery of her outrageous assertion that she turned her child into a monster, that so provokes us to condemn her. This flagrant display of how she warped her child's personality immediately dissuades us from trying to understand her sympathetically. Instead, without bothering with further inquiry, we are driven to accept her description of herself as a harridan. But I argue that if we uncritically accept her formulation of herself as a monster-maker, we succumb to the negative feelings that she understandably evokes in us and are thus disabled from thinking as clearly and objectively as we might about her and her role in her son's development. This easily can cause us to overlook the fact that even this woman who so repels us must possess the same obscure complexities and unconscious motivations that we impute to Shakespeare's other characters. And, of course, these less conspicuous aspects of her personality must also have entered into her child rearing. But our negative response to her prevents us from giving her this deeper understanding, the same understanding we freely give other, more sympathetic characters.

Thus we need to try to overcome our antagonism – what in clinical psychoanalysis is called countertransference – and make an effort to search beneath her noisy rhetoric for quieter qualities that may have also influenced her early relationship with her son. These more subtle, less visible components might not change our subjective response to Volumnia, but we could gain more insight into her behavior, which in turn would give us a better understanding of her and her role in Coriolanus's development.

Before proceeding further, I wish to offer the reader a brief personal note. As I searched out these less visible aspects of Volumnia and her role in her son's development, I encountered even more stubborn resistances within myself than I have grown accustomed to struggle with in applying psychoanalysis to texts. And these resistances very nearly wrecked my effort. Of course, these resistances resulted from my own, personal intrapsychic problems that were mobilized by thinking

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations follow The Folger Library General Reader's Edition of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. LaMar, eds., New York: Washington Square Press, 1962.

about this woman and her role in her son's development. And, of course, the strength of these resistances is a tribute to Shakespeare's artistic capacity to create an emotionally compelling portrait of a thoroughly obnoxious woman. Although I think I was finally able to process these resistances and discover the more complex layers beneath Volumnia's surface, the task was unusually difficult.

Thus I find it completely understandable that critics generally do not probe very deeply into Volumnia's personality but tend to accept at face value her account of how she distorted her child's development. Kahn, in her psychoanalytic exploration of the childhood origin of Coriolanus's character structure, writes of Volumnia: «By thrusting him from dependency and thrusting onto him a warrior self of her own devising, Volumnia effectively murdered the babe in Coriolanus, the loving and vulnerable self within him» (p. 172).<sup>2</sup> Adelman expresses a similar formulation in her essay: «Coriolanus incorporates not only his mother's attitude toward food but also the transformations in mode implicit in her image of Hector. These transformations – from feeding to warfare, from vulnerability to aggressive attack, from incorporation to spitting out – are at the center of Coriolanus's character and our responses to him; for the whole of his masculine identity depends on his transformation of his vulnerability into an instrument of attack» (p. 149). Garber concurs, arguing that «[Coriolanus] is a boy in his uncritical submission to Volumnia; he is either her submissive son or a mechanical man....» (p. 46) And, of course, all of these formulations are completely consistent with modern developmental psychology, which holds that the child's earliest experiences with the mother are crucial for personality formation and that difficulties in this area bode ill for the child's future development.

Quite like the literary critics and developmental psychologists, the other characters in the play also respond negatively to Volumnia. Thus in 4.2, Sicinius, the crafty tribune, spies Volumnia distraught at her son's exile and tries to avoid her. But she intercepts him and, at once reverting to the harridan, attacks: «O, y'are well met; the hoarded plague o' the gods/ Requite your love!» (l.17-18). He replies insultingly, «Are you mankind?» (l. 27). («Mankind» is usually read here as something like «mannish» or «savage», thus a deprecation of Volumnia's femininity.) But Volumnia's typically abrasive reply, «Ay, fool; is that a shame?/ Note but this, fool:/ Was not a man my father?» suggests that she hears the insult as a challenge to her very humanity (the more traditional meaning of «mankind»), and this indeed might also be part of Sicinius's intent. But we cannot be like Sicinius; we cannot allow ourselves the expediency of marginalizing her, thus denying her the understanding we offer other literary characters.

And this understanding is not made any easier by the fact that even when Volumnia is clearly the victim herself, she seems to do all she can to deflect our sympathy. For example, later in this same scene, her good friend, Menenius, responds compassionately to her anguish and symbolically offers her the primal comfort of his breast. «You'll sup with me?» (l. 69), he asks. But Volumnia, never comfortable with her dependency, is especially threatened now that she feels the most helpless. Accordingly, she declines Menenius's offer and fends him off with: «Anger's my meat; I sup on myself,/ And so shall starve with feeding» (l. 70-72). Then, with her «Leave this faint puling and lament as I do,/ In anger, Juno-like», she reinforces her stance as the enraged virago who, like the goddess Juno, needs none but herself. She thus defensively converts her neediness into anger and a phantasy of omnipotence. But in doing so, she denies herself the compassion of others. Thus, she does with herself exactly what she taught her son to do: she embraces anger and renounces all vulnerability – whatever the cost.

And the cost to Volumnia is high. In denying her neediness, she denies her own humanity and thus starves herself of her friend's compassion – and the reader's as well. Her words project her as

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<sup>2</sup> In a later publication, Kahn (1992) expands upon her formulation by pointing out that both Volumnia and Coriolanus are victims of Roman militarism: «As a mother, [Volumnia] is of course subjected to the dominant ideology, – but she is also instrumental to it, and thus central to the play's critique of *virtus*.» p. 165

something beyond understanding, something less than human, and it then becomes a simple matter for us to reject this evil creature who deliberately harmed her babe; she certainly is not of our mankind.

But let us recall Terence's words here: «I am a man; nothing human is alien to me.» Do we exclude her from our humanity because she represents something within ourselves that we need to disown? Might there be just a smack of *Volumnia* within ourselves that we cannot tolerate? What is intolerable within ourselves, we might easily project without, on to a despised Other, and then we can disown it as not of our mankind. This, of course, is the classical psychology of prejudice: we condemn and disown the black for his/her sexuality and the Jew for his/her greed. And this «proves» – if only to ourselves – that we are neither sexual nor greedy. If we disown *Volumnia*'s cruelty and callousness, then we «prove» that we could never, ever be that way ourselves. Thus, the temptation to exclude *Volumnia* from humankind may spring from our wish to deny similar, despised tendencies within ourselves.

But I argue that we need to be able to tolerate the intolerable just enough to search for and understand the deeper complexities that may motivate one who lives out such tendencies in her behavior. Let me at once be clear here about what I mean by «tolerate the intolerable»: I do not urge that we should support such behavior - in *Volumnia* or anyone else. Rather, I suggest that we need to tolerate difficult and repellent problems just enough to think clearly about them and possibly to contribute to their solution. Excluding from consideration that which repels us at best solves nothing and at worst amplifies problems by perpetuating the obfuscation that inevitably surrounds them.

And let me add that I do not think we need to blame ourselves for wanting to reject *Volumnia* and all that she stands for; it is, after all, also part of our own humanity to turn away from what we find distressing. However, we do need to try to understand even those characters – literary or real – of whose actions we thoroughly disapprove.

#### VOLUMNIA'S NARRATIVE OF CORIOLANUS'S DEVELOPMENT

It certainly does not help *Volumnia*'s cause that she so relishes her role as the creator and destroyer of her son's personality. In her first appearance in the text, she introduces herself by boasting how she shipped *Coriolanus* off to the wars when he was a little boy:

If my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed wherein he should show the most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied, and the only son of my womb; when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way; when, for a king's entreaties, a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, . . . [I] was pleased to let him seek danger where he was to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, from whence he returned his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. (1.3.2 -17)

Here, on the surface of the text, she celebrates how she sent her «tender-bodied» son away from her, at a time when «a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding». This, of course, encouraged him to renounce his normal childhood dependency on his mother in favor of an identity as a soldier and to inscribe the proof of his fearlessness on the battlefield with the blood of his enemies. And perhaps her thought of him as her husband (her only reference to her husband in the text) in association with «the embracements of his bed» suggests a not-so-unconscious libidinal interest in him. This incestuous tie would have driven him still further away from a passionate bond with another woman, and his pallid attachment to «silent» *Virgilia* seems to confirm this. Thus, *Volumnia*, the bitch-mother, destroyed her little boy's libidinal pleasures, present and future, oral and

genital. This left him only with his sadism which he inflicts on the rest of the world – with his mother’s blessings.

Accordingly, Volumnia presents us with a narrative in which she traumatized her own little son, giving him little choice but to incorporate the attitudes she pressed on him. And indeed throughout the text, Coriolanus lives out an identification with his mother’s cruel attitudes, finally leading Rome’s enemies against his own native city. As Kahn puts it: «Volumnia has succeeded all too well in making her son not a person but a personification, a grotesque caricature of Roman manhood» (p. 157).

Thus, we have neatly arrayed before us the helpless, abused child-victim who becomes the adult-victimizer and the omnipotent abuser-mother who is the cause of it all. Both partners in crime are thus clearly identified and securely labeled. And voilà, we are now in the fortunate position of knowing just who the enemy is and how she created one of Shakespeare’s least likeable characters. It is obvious, – too obvious, I argue: we are to hate cruel Volumnia, and perhaps even feel some jot of sympathy for poor, unloveable Coriolanus!

Thus encouraged by Volumnia’s own rhetoric, critics, both feminist and psychoanalytic, follow closely her words-on-the-page and condemn her, even though none of these commentators could be classified as a New Critic. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that critical commentary is replete with epithets such as «bitch-goddess», «monster-maker», and «harridan», epithets that call into question her «mankind»; only someone – or something – less than human could deliberately harm her child. This uncritical acceptance of Volumnia’s self-report demonizes her – just as she demonizes herself. And, of course, this demonization deflects us from searching for additional factors that might make her behavior with Coriolanus at least more understandable, if not forgivable.

It is also interesting to note that holding Volumnia responsible for Coriolanus’s personality closely parallels the formulations of psychotherapists whose empathic understanding is limited to their patients and stops short of their patients’ parents. While this therapeutic approach may be useful, perhaps even desirable under some circumstances, it must also be acknowledged that it is incomplete. Parents, real and literary, also require understanding, even – perhaps especially – those who flaunt their culpability and provoke our censure.

There is yet another factor that prevents us from understanding Volumnia: we gain something by labeling her the evil, omnipotent parent. This allows us to accord her son at least a modicum of sympathy: he is, after all, the innocent victim of that awful mother. If we can discover ways in which he was a victim, then we can empathize, at least to some extent, with Coriolanus, despite his belligerent, antipathetic attitude. Thus, critics are able to point out that Coriolanus eventually does mature, shows mercy to his family, and finally spares Rome – all this, of course, in spite of Volumnia’s upbringing. Walker refers to «the critical commonplace that Marcius has now become human and will die as a result» (p. 183).

But Volumnia is kept apart and almost never granted the understanding accorded her son. She remains marginalized throughout critical inquiry: the eternal, immutable witch-mother who, like Sycorax (Caliban’s witch-mother), created a monster. Even Luckj, rare among critics in regarding Volumnia as a «fully developed figure with a capacity for psychic depth and change», momentarily speaks of her as harming her son despite her «agonized awareness of the costs of her actions» (p. 329). Barzilai, in her essay, does not censure Volumnia but holds that she is but a literary device, necessary for dramaturgic purposes, rather than a representation of a real, in-the-flesh mother. Barzilai also offers a persuasively argued reading of Coriolanus as suffering from an «[internal] impulse silently pressing for the dissolution of the self», what Freud called the «death instinct» (p. 96). Although I have some difficulty with the concept of an inborn, inwardly directed «death instinct», this aspect of Barzilai’s reading is adjacent to my own in that she postulates as I shall later, that Coriolanus is driven by internal forces beyond his – and Volumnia’s – control.

Bamber, like many other critics, sees Volumnia as «a monumental figure quite incapable of change and devoid of complexity» (p. 102). But this is precisely the problem: Volumnia’s report of

her child rearing is completely devoid of complexity. It lacks all mention of the baffling problems, the endless uncertainties, the vexing contradictions inevitable in any parent's attempt to rear a child. Accordingly, we know that there must be vast areas of her child rearing completely concealed behind the stony facade Volumnia presents to the world. And so she remains a monolithic figure, portrayed in the text and in critical commentary alike as closer to granite than flesh and blood, all hard, repellent surface with no depth.

In the absence of so much information about the details of Volumnia's parenting, we need to acknowledge that we are in the midst of a relative vacuum about Coriolanus's development and must proceed cautiously with any attempt to fill that vacuum with conjecture. We certainly cannot simply accept as complete Volumnia's strident proclamation that there is a simple, direct, cause-effect relationship between the way she raised him and the way he turned out as an adult. Accordingly, we need to subject her account to the same scrutiny and skepticism that we accord the narratives of other fictive characters whose depths and complexities are hidden beneath the facade of their words. What then might be missing and therefore hidden from sight in Volumnia's account?

#### INFORMATION MISSING FROM VOLUMNIA'S ACCOUNT

In pointing out what is missing from Volumnia's account, my principal goal is to undermine certainty: the nearly unanimous critical certainty induced by her own words, that she created Coriolanus's personality out of whole cloth. Answers to the questions I shall raise are simply not available in the text, and I certainly do not intend to draw any firm conclusions based on what is absent; Shakespeare does not attempt to present us with a clinical case history, and Barzilai is correct that Volumnia is a literary device and that device part of the project for the drama. Thus, mere absence from the text signifies nothing; the play's always the thing. My purpose in this section is simply to create enough uncertainty to encourage further reader interrogation of the text for alternative explanations of Volumnia's behavior toward Coriolanus.<sup>3</sup>

But Volumnia is much more than simply a literary device; she is also a superbly drawn literary character, and her words therefore are as open to inquiry as the words of a real mother. If we can locate crucial lacunae in her assertions, if we can become less convinced that we know exactly what Volumnia did or did not do, we shall be in a better position to study the words-on-the-page to gain a deeper understanding of her role in her son's development.

So what are these areas of missing information? Volumnia speaks as if she were the only influence on Coriolanus during his childhood. How can this be true? Volumnia, despite her other faults, is neither shy nor retiring, not the sort of person likely to have isolated herself with her child. Surely, the patrician Volumnia would at least have had the usual slave girl to raise him.

And where is his father in all this? What was his father's role in Coriolanus's life, and how did the child react to him and his loss?<sup>4</sup> (Plutarch tells us that although Coriolanus lost his father «early, .... his father survived to hear of his [son's] successful generalship at Leuctra».)<sup>5</sup> Was there

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<sup>3</sup> Volumnia never taxes our negative capability but instead propels us into what Keats terms an «irritable reaching after fact and reason».

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Wagner (personal communication) points out that the absence of Coriolanus's father made him more vulnerable to his mother's pernicious influence.

<sup>5</sup> Plutarch's account of Coriolanus's contact with his father is somewhat ambiguous. Plutarch tells us both that Coriolanus's father died «early» and that: «[I]t was the greatest felicity of his [Coriolanus's] whole life that his father and mother survived to hear of his successful generalship at Leuctra. .... And he had the advantage, indeed, to have both parents partake with him, and enjoy the pleasures of his good fortune. But, Martius, believing himself bound to pay his mother Volumnia all that gratitude and duty which would have belonged to his father, had he been alive, could never satiate himself in his tenderness and respect to her.» (North's translation)

a grandparent, relative, or friend involved with Coriolanus to help his mother with him? We know absolutely nothing of other possible formative influences in Coriolanus's childhood, other than Volumnia herself.

And let us consider the style of Volumnia's rhetoric as she reports of Coriolanus's earliest years. We note that her report is highly selective. Totally absent from her words are the usual travails of parenting: the child's unpredictable mood swings; inexplicable preferences and aversions; puzzling fears, phobias, and nightmares. We do not even hear of the temper tantrums and the exasperating negativism that so many children exhibit and that we would expect in the childhood of anyone as hostile as the adult Coriolanus.

Instead of these difficult aspects of child rearing, Volumnia's proud chronicle of his childhood omits anything about him over which she had no control. Rather, she presents her parenting as if she had been in total command of the situation and had deliberately programmed her child-warrior's actions, which he then dutifully carried out. All moments of uncertainty or helplessness are omitted; hardly surprising, for, after all, Volumnia is our historian. Only indirectly and inferentially do Volumnia's words allow us to glimpse where she might have had difficulty or perhaps even failed with him at times. I shall return to this later.

Thus, her account is simple – much too simple, I argue: her monstrous golem sprang out of the mold she carefully formed, and behaved precisely the way she had planned. This outcome is in sharp contrast to what usually happens in real parent-child relationships where there is nearly always significant frustration of parental expectation – an aspect of developmental reality faithfully recorded elsewhere in Shakespeare's oeuvre; Prince Hal, Henry VI, Goneril, and Regan are examples. With these characters, Shakespeare's art faithfully reflects the experience of real parents whose plans for their children so often founder on the rocks of their children's individuality. In contrast, Volumnia hardly mentions any difficulties with her plans for her son and omits completely Coriolanus's temperament – his own natural inclinations aside from hers – and this omission calls our attention to this very sector of his personality development.

Volumnia tells us almost nothing about this aspect of his personality as a child, apart from what she wanted for him; there must have been more to him than compliantly following her wish that he become a soldier. Of course, it is impossible to believe that his natural temperament was shy and introverted, and certainly there is no indication of this in the text. But if by any chance, he were naturally inclined to be a quiet child, so very different than he is now, it would reinforce Volumnia's claim that she molded him. But I intend to show later on that there are indications in the text that he was always quite the opposite of a quiet child: that he had always been difficult and, at times, impossible for Volumnia to control. In this, he might have been just like his son, also named Marcius, who so cruelly «mammocked» a butterfly. (1.3.65)

In addition to what we do not know about Coriolanus's childhood, we must also be cautious about what we *think* we know from Volumnia's words. Her self-report of her mothering insists on her harshness toward him (and we need not question this), but her very insistence leads us to wonder what might be concealed beneath this strident claim. Doth the lady protest too much? Is it really possible that she loved him only when he acted like a monster? It seems unlikely to me that any mother who is not psychotic could behave this way toward her child, and the text does not represent Volumnia as psychotic.

Certainly she seems to love him now. She tells him, «Thy valiantness was mine, thou suckedst it from me» (3.2.152), and this speech is often cited as emblematic of her problematic attitude toward him. But if this is not merely Volumnia's metaphoric expression for her early influence on him, if she did in fact suckle him (and why should we doubt her words?), we need to give her credit for giving him her breast instead of turning him over to a wet-nurse as was customary for aristocrats in Shakespeare's time. And to my ear, «thou suckedst it from me» has the ring of a declaration of maternal love – disguised and concealed behind her haughtiness, but nevertheless a visceral affirmation of their organic bond. She thus affirms their basic, primal connection: her breast, his mouth;

her milk, his blood; we would hardly expect a tender declaration of love from this woman. Accordingly, I read her braggadocio here as possibly concealing strong, maternal feelings for her baby. Thus, Coriolanus's early bond with his mother might well have included love that was both nurturing and affirming, and not solely contingent on his acting out his aggression.

It also seems to me likely that this woman who is so fearful of her own dependency might be able to identify with her baby and thus take special vicarious pleasure in giving him her breast and her love. She thus could have vicariously gratified her own dependent needs by feeding her child – gratification by proxy, as it were. And indeed this may be a universal dynamic.<sup>6</sup> And even if we grant that Volumnia could not have verbally expressed tender love for her baby, her facial expression, the way she held him, and her eye contact could have transmitted a nonverbal message quite at variance with the report she gives us of those early years.

Of course, we have no way of knowing any of this for sure, certainly not with this fictional character – and often not with real parents' inevitably flawed recall of the past. But we do need to acknowledge that there is a great deal we simply don't know and that it is at least a possibility that Volumnia provided Coriolanus with a better early holding environment than is readily apparent on the surface of the text.

The possibility that Coriolanus experienced a better environment is important for our attempt to construct a childhood for him. If he were indeed provided with a better environment by a less monolithic Volumnia, it means that he was offered a variety of emotional experiences with which to identify. Why then did he identify himself so exclusively as a warrior if other, more benign identities were also available to him?

There was, of course, his mother's urging him to become a soldier and this must have played a part, although we must also keep in mind the dubious fate of parental plans for their offspring. But I argue that there was another factor, completely independent of Volumnia, that caused him to selectively adopt this particular identity. An unusual, constitutional predilection for aggression (possibly even genetic, since his son is so like him) would lay the foundation for this identity, which his mother then so assiduously encouraged. Children with an inborn, constitutional – although not necessarily genetic – predilection for aggression are well known to developmental psychologists and child psychoanalysts.<sup>7</sup>

But before we can accept the possibility of Coriolanus's own constitutional temperament as fundamental to his identity, we need something more substantial than what is *missing* from Volumnia's account; we need positive support from what is *present* in the text. Accordingly, I shall now try to show how the text may be read to reveal a less implacable, more complex Volumnia who could therefore have offered her child a range of choices for possible identification. Then I shall explore the text for indications that Coriolanus was driven by forces within himself – independent of his mother – to form an identity based on acting out aggression.

#### A MORE COMPLEX VOLUMNIA

The text, of course, offers no contemporaneous account of Coriolanus's childhood; we have only Volumnia's backward glances. But we do have an indirect source of information: we learn something of their relationship as they interact with each other as adults. What we learn of them in this way, we may cautiously project backward into the past. Of course, their circumstances at the

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<sup>6</sup> The reader can observe this dynamic firsthand by watching a baby being fed, and glancing at the caretaker's mouth which almost invariably opens simultaneously with the baby's.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of recent psychiatric research on this aspect of child development, see Zeanah et al. and Mannuzza et al. and Pajer. For a psychoanalytic perspective on hyperactive children, see Gilmore. The current scientific literature on the heritability of constitutional tendencies for hyperaggression is not nearly as compelling as studies indicating the importance of early constitutional factors in themselves, of whatever cause.

time represented in the text are radically different from the child-rearing years, but Volumnia is still the same woman, and her son, I shall try to show, might have been quite the same as a small child as he is in the «now» of the text.

We glimpse a more complex, although certainly no less manipulative, Volumnia in 3.2. Here she joins with the nobles to urge Coriolanus to retract his defiance of the people and thus regain their votes for consul. Of course, he resists as before; he cannot force himself to submit to the commoners any more than he could yield to the enemy.<sup>8</sup> To him, they are one and the same, and therefore he is puzzled by her request. He protests: «Why do you wish me milder? Would you have me/ False to my nature? Rather, say I play/ The man I am» (l. 15 -18). He seems convinced that the way to gain her love is by brutal, uncompromising behavior. Her wish for him to be «milder» violates his perception of her as the infernal she-cat who loves her kitten only when he kills. And this perception of her has been at the core of his relationship with her since he was a child.

But I argue that his perception of her is also a misperception. Later in the scene, she points out his misperception to him: «I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hath said/ My praises made thee first a soldier, so,/ To have my praise for this, perform a part/ Thou hast not done before» (3.2.131-34). Volumnia thus challenges his perception of her by pointing out that he could also have her love («praise») by controlling himself at times. And this, she tells him – and us – is something that he «hast not done before», and this then opens the possibility that he has always defied her.

Although Volumnia may be exaggerating, trying to manipulate him by inducing guilt, I argue that these words may also be read as an implied challenge to the very developmental theory she had earlier constructed with her «breasts of Hecuba» speech. She now opens the possibility that, when he was a child, she had also wanted him to control himself at times, certainly at least enough to protect those close to him – including her – from his aggression. But something – I argue that it was his constitutional nature – frustrated any attempt by her, or anyone else, to discipline him, and he failed to develop adequate controls. Later on, this developmental failure has its most dramatic expression when the citizens of Rome reject him and he plans to slaughter everyone he cares about, including his own family.

Accordingly, Volumnia's early relationship with Coriolanus might have been far more difficult and complicated than she now admits. It is true, she wanted him to be a warrior, but she also wanted a warrior who could contain his aggression when the situation demanded it. He, however, was unable to integrate any sustained self-discipline into his personality. Thus, Coriolanus was able to identify with only some of his mother's wishes and attitudes; with others he obviously could not. This difference between what Coriolanus took into his personality from his mother and what he did not can be accounted for by his constitutional temperament which explains why he developed his rigid, narrow, hectoring personality without any of his mother's capacity for self-restraint.

When Volumnia responds to her son's insistence that he «play the man» he is, she further underscores just how far he deviates from what she wants for him:

You might have been enough the man you are  
With striving to be less so. Lesser had been  
The thwarting of your dispositions if  
You had not showed them how you were disposed,  
Ere they lacked power to cross you.

3.2.23-27

Volumnia points out that he might have prevailed if he had been less mule-headed; he should have concealed his true feelings and then asserted himself when the tribunes were less powerful. Such

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<sup>8</sup> Coriolanus tries to obey his mother's urging to pretend to submit himself to the people and even dons the «gown of humility». But before he can gain their votes, he is provoked to renew his defiance, just as the tribunes had planned all along.

deception would be easy for Volumnia, for she «would dissimulate with my nature where/ My fortunes and my friends at stake requir'd/ I should do so in honor» (3.2.77-79). Volumnia combines Machiavellian deceit with Juno-like arrogance. Although little this offensive woman says about herself is calculated to make us love her, she does clearly reveal her appreciation of and capacity for self-restraint. And this she urges on her son.

But her words are wasted on him. For Coriolanus, to be «less so» is to be less indeed, and he remains unmoved. After much futile begging and cajoling, Volumnia then follows her own advice and appears to give up; perhaps she even dissimulates to have her way with him. But in doing so, she provides us with another glimpse of how he frustrates – and probably had always frustrated – her efforts to teach him self-control:

At thy choice then.  
To beg of thee, it is my more dishonor  
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin. Let  
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear  
Thy dangerous stoutness; for I mock at death  
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.  
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suckedst it from me;  
But owe thy pride thyself.

3.2.49-153

Although probably still hoping that she can somehow bend his will to hers, she resigns herself to Coriolanus's stubbornness and gives him his choice because she realizes she has no choice. She accepts what she cannot change, but rather than weep and bemoan her fate, she characteristically stiffens her resolve: «For I mock at death/ With as big heart as thou.» Perhaps she also consoles herself by reverting to her original developmental theory and claiming credit for creating him: «Thy valiantness was mine, thou suckedst it from me.» But despite the pride she feels, we may also wonder whether her words conceal some feeling of guilt because she knows that the same «valiantness» he sucked from her now also propels him toward self-destruction («Come all to ruin»). I shall return to the issue of her guilt later.

We need to note here that Volumnia accepts the reality of her son's intractable stubbornness and does give in to him, albeit arrogantly and ill-temperedly; grace is not her virtue. But she does in fact yield, and her capacity to do so is in sharp contrast to her son's inability to do so except under the most extreme circumstances, as when he is about to destroy the city of his birth.

I argue that Volumnia's capacity to accept reality and accommodate herself to it – if only under duress – is as much a part of her character structure as her arrogance. In possessing this capacity, her character is radically different from his; she is far more mature and highly developed than her son. She thoroughly appreciates the subtlety of strength in the acceptance of weakness and the futility of stubborn persistence in the face of certain opposition; her son considers all this to be merely weakness. Even if we concede that Volumnia does all this accommodating manipulatively, to induce guilt and thus gain ultimate victory over her son, we must also concede that at least she has the capacity to do so and he most assuredly does not.

And let us note especially the last line of her verse: «But owe thy pride thyself.» Here again, as earlier in the scene, she challenges her self-aggrandizing theory of her role in his development. But this time her challenge is quite explicit as she directly points to her son's own constitutional nature as the root cause of his uncompromising behavior.

Of course, her «owe thy pride thyself» reflects Volumnia's anger with her son for defying her, and she now disclaims responsibility for him: this «pride» of his – she means his mule-headedness – certainly did not come from her! But I read that more is suggested here. She informs her son – and the reader – that she perceives something deep within him that drives his extraordinary belligerence and undermines his self-control. Although she happily acknowledges that he took in a

full measure of her «valiantness», she also insists that he certainly did not take in a jot of her capacity to accommodate to the demands of reality. There must be something about him that determines just what he can take in from her and what he cannot. He is not simply a product of her creation as she had claimed earlier; he owes his stiff-necked pride to himself.

Thus, Volumnia's words here openly and directly subvert the very developmental history she had earlier advocated with her «breasts of Hecuba» speech. She thereby undermines her (far from unique) imagery of the child as an empty receptacle who sucks in parental attitudes en masse, like milk from a breast. Yet, despite this challenge to her original theory, there is still truth in what she told us earlier: children do indeed take in and identify with parental attitudes. Her original developmental theory remains intact; she has merely added a layer of complexity.

Now we can see that there is much more to the story of her son's development than simply victimization by a bitch-mother who turned her child into a monster and drove him to destruction. We can now glimpse that her innocent babe might not have been quite so innocent after all: he may have been born with unusually powerful aggressive tendencies that his mother then carefully nurtured - sometimes to her regret. Accordingly, Volumnia's own words tell us – here much more softly than in her earlier proclamations – that she is not to be held entirely responsible for her son's personality; Coriolanus's own nature makes him quite impossible for her and anyone else. And, as I shall show later, there is still more textual indication that he has always been difficult.

But if it is true that he has always been this difficult, why does Volumnia not simply tell us of the trouble she had disciplining him? Some mothers would make this clear at once. Why does she construct a developmental narrative – now let us call it her «private theory» – that claims responsibility for his actions, omitting precisely anything that she could not control and which would then tend to absolve her?

#### VOLUMNIA'S PRIVATE THEORY

On the surface, Volumnia's private theory derives from her moment in history and her persona; she certainly has little motivation for historic accuracy. In Roman times, as in Shakespeare's, the cult of militarism securely held the popular imagination and she is very much a creature of the times, as Barzilai points out. As the fiercely proud and supremely narcissistic mother of Rome's triumphant savior-general, she takes credit for his fearless behavior on the battlefield; she euphemistically calls it his «valiantness». And she is partly justified in taking credit, but I believe that there are other, less obvious reasons that she assumes responsibility for him.

Her son is not only Rome's savior; he is also in constant difficulty with the citizens, so her pride in him cannot be completely unalloyed by doubt. And Volumnia is constantly made painfully aware of his inability to compromise, a fatal flaw that must eventually destroy him. Like most parents, she probably feels guilty for his problems, despite her attempt to deny it. This feeling of guilt seems to plague parents of troubled children whether or not they did in fact contribute to their child's problems. For Volumnia, the guilt would be especially strong since she had deliberately fostered his belligerence. Goaded by this guilt, Volumnia, like many real mothers, would then embark on an understandable but often ill-conceived attempt to locate a cause for his behavior in the way she had raised him.

And Volumnia does not have far to search, for she already claims credit for his «valiantness» on the battlefield. Why, then, is she not also responsible when this same trait becomes self-defeating stubbornness in the political warfare of the forum? Is she not responsible for this as well? Thus, she constructs a narrative in which she is both the Juno-like mother who created a hero and the bitch-goddess who drives her son to destruction. And, of course, this arrogant, willful woman, who is so fearful of vulnerability, would find it extremely difficult to speak her *mea culpa*; for her, this is a feeling that dare not speak its name. So, she crows about what she *thinks* she did to him,

rather than speaking softly or with shame as she might if she were a less rigidly defended and more open about her feelings.

Thus Volumnia's combined feelings of narcissistic omnipotence and guilt – rather than, say, an intuitive understanding of the subtleties and complexities of child-rearing, structure her story of her son's development. She then buttresses her narrative by collecting only data that supports this theory, overlooking data that undermines it (essayists, beware!). Partial truth then becomes the whole truth for Volumnia, and she takes full responsibility for Coriolanus's problems. This is exactly the way real parents of troubled children and adults develop their self-accusatory theories that place them squarely at the center of blame, bearing out Bacon's observation that «human understanding, once it has adopted an opinion, collects instances that confirm it». And, of course, the credibility of Volumnia's private pleading is enhanced by Shakespeare's art.

Let me be clear here: I do not argue that she bears no responsibility for him; I agree with the other critics that she does. Rather, I argue that her guilt and narcissism lead her to construct an overly simplified narrative, a narrative that focuses exclusively on those aspects of her child-rearing for which she really does bear responsibility and to omit all divergent and confounding aspects: for example, how helpless or confused she must have been at times – just like all parents. And we might also note in passing that Shakespeare always reflects complexity in his main characters. The very absence of complexity in Volumnia's proclamations prompts us to locate the subtle nuances and contradictions in her narrative that Shakespeare might only reveal *sotto voce*.

However, there is one place in the text where Volumnia speaks out plainly about the difficulties she had with Coriolanus as a child and thus openly contradicts her claim of having intentionally created him.

#### CORIOLANUS AS AUTHOR OF HIMSELF

In the «supplication scene» (5.3), Coriolanus has joined with the enemy to lead an attack on Rome. Volumnia, now on her knees along with Virgilia and her grandson, begs him to spare the city but Coriolanus coldly refuses. Volumnia, now desperate, implores him:

There's no man in the world  
More bound to's mother, yet here he lets me prate  
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life  
Showed thy dear mother any courtesy,  
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,  
Has clucked thee to the wars, and safely home  
Laden with honors.

1. 174-180.

Volumnia no longer takes pride in his «valiantness»; now she berates him for his intransigence. He makes her feel completely helpless, «like one i' the stocks», and she fears that she cannot deter him from the destructive path he seems determined to pursue. Her helplessness with him highlights a curious anomaly in their relationship: although he is tightly bonded to her («There's no man in the world/ More bound to's mother»), he is also quite capable of completely ignoring her wishes. And, central to this reading, she then tells him – and us – that this contradiction, now his defiance of her pleading in Aufidius's camp, exactly replicates their relationship when he was a child: «Thou hast never in thy life/ Showed thy dear mother any courtesy,/ When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,/ Has clucked thee to the wars.» Now we can better understand the inner dynamics of Coriolanus's relationship with his mother: this military hero's adult relationship with his mother continues his infantile attachment to her, complete with all the ambivalence and defiance that are always part of that early relationship.

Although Volumnia here again may be trying again to control him by making him feel guilty, her words also provide us with important additional information about his childhood. She suggests that he always had been a difficult, at times an unmanageable child. Perhaps she had finally despaired of trying to discipline such a child and granted his wish to be a soldier, a real possibility for young boys in those times. She might even have told herself that her brave little boy could look after himself, and therefore she could let him go and do as he wished. Forced acquiescence, rather than real agreement with his demands, became a prototype of how she has to deal with him: she gives him his choice because she has no choice, just as when she failed to help him gain the votes of the commoners. Her metaphor of the «poor hen» who clucked him off to the wars then exactly expresses her feelings as she helplessly watched her little son strut fearlessly into harm's way. Now as an adult, he behaves with her (and everyone else) just as he behaved with her when he was a child.

And we can note just how far Volumnia's account has changed from her braggadocio in 1.3; she now presents us with a radically different narrative of Coriolanus's childhood. She no longer refers to herself as an acrobat who «sprang in joy .... at first hearing he was a man child» nor as the Juno-like mother who poured «valiantness» down his gullet. Now she tells us that she was but a «poor hen» who could only stand helplessly by and cluck her child off to war. Thus we have two entirely different versions of their history together, and this contradiction demands our attention. What was the real situation then: did she joyfully send her little boy off to war, or was she powerless to stop him? The text points Janus-like in both directions, and therefore we have no way of knowing which version is correct.

One could argue that here in Aufidius's camp Volumnia grotesquely exaggerates – perhaps even feigns – how difficult he was as a child, and we should not trust her words. She has already told us: «I would dissimulate with my nature where\ My fortunes and my friends at stake requir'd/ I should do so in honor.» How can we trust the words of such an unscrupulous woman? But that does not mean that now we can totally dismiss her words here as outright fabrications. If we were to do this here, how would we decide which of her words to dismiss and which to privilege? Could we dismiss her boast that she turned him into a warrior and simply attribute the claim to her overweening vanity?

The words-on-the-page need to prevail, and we must accept the possibility that both versions are correct: Volumnia was a malignant bitch-goddess *and* a pathetic poor hen. Accordingly, we need to develop a reading that integrates both versions and reconciles them with the rest of the text. And this provides greater verisimilitude, for an integration that accommodates widely divergent and conflicting narratives comes closer to the usual complexities encountered in real mother-child relationships.

## TWO HISTORIES: ONE CORIOLANUS

With these two versions in mind, let us return to 1.3, where Volumnia crowed about how she raised Coriolanus to be a warrior. Recall her «Away you fool!» (l. 39) which began her «breasts of Hecuba» verse, her callous response to Virgilia's concern for her husband's safety.

In the integration I propose, Virgilia's fear for her husband's safety recalls for Volumnia her own fears for little Coriolanus (or Marcius, as he was then called) when he was off to the wars. Volumnia's dismissive «Away, you fool» then becomes a repetition of her defense against her own fears for her «tender-bodied» child: she dismissed her fears by telling herself that she was just being foolish. This, of course, is exactly how women have had to stifle their fears for their soldier sons (and now daughters) throughout the ages. She could then «leave this faint puling and lament» for her little boy: anger is her meat, lament is her poison.

But, of course, she does far more than simply defend herself against her fears; she also gratifies her own prodigious hostility by urging her son on the bloody course that he is determined

to pursue. In this, she is like Freud's rider in his analogy of the ego's relationship with the id: the ego-rider can steer the id-horse only in the direction the horse wants to go (Freud 1923). And she gains narcissistic satisfaction by arrogating «credit» for having raised a man-child who returns to her with «brows bound with oak».

And here in 1.3, there is, additional textual support for reading Volumnia as both helpless to control his wild behavior and encouraging it. In the long prose speech in which Volumnia first tells us how she raised her son, she proclaims her joy «in that absence wherein he won honor». She insists that «to a cruel war, I *sent* him»; «sent» is used here in the sense of «dispatched» (l. 13). But we note also that later on in the same speech, she tells us that she «was pleased to let him seek danger where he was to find fame»; «let» is used here in the sense of «permit». Perhaps this is another instance of her «at thy choice»: she lets him seek danger because she is unable to stop him. Volumnia again bows to the inevitable and endorses it as her choosing. And, of course, on still another level, his hostile behavior *is* of her choosing!

Thus, both of Volumnia's versions of Coriolanus's childhood history are correct: she encouraged her son's aggression and, at the same time, felt relatively powerless to prevent it. And, as he grew older, physically stronger and more independent, she had even less control and had to let him go ever further, finally into the ultimate act of aggression: war.<sup>9</sup> Thus I read Shakespeare's characterization of Coriolanus as a savage son of an equally savage mother, his nature nourished by her nurture, a match made in heaven and hell.

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In questioning the conventional commentary on Volumnia, I raise the perplexing problem of the limitations of retrospective construction by both psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic literary critics of the parents' role in causing emotional problems in their children. Long before Freud, this problem bedeviled parents as they tried to understand their own errors in child rearing in a similar effort to account for problems in their offspring. The accuracy of all retrospective constructions – by psychoanalyst, critic, and parent alike – is almost always compromised by conscious and unconscious selection, as all parties tend to select data which seem congruent with present problems and to eliminate data which are not. And the record of prediction of adult personality characteristics of children by direct observation of their parents is equally dismal: to date, no research study, based solely on parental attitude, has predicted prospectively how a given child will turn out. Of course, parents do bear a heavy responsibility for their child's emotional development, but the degree of parental responsibility for serious emotional problems in their offspring and the precise role of environmental influences on the child remain largely unresolved issues in child developmental research.

Earlier in the century, pioneering child therapists «resolved» the problem of parental accountability for the children's emotional difficulties by holding the parents completely responsible. In some extreme instances, this attitude led to treating only the parents and withholding treatment from the troubled children. Although including the parents in the therapeutic milieu can be very helpful, the position of holding parents solely responsible led to decades of clinical obfuscation and scapegoating of parents. Most clinicians now consider that complex constitutional factors in the child interact with equally complex environmental influences to determine adult personality. This intricate circularity precisely parallels the complex, reverberating dynamic seen in all close relationships. How easy it was when we could avert all this complexity and simply fault the Volumnias of the real and fictional world!

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<sup>9</sup> Plutarch tells us he went off to war as a «stripling».

The expansion of developmental theory to include the child's own personality and his/her constitution demands that we move beyond merely blaming Volumnia. Including Coriolanus's own constitutional predisposition in our schema opens the possibility that his temperament when he was a child was much the same as it is in the «now» of the text: he was overcharged with aggression and internally driven into wild and reckless behavior. In this reading then, the hyperaggressive child, Caius Martius, is father to the reckless warrior, Coriolanus.<sup>10</sup>

Clinicians have followed such children as they mature into adulthood, and distressingly often their problems dangerously persist.<sup>11</sup> Many have difficulties with the law and are imprisoned. Coriolanus, of course, was a law unto himself until he violated Roman tradition, and was banished – the equivalent of imprisonment for Roman aristocrats. Then he turned against his own republic and literally became an outlaw.

Thus, I read Volumnia's words as recalling the dilemma of a mother who finds who herself trying to raise a hyperaggressive child. Such children can drive their mothers to distraction, and, in turn, many mothers respond by trying hard to curb them; some, in desperation, even risk breaking their spirit. But instead, Volumnia's own character structure caused her to adapt to her unruly son's ways and finally to take pleasure in his audacity. She tells us: «I had rather have eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action» (1.3.24 -5). Although words like these might distress the modern reader, one could argue that, given the Zeitgeist, Volumnia's support of Coriolanus's aggression contained elements of positive adaptation to the real dangers that surrounded Rome in those early days.

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At the beginning of the «supplication scene», Coriolanus sees Volumnia, Virgilia, and his son, Martius, approaching his tent in Aufidius's camp. His resolve starts to melt, for he really is «not of stronger earth than others». He tries to firm his resolve by disavowing his bond with them:

.... I'll never  
Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,  
As if a man were author of himself  
And knew no other kin.

5.3.37 -40

Of course, his subjunctive «as if a man were author of himself» completely undermines his denial of his attachment to his family, and in fact his words do the precise opposite: his use of the conditional reaffirms his strong bond with them. He is as imprinted with his family as if he were one of Lorenz's goslings. And, according to the reading I propose, his and Shakespeare's selection of the word «instinct» here may contain still another layer of meaning: a reference to the feeling of being driven by forces deep within, not subject to Coriolanus conscious control and quite apart from intellect, «*Trieb*» in the Freudian sense. In this sense, he indeed «author of himself».

Thus the text may be read as a Shakespearean questioning of the egalitarian but overly optimistic view of the baby's mind as a *tabula rasa* on which the parents inscribe their mark. I have tried to show that the text also represents how parents make their mark on the background of the

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<sup>10</sup> In Plutarch's account, Coriolanus «began at once, from his very childhood, to handle arms; feeling that adventitious implements and artificial arms would effect little». Was this an indication of an unusually strong and dangerous aggressive temperament? It surely would indicate this in modern times but even if this were also true for a boy in early Rome, we know that Shakespeare freely adapted Plutarch. Yet, I think it means something that Shakespeare read Plutarch and closely followed him, at times almost word-for-word, in other places in this text.

<sup>11</sup> For longitudinal studies of hyperactive children, see Klein et al and Manuzza et al. For girls, see Pajer.

child's inborn, constitutional proclivities. Thus, the analogy is more properly with a painting exhibiting pentimento or with a palimpsest, rather than with inscription on a blank slate. We might even speculate about what would have happened had Coriolanus been born a more sensitive, even fearful child. Then he might have responded with anxiety to his mother's bloody wishes for him and become withdrawn, perhaps even hidden behind her skirts. But now we leave the text too far behind.

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# «The something in you that is more than you»: The *object a* in Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*

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Filmer, c'est regarder quelque chose qui va disparaître.

Agnès Godard, *Cahiers du Cinéma* no 538 sept 99, p. 62

Anything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image.

Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), 87.

In his later seminars, Lacan formalized his axiomatic statements concerning the structural meaning of language for the speaking subject under the term *object a*, the cause of desire and the somewhat mysterious «*plus de jouir*» (supplementary pleasure). By means of this term, he condensed and rationalized the Freudian «lost object» as well as the principle theoretical effect of so-called «object relations». Lacan's invention of the *objet a* is a major contribution linked to his insistence on the subversive power introduced by the notion of the unconscious.

Wong Kar-Wai's seventh film, *In the Mood for Love*, which won for him the best director award at Cannes in 2000, can be studied as an illustration of the workings of the *objet a* in the love relationship, the «something in you that is more than you».

Interestingly, it is in its specificity as Hong Kong cinema that Wong's work best seems to lend itself to this type of reading. Perhaps it is in its treatment of space that *In the Mood for Love* manifests its origins in Hong Kong cinema. Crowded quarters are a metaphor for Hong Kong, a

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city that has the highest population density in the world. Space, or rather lack of space, becomes a synonym for place. Therefore the moving-in scene at the outset of the film, with the movers attempting to squeeze pieces of furniture through the narrow corridor of the apartment building, prepares us for the forced proximity in which the characters must live. The interchangeability of possessions will evolve into an exchange of people as partners shift from one apartment to another.

Most of the film is shot in interiors of tiny over-crowded Hong Kong apartments or offices. When Maggie Cheung wants to give her boss some privacy to talk with his mistress on the phone, she has to offer to make him some coffee and we watch her leaning against the wall in a narrow corridor with the coffee maker. In an interview, Wong's cinematographer, Australian Christopher Doyle, remarked that working in Hollywood annoyed him, since there, if a wall is in the way, they want to take it down. In Hong Kong, according to Doyle, «if a wall is in the way, we use it». In *In the Mood for Love*, there is almost always a wall in the way. And that is how Wong Kar-Wai reminds us that, although spectators at a film are in the position of voyeurs, we do not see everything. The cinematography of Wong Kar-Wai makes constant use of the wall through the technique of split-staging. If we analyze the images of this film presented on the screen, we are reminded that the word screen designates something that hides something else, as in Freud's «screen memory», as well as a supporting surface on which images can be projected.

The Wong-Doyle camera style using slow motion, but which additionally seems to omit some frames so that the visuals appear somewhat «broken» and discontinuous, conveys at least two different messages. First it links radically different elements stylistically – in earlier films, the themes of love and violence for example, much like the various disparate elements that comprise Hong Kong. Those disparate elements produce the social confusion that each individual struggles against to maintain a sense of personal security. Thus the stop-action effect with which Wong presents characters trying to find an authentic emotional connection, or trying to stay alive, makes tangible the plight of these characters groping about in a world that is visibly disappearing before our eyes.

The second purpose of the camera work is to make evident the real impossibility of seeing «the whole picture». As one observes the stop-action shots, the viewer will notice that the effect leaves out bits and pieces of time and space, so that no image ever truly coheres. It is a cinematic technique that makes the effects of loss or lack quite vicarious for the viewer, who is placed within the world of the film and is allowed to experience the temporal and spatial disappearance of that world as it is projected.

In his latest effort, the themes of all Wong's films resurface: the transience of relationships, introspective isolation and the persistence of memory; as always these themes are illustrated by the opposition between two human types: the first haunted by the past and blinded to opportunities in the present by the haze of nostalgia, the second devoid of memory and therefore leading a meaningless existence, needing to find a purpose, but unable to do so because incapable of committing to relationship. There is apparently no gender specificity in Wong's universe. Males and females are equally apt to choose one or the other of these subjective positions. In *Happy Together*, Tony Leung plays a homosexual lover who clings to the past and fantasizes the possibility of «starting over», while in *In the Mood*, he plays a heterosexual in an identical position. *In the Mood* experiments with a new situation however, since both of its protagonists are of the first type, wounded by their pasts and, «once burned», they are incapable of seizing an opportunity for love in the present.

For *In the Mood for Love*, Wong's cinematographer, Chris Doyle, again creates his idiosyncratic camera work in this latest film where the signature introspective slow motion to the nostalgia-laden theme song has never gone so far. Nothing is more beautiful, or sadder, than the willowy, swaying silhouette of Maggie Cheung carrying her little tin carry out can, as she descends the stairs of the noodle restaurant for her solitary sustenance. *In the Mood* luxuriates in the luminescence of images boosted by high-contrast film and the Godardian jump-cutting and iconographic fascinated staring

at objects, especially clocks, to underscore a fixation on time and immanence. The hand-held camera, use of available light, stop action shots as the protagonists exchange a gaze heavy with the potential of emotion which is still suppressed, all these are familiar techniques from previous films by Wong that appear here matured and mastered at last. The creative wide-angle lenses and expressive use of camera speeds, as well as the rapid scatter-shot montage so remarkable in films like *Chungking Express* and *Fallen Angels*, are less invasive here. In fact the spectator is considerably less aware of what the camera is doing than is usually the case in a Wong Kar-Wai film, and all the more spellbound by the charm of the images. An investigation into the nature of desire is pursued through the recourse to Wong's signature slo-mo which seems to convey the fact that the more slowly and carefully we look at an image, or at the faces caught in freeze-frame, the more resolutely recognition seems to flee our grasp. In «Montage interdit», André Bazin makes a case for the purity of a cinema that respects the unity of space (55-59). We must believe that what we see is what is there. Montage, on the other hand, is a literary technique and is heterogeneous in cinema: the use of montage tells the spectator that s/he is watching a fabrication, an illusion. The scenes in *In the Mood* using slow motion, take Maggie Cheung out of the realm of the documentary in cinema and put her into the realm of fantasy. For if slow motion is used aesthetically and romantically, it is also used analytically; slow motion reflects a desire to immobilize a fleeing reality, to make time stand still, an effort to understand; yet the camera can only ever render an image. In fact, it is striking that the camera often does not even succeed in showing us the body of a character, but rather the silhouette or the reflection of that body, and the many images caught in a mirror frustrate the very same voyeurism in which the film invites us to participate. The closer we look, the less we see, since slow motion, like analysis, leads, after a certain point, only to a blurring of the image. *In the Mood for Love* is an exercise in the aporia of the visual. The image is always only an approximation of the real.

Like Ozu and other filmmakers interested in transience, Wong fills his films with images of mutability – boiling clouds, wafting steam, and in *In the Mood for Love*, cigarette smoke, in earlier films, zigzag traffic patterns and pulsating city lights, shadows that drift across a landscape; a gigantic waterfall (*Happy Together*); wind ruffling a sheet of orange plastic as a man's life pumps out of him (*As Tears Go By*). All of these images replace plot, dialogue or characterization, as they appeal directly to the senses speaking of the seduction of evanescent beauty.

Wong's signature camerawork is given eloquent re-enforcement through the use of voice-over. In virtually all of his work Wong's main characters are assigned voice-over. They comment on what they are doing, anticipate the future of the narration, share their regrets for what is always already impossible. These interior voices comment on the loneliness of Wong's heroes, since interior monologue replaces dialogue. Thus the characters step outside time as they detach themselves from their own present: «In 48 hours, I was going to fall in love with this woman», says one protagonist of *Chungking Express*, while a freeze-frame captures the gaze between him and an unknown woman. «In a year will you still remember this moment next to me?» wonders another character solipsistically. Phrases intended for no one but the speaker, make it clear that the characters are outside what they are living, spectators, like us, of their own existence. In *In the Mood for Love*, both the man and the woman utter the phrase that reveals their desire, «If there was an extra ticket, would you go with me?» in voice over and so it is clear that this confession of love is never made to the other.

It is the human hunger for images that condemns Wong's characters to repetition. Maggie Cheung's character in *In the Mood for Love* has the same maiden name as her character in *Days of Being Wild*, Su Li-zhen. If *Days* is set in 1960 and *In the Mood* opens in 1962, this could easily be the same woman two years later. Far from being a pointless exercise in New Wave style intertextuality, this coincidence could serve to underline the fact that these people live only in images. Indeed, Mrs Chen, née Su Li-zhen, spends most of her «free time» at the movies.

At the end of *In the Mood*, using a technique from old silent films, the screen shows a message. This is its text:

He remembers those vanished years.  
As though looking through a dusty pane,  
The past is something he could see, but not touch.  
And everything he sees is blurred and indistinct.

This quote, from a contemporary author, well known to the Hong Kong audience, typifies the weight of nostalgia in Wong Kar-Wai's oeuvre: an absence of a presence, a far-away time, no longer a place, only an image, seen as if distorted.

According to Clément Rosset, «The Real is that which has no double», (1979, 22) yet the characters in this cinematic universe are surrounded by mass produced objects and the overwhelming presence of these objects ridicules any claim people might have to authenticity. The cop whose girlfriend liked pineapple in *Chungking Express* laments, «To May, I'm just another can of pineapple». As Gina Marchetti notes, in Wong Kar-wai's world, people function as commodified objects (2000, 299). What is unbearable, when it is a question of love, is the knowledge that one is exchangeable, only a place holder. Yet, in *In the Mood*, the fact that the spectator never sees the face of the protagonists' spouses, but only their silhouettes from the back, leads us to doubt the reality of these people as individuals; they are only roles, which can be played by others. Tony Leung's wife is only distinguishable from behind thanks to her 60s flipped up hairdo. Given the silhouette we see on the screen, her part could easily be played by Maggie Cheung wearing a wig. Commodification becomes even more problematic given Wong's aesthetic investment in his art. In «L'architecte et le vampire», Wong remembers the shock produced in him by the discovery of the films of Luc Besson. According to Wong, for Besson, actors are the equivalent of stones, trees, objects. He films them with exactly the same attention.

In the midst of a superficial existence there is a hopeless desire for purity of sentiment. The question of truth and falsehood leads to the more general concern for real love, lofty sentiment etc. In *Happy Together*, the Tony Leung character tells his boyfriend, «I'm not like you». To mean, that he is not promiscuous, is only interested in real love as opposed to superficial sexual encounters. In *In the Mood for Love*, Tony Leung's character tells his womanizing friend Ping, «Not everyone is like you».

The possibility that feelings are not authentic surfaces disagreeably in *In the Mood for Love* when adulterous husbands and wives give the same gift to their legitimate and illegitimate partners. This is the habit not only of the husband and the wife of the principles, but also of Mr. Ho, Maggie Cheung's boss who also makes use of her husband's business trips to Japan to procure handbags for both his wife and his mistress. When they notice purses and neckties that are identical, the protagonists wonder if they themselves are not just as interchangeable and indistinguishable as objects of desire. It is unbearable, when love is involved, to feel oneself occupying the place of another. When Tony Leung's character announces that he is leaving Hong Kong for Singapore, he says, «I thought we wouldn't be like them». The message is that we are all alike, victims of emotions we do not control. All lovers are substitutes for original passions that have been lost.

In *In the Mood for Love*, both Tony Leung and Maggie Cheung proclaim «We won't be like them», to underline their difference from their adulterous spouses. Yet while the heroes of the film deplore such lives, their own relationship is only a copy of that of their spouses. Their interchange has its point of departure in a question: «How did it begin?» As the betrayed husband and wife attempt to understand their partners' feelings, they take the roles of the others and try to act out their first encounters. Is love always a matter of role-playing? Although the adulterous husband and wife have no faces in the film, their voices are heard. The Leung-Cheung couple is two couples in one because they will play the roles of both sets of lovers. Early in the film, a woman is crying

in a hotel room. Later we recognize this as the hotel in which Tony Leung's character has rented a room. Who is the woman: Maggie Cheung or her rival? Ultimately of course the point is that she is all women: not an individual as essentially unique, but a role, a position in the relationship of desire. In one scene we are placed in the focal space of the adulterous woman as Maggie Cheung stands in her doorway trying to be nice to this neighbor, her face poignant with her loneliness. The camera lovingly dwells on Maggie Cheung as she tries to come to an understanding of her husband's desire. The question, «What am I for your desire?» is displaced onto the need to occupy the place of the other woman, the one the husband loves. However the subject of the passion, the husband, is now replaced by the husband of the other woman. This unknown man is uniquely suited to play the part of the object of desire precisely because he is the husband of the other woman. Since Maggie does not know what her rival has that makes her desirable, she must seek enlightenment from the only one who has intimate knowledge of this desirable woman. Lacan's axiom, «He whom I love is he of whom I suppose knowledge concerning my desire», is fully operative in this scenario since both the man and the woman need each other in order to fathom the desire of their spouses.<sup>1</sup>

During a very moving scene in which the betrayed couple takes the parts of the others during a Western-style meal at a restaurant, Maggie Cheung tells her neighbor to order for her, since she has no idea what his wife likes to eat. Later as both of them manipulate knives and forks, instead of their usual chop sticks, Tony Leung puts mustard on her plate and she obligingly dips each bite of meat she cuts into the condiment. Miraculously we feel her heroic effort to surmount her distaste in order to be the other woman. The spectator can almost taste the relish that brings tears to our eyes, as Maggie Cheung comments, «Your wife likes hot dishes».

Both characters are stoically incorporating a food that is distasteful to them and the spectator is lead to feel repulsion for the meat dutifully consumed by these two as they act the part of the others. When they are being themselves, they always eat noodles.

It is as if «life» itself were not primarily biological, but symbolic, present more forcefully in ritualized acts of signification than in the body. Recognition in Lacan is both visual in the imaginary and verbal in the symbolic, and ultimately impossible in both realms. When she is asked what name she would like to be called, Maggie Cheung answers, «My husband's name is Chen».

Desire seeks out a real beyond imaginary mis-recognition and symbolic interpellation but confrontation with this Real can expose the subject to both anxiety and violent aggression.

In an interview given to *Cahiers du cinéma*, Maggie Cheung says that the Hong Kong of the 60's, the Hong Kong of her childhood, before her parents moved to England when she was eight, is, for her, essentially a world of smells and sounds. She remembers the clicking of high heels walking down long corridors and this is a sound that she rediscovers in *In the Mood*. I also notice the clatter of old type-writer keys, the return of the carriage and the rolling of a new sheet of paper into the machine, all magnified sounds that fill our ears when Maggie Cheung's character goes about her duties in her office job. These sounds are absolutely codified, familiar since we have heard them in innumerable films. They contribute to create a certain cinematic classicism. They are not so much signifiers as signs, signs of a period, signs of nostalgia. Sound is not recorded automatically with the images. It is added later. The creator of a film must work to compose the sound track of his film, finding artifices that will translate into a realism of the precise sound to be evoked. This is, for Michel Chion, a question of texture comparable to that a still life painter struggles to find to render the flesh of certain fruits. What are we to make then of the lack of coordination between sound and image that is quite prevalent in the film? While the camera lingers

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<sup>1</sup> For Lacan, the love relationship is the model for the relationship of transference in psychoanalytic practice: «Celui à qui je suppose le savoir, je l'aime:» (XX, 64)

over a scene, we hear the irruption of a telephone ringing. Only after we have been distracted by the noise, does the scene change to the office space where a phone fills the screen as source of the ringing. This use of sound track thus becomes a means of facilitating the narrative process; it permits a transition. Yet it undercuts the illusion of reality. It is only in a dream that a noise can become the creator of an image and eventually of a story-line.

Chris Doyle has been Wong's cinematographer since his second film. If Wong is his own screen writer, but never has a finished screenplay before beginning a film, he attributes this technique to his collaboration with Doyle. According to Wong, Chris has no patience for words and plots. He thinks of a film in terms of musicality: a film is a matter of rhythms, like a dance. In *In the Mood*, we see the same scene run twice, identical or almost, but with different dialogue, as the characters attempt to recreate the history of the love scene between their spouses. And when Maggie Cheung breaks down and cries, Tony Leung comforts her saying, «It's only a rehearsal». «The real is that which has no double».

#### THE SEARCH FOR THE SOMETHING IN YOU THAT IS MORE THAN YOU – THE *OBJET A*

*In the Mood for Love* presents the process, not so much of living an affective relationship, as of identifying with one. As we have seen, this identification can only operate thanks to negation: «We won't be like them». Here identification is prompted by a moment of loss; the subject is produced at the site of absence, the default of the sexual partner whose existence defined the relationship and the place of the subject in that relationship.

In *Seminar XX* Lacan quips that if clothes make the man, what is beneath the clothes, which we call the body, is perhaps the leftover; Lacan has called this leftover l'*objet a*. And he goes on to add that when a man approaches a woman, what he is really pursuing is the cause of his desire, «what I call *objet a*» (XX, 67-68).

We have seen that the theme of love is linked to the question of knowledge (XX, 84). The object of the gaze is seen as in possession of the *a*. Does that mean he/she is it? Wong Kar-wai teaches us that if I have the *a*, it is only for the other that my possession is authenticated. I have it only for the other, never for myself.

Throughout the year of his twentieth seminar, Lacan repeated this formula: «I ask you to refuse what I'm offering you because that's not it» and once he added «That not it – here is the plea which distinguishes the pleasure (*jouissance*) obtained from that which was expected» (XX, 101). And he adds, «...you know what "that" is, it's the object *a*». The object is no being: the object *a* is that which supposes the emptiness of a demand; it is something which can only be situated thanks to metonymy, that is through the pure contiguity assured by the sentence structure from beginning to end, that allows us to suppose a desire that no being justifies.

And Lacan, prefiguring Wong, continues by insisting that the reciprocity between subject and object is total. «That is what I have called the division of the subject.» It is in the object *a*, the cause of desire, that the subject identifies himself to his desire (XX, 123).

In an article for the *Cahiers du cinéma*, Wong Kar-wai compares himself to a vampire: he steals something from his actors, something they did not know they had (1999). Thus the «something in you that is more than you» corresponds to a something in me of which I am ignorant. «We won't be like them», comes to signify on several levels: we will not be the meat-eaters, the gross physical beings, flaunting sentiment as physical need. We are pure spirits. In the cinema of Marguerite Duras the voice-over technique contributes to bring into being a reality of floating words, disembodied words, which are paradoxically, by the same token, somehow eternal, while the physical presence of the character loses all credibility. Michel Chion has called the use of sound to create disincarnated voices in Duras' final films «more off than off» (14).

Music is one of the keys to the art of film in general and is largely responsible for the atmos-

phere created in Wong Kar-Wai's oeuvre. The Mamas and Papas' *California Dreaming* throbs throughout *Chungking Express*, more than a commentary, the song becomes a motivation for the actions and reactions of its characters. Astor Piazzola's *Tango Apasionato* in *Happy Together* says that blind Eros is implacable. While the realistic sound of noises and words, anchor the images on the screen in a space and time illusion of reality, music is capable of disengaging the image on the screen from real time, this is hilariously illustrated in Alain Resnais' *On connaît la chanson*. Music can make the image dance in its slow motion dream to the rhythms of Wong's sound track. In silent film and in the music video clip, chronology becomes irrelevant and causality is put between parentheses; the same scene can be viewed from three different angles, cause and effect are now a moot point and the image follows the scansion of the musical phrase. The couple in *In the Mood* is not sometimes themselves and sometimes acting the parts of their adulterous spouses; they are always acting a part, just like the rest of us, they are condemned to act a part. Although the protagonists never sing, the film is closer to opera than it is to narrative cinema; it is also closer to music video where, thanks to the possibilities of play-back, the same voice can accompany several different faces, or no face at all, since song does not restrict the succession of images the way words do.

The choice of a purely spiritual existence in Wong Kar-Wei's latest effort means that the love relationship of the heroes will not be consummated; instead the couple will collaborate in an artistic endeavor; they will write martial arts stories. In the film we see Tony Leung alone, but multiplied, since his reflection is repeated in a series of mirrors: he is writing. We see Maggie Cheung alone, writing. She seems to be in his room, but alone. The relationship between the protagonists is based on sublimation. When we see the couple together, they are examining manuscripts. No dialogue is heard only the music drowning everything else in the scene. Earlier Tony Leung told his neighbor that he would rent another room so that they could meet without the gossip of their neighbors. However they seem to meet to write, not to make love. Contrary to the Western chivalric tradition, the Chinese wandering knight does not serve a woman or even fall in love (although a woman warrior may assist him). The hero is governed by loyalty – to his family, especially his father, and to his friends, or «brothers» (Liu, 125-129). *Ashes of Time* is a martial arts fiction, which is closely paralleled, thematically, to Wong's most recent film. Perhaps this is the sort of story the lovers are writing.

When Maggie Cheung appears at the end of the movie, having replaced the *mater familia* in the apartment in which she formerly rented a room, she has a small son. Whose child is it? The husband's, the lover's? Perhaps, for Wong Kar-Wai, both were necessary to promote this woman to the status of mother. Just as the films of Wong Kar-Wai delight in doubles, parallel narrations, repeated scenes, photos, recordings and videos which repeat reality, rendering it surreal, so a love significant enough to create new life, could only be the result of a double encounter, an encounter with a double.

In *Seminar XX*, Lacan famously and controversially defined the realm of the feminine as that of the «Not-All». And added: «it is on an addition to this not-all that the pleasure of the woman rest.» Moreover, «For the enjoyment (*jouissance*) of the fact that she is not-all, that is that she is somehow absent to herself, she finds a plug for the gap in this *a* which will be her child» (XX, 36).

In the world of Wong Kar-Wai's images, what you see is never what you get.

#### WONG KAR-WAI FILMOGRAPHY

*As Tears Go By* 1988

*Days of Being Wild* 1990 Maggie Cheung, Andy Lau, Tony Leung, Carina Lau, Jacky Cheung

*Ashes of Time* 1992-94 Brigitte Lin, Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung, Carina Lau, Maggie Cheung, Jackie Cheung

*Fallen Angels* 1996 Leon Lai, Michele Reis, Karen Mong  
*Chungking Express* 1996  
*Happy Together* 1997 Tony Leung, Leslie Cheung  
*In the Mood for Love*, 2000 Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung

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# Problems of war and peace (\*)

MAX DAY (\*\*)

Problems of war and peace depend ultimately on how people individually, in families, in small groups and in larger groupings deal with aggression and love. Yet the connections between peace and love, on the one hand, and war and aggression, on the other, are not direct and simple. Looking at only one link in the chain of war and peace may be misleading. If diplomacy is war carried on by other means, peace, too, may be war carried on by other means. Peace may reign for a while, for a generation or two, and then the old enmities resurface and lead to further open warfare. We may start out with a peaceful aim in mind and become very aggressive and angry in pursuing it. Why is this so? It seems to be in the nature of the human animal to be aggressive and to enjoy it for its own sake. Furthermore, once we allow ourselves to enjoy the excitement of aggression, it runs amuck with abandon and thus creates some of the problems of war. The potential for anger, aggression and war is present in every one of us to different degrees. So is the potential for love and peace. War depends on the total of aggression in all of us, counter-balanced by the total of love in all of us. Aggression and the potential for war find their sources in the individual and in the group.

The tendency to aggression is inborn. The degree of it differs from one individual to another. As early as 1911, while studying families of depressed patients, Karl Abraham noted that they all seemed to have a greater tendency to aggression than those of other patients. This is also evident in the degree of aggression with which each individual is born. In utero, different fetuses procreated by the same father and mother kick to different degrees. One young suckling may bite the nipple and smile, despite warnings not to do so, while his sibling is content to listen to the warning not to bite. Different children take more pleasure or less in water play and in smearing. The child will build up an elaborate structure from blocks and then with great pleasure smash it, although, if another child smashes his block building, he might wail in anger. He enjoys his own destructiveness. During the phase of phallic sexuality, aggression may be intensified by the child's own feelings and phantasies about being a girl or a boy as well as how these are looked on by each of the parents, the family and the larger society. Phantasies of a probing, destructive penis or a biting vagina are common in boys and girls.

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The inborn aggression, amplified or toned down by the specific family of the individual and his upbringing, leads to the resultant character structure. How the family deals with aggression is an important influence. By the age of six, children in divided communities, as in Ireland, already recognize social differences and react accordingly (Connolly, 2002). Merely insisting that he be good does not suffice. Under the pressure of general frustration, loss of supportive figures or shaming or when the family gives permission by example to express aggression, goodness wears out and quite easily grows into viciousness. Chance unfortunate events in the life of an individual may intensify the innate aggression, especially when such events occur early in life. Repeated shaming or other influences that lead to an intense dread of falling apart lead to intimidation, volatility and rage (Lansky, 1993). Sometimes overwhelming events even in later life may intensify the inborn aggression. Aggression may be enhanced or controlled by formal education, and the ways the community, the tribe, the folk, the nation and even larger conglomerates of which the individual is a member, deal with it.

How is *aggression managed reasonably in good times*, without external frustrations? It is the love from the mother and for the mother that make the child willing to control and manage his own aggression (A. Freud, 1949). The fit between the mother and child complicates the interplay between the two and the resolution of aggression. In this process the parent must be willing to accept and entertain a goodly amount of the child's aggression before the lessons to control and manage his aggression are learnt by the child. Does the child show too much aggression for the mother's comfort? Is he too placid? Is he reminiscent of an angry parent or other relative? Any such mis-fit will make it harder for the mother to help the child modulate his aggression. The psychological circumstances of the mother at the time of the child's coming onto the scene also affect the management of aggression. Is she in grief? Has this child come after a miscarriage or still-birth? Such a background may increase the mother's depression, decrease her ability to tolerate aggression and decrease her willingness to entertain the child's aggression. In addition to managing and modulating his aggression he has to be helped to have reasonable outlets for his aggression. One can find these in games, sports, athletics as well as in fighting. Yet each of these activities may break into open aggression on the part of the fighters and the audience. It is not unusual for sportsfigures to be aggressive in their private lives where there is no referee to hold them in check. Sometimes in the middle of a sport activity they become aggressive. For the adult, aggression finds outlets in satisfying ambition, in competition, in pursuing one's interests actively and so on. There would be no enjoyable love-making without aggression. There would be no creativity without the free availability of aggression. So the child must be taught to modulate and channel, not suppress, the amounts of aggression required for a given purpose, not merely to inhibit it. It is a matter of how much aggression, how to express it, when, with whom and for what purpose.

Much of this teaching takes place by example rather than by exhortation or education. How does the mother show her anger? How does she greet the anger of others? How does she deal with the father's anger, with that of other siblings, other family members and other people? These unspoken lessons determine how the child will deal with anger and may store up a pool of unexpressed anger, which may find expression later on in mass outlets like anti-social behavior and war. The character structures of the parents play roles in these developments.

In some families aggression cannot be expressed openly. It must always be overlooked or denied. Where does it go for expression? In others the stress is always on goodness. In still others aggression may be expressed against those who do not believe in the religious, political or folk ideals of the family. One is polite to one's parents but can hate the Kikes, or the niggers, or the Catholics or the Protestants, or the 'male chauvinist pigs', or the gays, or the Republicans or the Democrats, or the communists or the capitalists and so on. This is very economical for the parents, since it saves them the problem of absorbing the child's aggression by supplying an outlet for it outside the family. This very economical outlet for the family, of course, intensifies the problem for 'the outsider'. Some families blame themselves for all events of aggression. Still other families

enjoy their aggression quite openly in going after women, going after men, in business, in anti-social activities and so on. Knowing the proportion of each of these types in the general population would help us make an estimate of the size of the problem. In fact, it is more complicated because most families use several of these devices to deal with aggression. Furthermore, given enough stress, anyone, who is reasonable in her or his management of aggression, may regress to more primitive methods of dealing with aggression.

It is instructive to study *aggression and its management in small training or therapy groups* of no more than eight to fifteen people (Day, 1956). Whatever aggression each member brings to the group is, at first, displaced onto powers outside the group such as the chairman of the department or a supervisor. On the surface this is done out of respect for the leader but, in fact, out of fear of the leader and his possible retaliation. The angrier the member, the more he fears retaliation from the leader. What to do with this load of aggression? If the leader methodically interprets it as displacements of their anger towards himself, most often because of envy of him, hidden competition with him and from other childhood sources that depend on the development of each member, it frees them up from some of their anger towards one another. They can begin to see some of their own selves in others in the group. They can then do some work together in trying to understand themselves and one another, which is the business of the group. If the leader is defensive, seductive or authoritarian to avoid the anger of the members, he thereby squelches their anger. They are then less free to do the work of the group, since they know they must conceal or deny their anger to him. They will then become tied to him without progressing and be unable to focus on group problems or individual past problems. This stultifies the work of the group. Why does the small group approach work well, when it does? The members gradually realize the leader cares for them by his accepting and welcoming the worst parts of them, their anger, without disapproval or retaliation. Then, by identification with the leader, they can use their aggression constructively and creatively to accept and love themselves, their fellow members and work out their problems together.

How this accepting of group anger by the leader works in large groups we do not know. Most leaders of large groups do not willingly accept the anger of their members. Many political leaders; often have a large measure of narcissism and thus find it hard to accept the disappointment, frustration or anger of the people. They often deny matters, defend themselves, blame favorite scapegoats or Satans or retaliate.

Satiety may be of use in modulating aggression in moderate and large groups. An apparently non-analytic approach with a larger group may work to a degree. I have called this 'The Barton Cure'. After the Second World War, Walter Barton became the superintendent of Boston State Hospital, which then housed three thousand mostly chronically sick, neglected mental patients. He had six or eight psychiatrists under him to care for that large mass of people. One building housed one hundred and seventy-six disturbed women, who at times bit off noses, ears or fingers. What to do with this much aggression? He pursued what looked like a superficial approach, not analytic in outline but surely analytic in underlying understanding, meaning and effect. He had all the women marched through the cafeteria at eight o'clock in the evening and each one was given two slices of bread covered with jam and a glass of milk at bedtime. The average gain in weight was ten to fifteen pounds. They still remained aggressive but the extremes of aggression abated. There was, of course, no understanding of its meaning or its sources by the women but the immediate problem was dealt with. Was the evening bread and jam and milk, like what their mothers had given them or should have given them as children at bedtime? We don't know. The Romans understood this in managing the peoples of their empire by offering them 'bread and circuses' – entertainment in the circus and bread, while providing for displacing the aggression onto the fighting slaves, Christians or Jews. Many peace efforts nowadays count on fattening people, so the people might work more, become more prosperous and fight less. Those espousing the current constant push to have people reduce weight should keep this counter-example in mind, since losing weight releases aggression,

which then must find other outlets. This feeding approach is dramatic, limited in scope and potential and yet may pose certain physical and emotional dangers.

Then we come to the *social sources for aggression*. Each locality or tribe or folk has its own well of aggression and its views on aggression. During the Second World War, it was quite acceptable in the United States to kill Germans or Japanese. Yet even in those days one third of American soldiers on the battle-field fired their guns away from the enemy lines. Surely some of the earlier national self-righteous anger must have satisfied individual sources of aggression in the mass of soldiers. Folk views on the rightness for expression may also change in time, because of our inner fear of it. Since then, we have had many second thoughts about having done that in the past. Even murderers of children are not put to death nowadays but are given fifteen years in prison with the possibility of parole in a few years. We forgive the murderer with rationalizations about being civilized, perhaps out of fear of expressing our own aggression and then facing such punishment in the future. We must also ask where the rage of the aggrieved goes?

Wars can be used to funnel the combined *aggression of the populace onto an outsider*, saving the inner populace from it. This was one of the motivations for the Crusades. This works on a large scale much as the use of the outside scapegoat by the family works on a small scale. This works only as long as the emergency goes on. When it stops, there is at first a period of relaxation, especially if there is prosperity, as there was in the United States after the Second World War. Then new outlets must be found for the combined aggression of the people. Within time, the anger breaks out amongst the populace of the country in political disagreements, a demand for more equality for minorities, battles over abortion, demands for equal rights for women, insistence that women must obey their husbands, demands the government not tell people what to do and other such disagreements. Each of these may be quite justified in itself but the vigor of expression begins to satisfy other, inner sources of aggression present in the population at all times. Once aggression is given social permission, it increases and goes in many directions, often not originally intended, because of its multiple inner sources and the sheer pleasure in finding a rationalizable, justified outlet. There are always enough differences amongst a large population to allow for such inner bickering and even bloodletting. This may be one reason why the Cold War was so economical for the world at large in terms of open warfare. The terror of a possible outbreak of a cataclysmic atomic war directly between the United States and the Soviet Union kept both armed to the teeth, made other nations uneasy about much open warfare and the world generally remained at peace – more so than since the fall of the Soviet Empire. The threat of total annihilation, then, for the world at large was one successful deterrent to war, as long as it lasted. Perhaps the threat of melting of the polar ice-cap or the disappearance of the ozone layer might also force peoples to unite in peace for a while in order to deal with a common massive danger. This might work only as people saw direct connections between outer changes in the world and the physical effects.

How then to deal with threats to peace? In a correspondence with Einstein sponsored by the League of Nations, Freud (1933) was skeptical about containing war but suggested that two techniques were of use – the use of intellect to make men independent of their leaders, while relying on their own thinking and identifications with others. Ironically this was published just a year before the great political upheaval in Germany brought about an enormous war in the whole of Europe with many deaths and the extermination of Freud's own people. He himself barely escaped death by the efforts of an ex-patient who worked matters out with the Gestapo for Freud to emigrate to safety in England. The weakness of the use of intellect was manifest, since intellect may be used for both war and for peace. Identification with others may not last during a storm of feelings.

How else to deal with the problem? Even then Einstein suggested the need for world government to which all people would subscribe. Again intellect and logic are weak reeds. It is not possible to establish a world government, since people care only for those who look like themselves, think like themselves, those unlike themselves whom they see in person, interact with frequently and get to know personally and thus to like. In a family, in a small group, given good leaders,

members may get to feel the leaders care for them. In larger groups it is harder to develop this feeling. Hence few people feel their leaders care for them except during national emergencies, when they fear some common outside threat. A world government would find it difficult to provide that feeling. This is further complicated by the problem that those who end up running governments tend to have particular kinds of character structures, often with a necessary streak of narcissism in order to be motivated to do that kind of work. Sometimes their character structure verges on paranoid attitudes, when they wrap themselves in the virtue of their political cause. They have to be intelligent, show political and administrative abilities and boundless energy. It was not for nothing that Weber (1918) said that «a state is a human community that (successfully) claims *the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory». Because of the multiplicity of forces, groupings, needs and demands of the populace at large, only clever manipulators get to the position of running governments. Since they do not know their constituents personally, they feel less personal love for their members. Thus paranoid types like Stalin or sociopathic types like Hitler or Saddam Hussein may get control over masses of people with cruelty and viciousness. People are kept in line with murder and terror. This hardly breeds love. Often, for reasons of character structure or incidental heart-breaks they may encounter in their personal lives, some leaders may develop more of a sociopathic streak, which leads to their mobilizing their own forces but not the populace as a whole.

Is there only pessimism for us in facing this matter? It is rather a matter of realism in the face of the gigantic ever-flowering problems in this arena. World commerce may help, since it brings people together from different parts of the world and they may learn from one another and get to like one another but only on an individual basis. Yet commerce also arouses competition, envy and anger and provides excellent outlets for aggression as well.

How does love help us with problems of war and peace? Love is the most essential bond holding people together. It has to be legitimate love and not merely a reaction-formation or intellectualization. It works only when people know one another. Even so, each one of us has only a limited capacity for love, a limited number of friends, confidants, and acquaintances. Each individual has only a limited amount of love as well as of hate. It seems as if we have an unlimited amount of hate because hate is so often suppressed for the multitude of reasons given above. It gets saved up and seeks outlets wherever it can find them. There is more of it to be expressed and used. Love can be used in such ventures as the peace corps or missionary work. Even then one has to be on guard, lest the hidden aggression be expressed in the very loving and peaceful work. Even when we learn the horrors and personal dangers of war, the lesson lasts only as long as we do and when we die, it must be learned all over again by others.

#### SUMMARY

For these reasons, the problems of war and peace cannot be solved easily and will remain with us. Aggression in its various intensities is inborn. It is a necessary part of life, of pertinacity, of ambition, of serious advancement, of love-making, of creativity as well as of destructiveness and war. How it is allowed to develop, to be expressed, to be modulated, managed and satisfied depends upon the particular tendencies of the individual, the family he happens to grow up in, the general culture in which he grows up and chance occurrences in the course of development. Some methods hold it in check, such as feeling loved and accepted, satiety but also the threat of retaliation or of total annihilation. Other methods, such as threats or directing the hatred to the outside, work as long as these whips or outlets are maintained but create problems for those outside the group and ultimately for the leadership exercising such techniques. Love works only on a personal level and on a small group level, where the contact with the leaders is personal and direct but not on a large group level. It can work when there is the threat of extreme, external danger. Love has to be

fostered at the individual level in caring for growing children and then fostered in small groups and by mixing with strange populations because one wants to, not as a result of force or shame. For these reasons the problems of love and aggression, of war and peace, are so problematic and remain constantly with us.

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# Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* – Reconsidered

RAINER J. KAUS (\*)

«The greatness of these thinkers of the nineteenth century consists in the fact that they noticed that new problems were intruding in the world and saw how these problems were threatening more and more to develop into aporias because our tradition did not offer any points of approach to deal with them.»

Hannah Arendt<sup>1</sup>

The literary scholar, Terence Reed, has shown how the character formation by the Wilhelmine period is mirrored in Thomas Mann's work.<sup>2</sup> The ethics of achievement as the attempt to tame what is Dionysian, southern European, wild, sensuous. The recollections and self-reflections of Thomas Mann in exile about the abysmal nature of the German soul are also worth reading in this connection. In his last great novel *Doktor Faustus*, this development is shown once more and brought closer to us in its being doomed to failure.

*Death in Venice*, too, deals with the emergence of inward experience which has the effect of destiny for the artist, Aschenbach. The artist, who finds himself in a creative crisis and is living in an elegant area of Munich (Prinz-Regentenstraße), goes to the English Garden for his afternoon walk. At the end of his walk he encounters various premonitions and symbols of death at the Northern Cemetery such as the crosses and memento panels, the Byzantine construction of the chapel for the last rites, and the strange, red-haired wanderer – with a bast hat and exposed teeth, a messenger of death par excellence – whose strangeness simultaneously stimulates a kind of urge to travel in Aschenbach.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt *Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände im politischen Denken der Gegenwart* Frankfurt/ M. 1957, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Terence J. Reed *The Uses of Tradition* Oxford 1996<sup>2</sup>

The direction of south is indicated non-specifically. Venice as a destination for the journey will only become apparent later on. Some time will pass until the actual departure. Aschenbach tidies up his desk, gives his servant the order to prepare his house in the mountains for a vacation and then travels to a small island off the Yugoslavian coast. He only gets to Venice via several detours. The journey by sea to Venice is already marked by nausea and horror about the «false youth», an old man who tries to present himself as a youth in a light yellow summer suit and scarlet tie – he too with a straw hat and yellow false teeth, a traditional symbol of death.

«One of the party, who wore a light yellow summer suit of extravagant cut, a scarlet neck tie and a rakishly tilted Panama hat, was the most conspicuous of them all in his shrill hilarity. But as soon as Aschenbach took a slightly closer look at him, he realized with a kind of horror that the man's youth was false. He was old, there was no mistaking it. There were wrinkles round his eyes and mouth. His cheeks' faint carmine was rouge, the brown hair under his straw hat with its coloured ribbon was a wig, his neck was flaccid and scrawny, his small stuck-on moustache and the little imperial on his chin were dyed, his yellowish full complement of teeth, displayed when he laughed, were a cheap artificial set, and his hands, with signet rings on both index fingers, were those of an old man.»<sup>3</sup>

Aschenbach feels nausea and horror, quite in contrast to his own feelings later in a similar situation in which he allows himself to be made up in a youthful manner and have his hair dyed by a dubious hairdresser for the handsome Tadzio.

On this the journey by sea, Aschenbach sensibility enters a kind of surreal phase.

«Aschenbach put his hand over his forehead and closed his eyes, which were hot from too little sleep. He had a feeling that something not quite usual was beginning to happen, that the world was undergoing a dreamlike alienation, becoming increasingly deranged and bizarre, and that perhaps this process might be arrested if he were to cover his face for a little and then take a fresh look at things.»<sup>4</sup>

According to André Breton, this dream-world has the same, if not a more real reality than the photographed world of sights – that over-real reality which in the formulations of modern surrealism seems to be associated with anxiety, nausea, nightmare, intoxication, shock and perversion. Thomas Mann is thus insofar a very modern writer.

From the first moment, Aschenbach is fascinated by Tadzio who, with his beauty and gracefulness, embodies the ideal form of an ancient sculpture. This fascination is manifested, however, only in glances. A real encounter never comes about and thus, his homoerotic and narcissistic fantasies remain the sole source for Aschenbach's further conduct. His ethics of achievement gradually dwindles.

#### TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Something new can only be risked from the security of tradition. In order to literarily shape aporias which can no longer be resolved by the tradition by means of new categorized forms, Thomas Mann employs in his early work a mixture of myth and shaping of his own real experiences. In this regard, too, he is a representative of modernity in his own way. From the point of view of literature he is concerned with taking leave from psychological naturalism, and historically he is concerned with overcoming Wilhelminianism.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Mann *Death in Venice and Other Stories* translated and with an Introduction by David Luke, London 1998, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Mann *ibid.*

The early narratives, which include *Death in Venice* from 1913, show a characteristic trait of Thomas Mann:

«Love – what is it? A sincere question, of course, but it is perhaps not completely superfluous to try to find an answer, yet another answer. So, love – that is what we call this extreme feeling which leads from liking to passion and from passion to dependency; it transports the individual into an intoxicated state which can temporarily impair the soundness of mind. It is a happiness which causes suffering, and a suffering which makes a person happy.

Such a generalization seems to be questionable, but it seems suitable for making visible a red thread running through Thomas Mann's oeuvre, for this feature disconcertingly drew attention to itself from the very beginning. How suddenly a still undefined interest in a person is aroused and is almost simultaneously transformed into a liking, and then into a passion, and how this passion results in a dangerous dependency, indeed in disaster.»<sup>5</sup>

Marcel Reich-Ranicki calls it, among other things, a representative trait of Thomas Mann's works that liking and passion end in disaster. He says that this is not the least significant reason for his important role in the twentieth century.

The protagonist, Aschenbach, aristocratic, honoured and distinguished as a professor, runs through almost all stages of love in the narrative. At first in the intellectual, spiritual area which Thomas Mann calls the Apollonian dimension and which in the novella is especially apparent in the search for sensuous beauty.

The return to concepts such as Dionysian and Apollonian from ancient times refers associatively to the ancient tragedies in which a conflict is presented which has to be solved. However, the tragedy does not admit any ending pointing towards the future. The gods punish humans for their terrible deeds.

But the ancient tragedies do not include any firm ideas about morality, and insofar they are more human than the Christian moral teachings with their unquestioned assumptions about good and evil. *Death in Venice*, too, is divided into five parts, analogous to a drama.

Aschenbach, the protagonist, finds himself in the city of his longings, even though he already had to leave this city twice earlier on because of health complaints. Venice is portrayed in the ambivalence of total opulence and Mediterranean sensuousness, the fulfilment of yearnings, and also as a health hazard, as a meeting point for people from all over the world, with its life on the beach and the famous Hotel Des Bains, but also filled with the billows of the smell of carbolic acid after the outbreak of cholera.

«This was Venice, the flattering and suspect beauty – this city, half fairy-tale and half tourist trap, in whose insalubrious air the arts once rankly and voluptuously blossomed, where composers have been inspired to lulling tones of somniferous eroticism.»<sup>6</sup>

Aschenbach reaches the city, rowed over by a strange gondolier who does not bode anything good, but who in the further course of the narrative is quickly forgotten again. Among the hotel guests Aschenbach discovers a Polish youth called Tadzio whose extraordinary beauty fascinates him. At first it is fascination, and a yearning infatuation quickly arises which ends in intoxicated states, day-dreaming and dissolute dreams. The older man of around fifty with the slightly greying temples can scarcely still recognize himself when he sees his principles of ethics of achievement endangered by the sudden confrontation with his sensuous wishes which have been suppressed for a long time.

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<sup>5</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki *Sieben Wegbereiter* Stuttgart, Munich 2002, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 248.

His daily actions are determined by wishes. His longing drives him to look for Tadzio everywhere, on the beach, in the laneways, in the hotel – in fantasies. It is striking that all his desire is simultaneously paired with a great fear of coming into conversation with Tadzio.

«Nothing is a stranger, more delicate, than the relationship between people who know each other only by sight – who encounter and observe each other daily, even hourly, and yet are compelled by the constraint of convention or by their own temperament to keep up the pretence of being indifferent strangers, neither greeting nor speaking to each other. Between them is uneasiness and over-stimulated curiosity, the nervous excitement of an unsatisfied, unnaturally suppressed need to know and to communicate; and above all, too, a kind of strained respect. For man loves and respects his fellow man for as long as he is not yet in a position to evaluate him, and desire is born of defective knowledge.»<sup>7</sup>

It is a tragic trait of Aschenbach that he is not able to verbalize his wishes and fantasies, and so it is not surprising that his dissolute dreams become more and more unbridled. The attempt to leave Venice fails superficially because his luggage is mistakenly dispatched to Como and Aschenbach reacts in a purely formal way to this by waiting for his suitcase again in the Hotel Des Bains. Back in his hotel room he first becomes conscious of the fact that his departure had become so difficult because of the beautiful Polish youth.

The climax of his bodily and mental state, which ends in disaster, has a parallel in the progressive development of the epidemic which is rampant in the city. The infatuated Aschenbach becomes more and more exhausted and so becomes increasingly prone to cholera.

Thomas Mann always did very precise research for his writing in advance and often allowed himself to be stimulated in his work by real events. Included among the materials of the Thomas Mann archive at the ETH in Zurich there are pages containing a precise analysis of «colera asiatica», a photograph of Gustav Mahler, who had just died and who was to become a model for Aschenbach, and a small newspaper clipping about a cholera epidemic in Palermo. In no way does Thomas Mann regard illness in an entirely negative way but, like Alexander Mitscherlich, also as an opportunity, an opportunity to enhance sensibility.

According to Hans Rudolf Vaegt, who has done a precise study of *Death in Venice*, sources of influence on the genesis of the text between 1911 and 1913 included the real outbreak of cholera in Danzig during a holiday journey by Thomas Mann to Zoppot, which forced him to leave, then Mann's short stay in Venice with his wife Katja and his brother Heinrich in 1911, and Mann's own homoerotic and narcissistically coloured recollections of youth, which also had their effects on the narrative *How Jappe and Do Escobar Thumped Each Other*, also written in 1911. Vaegt convincingly shows that many of the compositional elements are based also on personal experiences of the author.<sup>8</sup> However, this must not lead us to interpret the work mainly from this perspective.

In a very empathetic and moving way, the first person narrator of the novella describes the increasing threat to the city and its inhabitants. All of them try to assuage Aschenbach with his conjectures and fears about catching the disease. He finally learns the truth about the lethal epidemic from a clerk in a travel agency, a British man whose country stands for reason and objective reality. He advises Aschenbach very urgently to leave the city at once.

«The clerk was a tweed-clad Englishman, still young, with his hair parted in the middle, his eyes close-set, and having that sober, honest demeanour which makes so unusual and striking an impression amid the glib knaveries of the south.»<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 243.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Rudolf Vaegt 'Der Tod in Venedig' in *Thomas Mann Handbuch* Helmut Koopmann (ed.) Stuttgart 2001<sup>3</sup>, pp. 580-591.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 256.

But despite this annihilating piece of news, Aschenbach stays on in Venice and even keeps the truth from the Polish guests in order to delay their departure.

When Aschenbach, with dyed hair and artificially made young once again by the hairdresser, sits once again at the seaside with a book in his hand, he becomes witness of a playful fight between Tadzio and his friend, Jaschu. Viewed in terms of depth psychology, it comes here to a double displacement, on the one hand, to a displacement of the issue, namely, the homoerotic wishes, to the fight between the two men and, on the other, to a displacement of the person, that is, to Aschenbach's identification with Tadzio's friend who gets the best of Tadzio and overpowers him.

Shortly before Aschenbach dies, the world of desire and reality mix once again in his imagination.

«But to him it was as if the pale and lovely soul-summoner out there were smiling to him, beckoning to him; as if he loosed his hand from his hip and pointed outwards, hovering ahead and onwards, into an immensity rich with unutterable expectation. And as so often, he set out to follow him.»<sup>10</sup>

If Aschenbach had followed his inner voice at the last moment and had warned the Polish family,

«Madam, allow me as a complete stranger to do you a service, to warn you of something which is being concealed from you for reasons of self-interest. Leave here at once with Tadzio and your daughters! Cholera has broken out in Venice»<sup>11</sup>,

then he would have finally confronted reality and would have still been able to escape disaster. But instead, his intoxicating passion is discharged in an erotic dream which provides evidence of unconscious wish fulfilment.

«But the noise, the howling grew louder, with the echoing cliffs reiterating it: it increased beyond measure, swelled up to an enrapturing madness. Odours besieged his mind, the pungent reek of the goats, the scent of panting bodies and an exhalation as of staling waters, with another smell, too, that was familiar: that of wounds and wandering disease.»<sup>12</sup>

Here the multiple mythological allusions in the text will not be discussed in any more detail. Only the pair of concepts, Apollonian and Dionysian, will be addressed, following Nietzsche, who was a strong influence on Thomas Mann. Thus, Aschenbach as artist has not mastered the ambivalent role of beauty, the Apollonian dimension as attraction, on the one hand, but also as a temptation into the Dionysian realm, on the other.

«His eyes embraced that noble figure at the blue water's edge, and in the rising ecstasy he felt he was gazing on beauty itself, on form as a thought of God, on the one and pure perfection that dwells in the spirit and of which a human similitude and likeness had here been lightly and graciously set up for him to worship. Such was his emotional intoxication; and the ageing artist welcomed it unhesitatingly, even greedily. His mind was in labour, its store of culture was in ferment, his memory threw up thoughts from ancient tradition which he had been taught as a boy, but which had never yet come alive in his own fire.»<sup>13</sup>

Aschenbach does not succeed in managing to tread the perilous path between order and conscientiousness on the one hand, and passion on the other, which could have inspired his artistic

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 267.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 258.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 260.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 237.

endeavours with life without him falling victim of Dionysian madness. The artist between the extremes of discipline and Gypsy life can only unfold his creativity in the experimental play and free juggling with all possibilities.

«And what a game it is too, how much defiance there is in it and how much satisfaction, this self-formation of a talent!»<sup>14</sup>

If the already proven artist, Aschenbach, had not further followed only his fantasies and roaming gazes, he would have addressed Tadzio concretely and have employed his reason in the sense of sublimation and a regulation of affect. He would have admitted what was repressed and would have been in a better position to withstand the tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian dimensions.

#### THOMAS MANN AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Frederic Wyatt defends the thesis in the psychological investigation of literature that the analytical procedure can be applied mainly in those cases where the coherence of a story reveals ruptures. He surmises that here unconscious forces are at work.

«Multivalence of meaning refers to ambivalence, contradiction and conflict. Another, deeper level of the dialectic of the soul seems to have insinuated itself. Whether it be unconscious in the technical sense or not, sometimes we can find out its direction from the context and the analogy with what we know from the prototypical course of fantasies.»<sup>15</sup>

This approach is very plausible and leaves a lot of room for play for interpretation by literary scholars and also by psychologists of literature. It basically represents the position that the fantasies preceding a story are rooted in the author's personal history.

«The original fantasy is increasingly transformed into a subject or a story and is shaped and formed accordingly. In turn, during these innumerable acts of conscious manipulation, the stimulation from other sources, particularly printed sources, is consciously employed.»<sup>16</sup>

Wyatt tries to do this in his article *On the Choice of Subject in Literature: Dangers and Gains* and applies it also to the novella *Death in Venice*. He uncovers various ambivalences. For him, Aschenbach reveals a great distance from his passion and his «tenacious sense of reality»<sup>17</sup> which places itself «protectingly and divertingly between impulse and execution». Wyatt's conclusion is then surprising, that Aschenbach's intentions are «essentially narcissistic»<sup>18</sup> so that Aschenbach's infatuation with Tadzio, he claims, represents his own search «for a part of himself which has been split off»<sup>19</sup>, the unconscious narcissistic part of his ideal self.

No matter how one may view this, most interpretations from depth psychology and the psychology of literature such as those of Heinz Kohut, Frederic Wyatt, Peter von Matt and Manfred Dierks can all be tied down to an Oedipal or narcissistic position, even though von Matt mainly makes the Oedipal conflict the focus of his investigation, Wyatt the discontinuity of the text, and

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Mann *op. cit.* p. 208.

<sup>15</sup> Frederic Wyatt *Zur Themenwahl in der Literatur. Gefahren und Gewinne* 1984, cited according to S. Widmaier-Haag *Es war das Lächeln des Narziß. Die Theorien der Psychoanalyse im Spiegel der literaturpsychologischen Interpretationen des «Tod in Venedig»* Würzburg 1999 p. 146f.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p. 133.

Dierks puts Mann's knowledge of Freud's writings during the writing of the novella *Death in Venice* at the centre of his analysis. In his knowledgeable and enlightening article from 1990 *Writing Block and Reading Freud. A New View of the Novella 'Death in Venice'*<sup>20</sup>, Manfred Dierks defends the thesis that Thomas Mann's receptive stance towards Sigmund Freud's writings can be well demonstrated on the basis of the handwritten markings in the copies of the Collected Works kept in the archive.

The question remains, however, what Thomas Mann had actually read of Freud up until the time of writing the novella. Today this has still not been precisely shown by any author. Despite that, Thomas Mann's statement in a 1925 interview with the periodical *La Stampa* makes an impression:

«As far as I am concerned, at least one of my works, the novella *Death in Venice* arose under the impression of Freud. Without Freud I would never have thought of shaping this erotic motif, or I would certainly have shaped it differently.»<sup>21</sup>

Whether his writing block at this time (which he also expresses in a letter to his brother Heinrich), as Dierks conjectures, was really triggered by the reading of Freud's texts, however, remains to be seen and leaves a lot of clinical questions open.

The fact that Mann did not become a slavish disciple of psychoanalysis can be seen from various passages in his oeuvre, e.g. in *The Magic Mountain*. But in Freud's sense, he has captured something of the function of «day-dreaming and fantasy».

«In the creative writer, Freud says, 'A strong experience in the present awakens... a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory.»<sup>22</sup>

In his 1978 article *On the Psychology of the German National Writer. The Significance of Execution and Transfiguration of Goethe by Thomas Mann*<sup>23</sup>, Peter von Matt convincingly succeeds in drawing on Thomas Mann's Oedipal conflict – reactivated by his preoccupation with Goethe – as an hypothesis for the making of the novella. He describes this as the «psychodramatic substrate» in *Death in Venice*.<sup>24</sup> According to von Matt, here, Thomas Mann was able to let loose his fantasies of annihilation of his father. Instead of competing with Goethe's own experiences in Marienbad, where Goethe falls in love once again in old age, he allows Aschenbach, as a substitute, to become a famous writer and evades by «degrading a highly intellectual spirit through passion»<sup>25</sup> in the form of Aschenbach. This is reinforced all the more by «the homosexual, denied proclivity towards pederasty»<sup>26</sup>. Even though for many authors pederasty is the focus of attention, Frederic Wyatt's thesis of a split-off part of the self cannot be taken seriously enough. It is thus helpful to go through the text once more systematically with an eye to discontinuities.

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<sup>20</sup> Manfred Dierks *Schreibhemmung und Freud-Lektüre, Neuer Blick auf die Novelle «Der Tod in Venedig»* 1990, cited according to S. Widmaier-Haag p. 155.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Mann in *La Stampa* May 1925.

<sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud, cited according to Ethel Spector Person in Person et al. *On Freud's «Creative Writers and Day-dreaming»* New Haven and London 1995, p. XI Introduction.

<sup>23</sup> Peter v. Matt *Zur Psychologie des deutschen Nationalschriftstellers* 1978, cited according to S. Widmaier-Haag p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* *Literaturwissenschaft und Psychoanalyse* Freiburg 1972, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Mann 'On Myself' 1940 in Peter v. Matt 1978 *Zur Psychologie des deutschen Nationalschriftstellers* cited according to S. Widmaier-Haag, p. 133.

<sup>26</sup> Peter v. Matt 1978, in *ibid.* *Schicksal und Phantasie* Munich p. 615 cited according to S. Widmaier-Haag *Es war das Lächeln des Narziß* p. 135.

In general, however, the concepts of depth psychology such as «unconscious wish fulfilment», «displacement» and «sublimation» should not blind us to the important fact that depth-psychological interpretation always has to be verified against the background of a way of viewing which is imminent to the work and based on the philology of literature which, among other things, investigates narrative problems such as narrative time, narrative structure and narrative perspective. This will have to be shown in more detail in a more extensive work by this author to be published early in 2003. There, we will get involved with paradox, humour, irony and music in Thomas Mann and his relationship to Goethe, Schiller and Nietzsche.

«However that may be, for the lonely, often larmoyant heroes of the young Thomas Mann, who long for love, love is never fulfilled. For them it can be said that they are afraid of women. They dream of release but they are never granted it.»<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki *op. cit.* p. 114.

# Transforming words: Poetry and psychologies of change

*JAN L. HITCHCOCK (\*)*

I am approaching the interrelationships of poetry and psychology very broadly, being initially drawn to this area by the sheer variety of psychological perspectives – in addition to psychoanalytic – that are relevant to poetry. My first organization of these varieties of interrelationships has been around the theme of transformation, how words and people transform and are transformed. I do have a more specific hypothesis for today: A transformation in the understanding and disciplinary orientations of psychology may be possible when we shift the usual direction of our focus, utilizing poetry as a vehicle for re-consideration of psychology instead of the more customary application of psychology to «analyze» poetry.

Much written in the separate disciplinary domains of poetry and psychology – and in the scholarship on the interrelationships between them – can be subsumed within the theme of transformation. Transformative processes are integral to psychological perspectives on poetry – how poetry is written, what it has the potential to evoke, how the reader responds and re-creates in turn. Transformations of experience and perspective, along with transformative use of language, underlie the making and reading of poetry and are sought in the practice of poetry therapy. In addition to the long tradition of psychological study of poetry, poetry in turn can be a powerful and evocative vehicle for understanding and communicating transformative processes as studied by various psychological subdisciplines (including, of course, psychoanalysis, but also humanistic, transpersonal, Jungian, social, developmental, and cognitive psychologies).

The variety of perspectives with which «transformation» appears in writings on poetry and psychology suggests a rich, multifaceted territory, an area where questions of depth and substance can be pursued. It is thus this theme that I used in my recent design of an interdisciplinary course on poetry and psychology. It is also within this broad theme, and through the experience of the first offering of that class, that I have arrived at my more specific focus for this presentation. The emerging quandary from the experience of teaching this course, and the more specific question I would like to put forward today, concerns the paradox of psychology's customary disciplinary

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«primacy» over poetry and yet what appeared, as the course unfolded, the simultaneously greater salience and impact of poetry (and literary writings about poetry) in addressing fundamental issues about the nature of the human psyche.

While I will not be describing the course in extended detail today, this first offering involved a group of approximately 20 students majoring in social and behavioral sciences and the arts and humanities. From the first class meeting to the last, the energy and engagement levels confirmed that we were indeed in a territory of rich possibilities, of multiple readings and meanings, of inquiries that felt freshly discovered by the students. An example of a student's impression of the course, drawn from the anonymous mid-term course feedback sheets: «I love that in addition to the more technical aspects of both poetry & psychology, we are also really trying to get to the source of the somewhat 'unexplainable' in both of them.... You'd probably be surprised how much we (well, some of us) talk about ideas from the course outside of class.» While, by the end of the course, a couple of students commented (accurately) on the challenge of «integrat[ing] this [variety of material] into one clear picture of what the class was about», the majority of the students maintained a high level of engagement, summarizing the class as «one that pursues and demands an opening up of the individual's mind...» and «a class for life».

I used Edward Hirsch's book, *How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry*, K.C. Williams' *Poetry and Consciousness*, and Robert Pack and Jay Parini's *Introspections: American Poets on One of Their Poems* as the main texts written from «poetic» perspectives. My main psychological text was Stephen Levine's *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*, a book oriented to the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of expressive therapies. A fuller range of readings on psychological perspectives on transformation needed to be pieced together through a variety of supplementary chapters and articles.

I assembled a set of psychological readings bearing on change processes that I thought stood as good complements to the readings of and about poetry:

- developmental psychology (Harrower 1995 [1972]; Nowak-Fabrykowski, 1992)
- psychoanalytic (Freud, 1958 [1908]; Jones, 1997)
- analytic (Jung, 1966 [1923])
- clinical counseling/«poetry therapy» (Mazza, 1999)
- cognitive (in Scarry, 1999)
- social psychology (Samuels, 1990)
- the psychology of «Quantum Change» (Miller & C'de Baca, 1994)

Subthemes in transformation organizing the course included the declaration and development of the «self», children and poetry, conscious and unconscious processes of change, the creation of images, therapeutic functions, and «poetry, power and political witnessing».

For a first offering of a one-semester undergraduate course, I think I had assembled a reasonable assortment of relevant readings. Still – and this leads to the central quandary I set before you – the experience of this course suggested the formal psychological inquiry into «transformation» to be much less compelling than that found in poetry and associated literary writings. Students from both the humanities and the social science degree programs voiced less excitement about the explicitly psychological readings in the course. I, too, felt that.

Perhaps it was a matter of the readings I chose. Or perhaps, as the psychologist-instructor, I was more enthralled with what for me were the relatively newer expanses of Poetry, thereby investing in, and asking less of, the psychological perspectives. I don't think these provide full explanation, however. Our readings of and about poetry simply took us «further» into different dimensions of transformation than did the accompanying psychological texts, and seemed to open up more provocative questions about the human experience, the nature of consciousness, the power of emotions. For instance, Elizabeth Bishop's poem «One Art» and Edward Hirsch's accompanying commentary on the poem's portrayal of response to loss was far more engaging for the class than

most of the subsequent readings drawn from psychology. In light of the greater impact and engagement elicited by the readings of and about poetry, I became increasingly disquieted by the irony of poetry most often functioning as the «secondary» field when brought together with the psychology.

Typically, poetry in the interdisciplinary readings I encountered is used to *illustrate* psychological processes, perhaps in evocative ways, but as illustration nonetheless. So often, poetry and poets are the «object» of study, functioning as complementary, inherently secondary approach to those studied by the method and «discipline» of psychology.

An undervalued, and I wonder if also under-evaluated, link, then, in considerations of the transformative processes and interrelationships of poetry and psychology is how poetry might transform our understanding and appreciation of psychology – both the «matter» and method of the discipline. I am particularly concerned here with the subdisciplines identified with «scientific psychology». Can – should – there be a transformation of understanding of disciplines and usual relationship between psychology and poetry? In the hierarchy of disciplines, the Social Sciences, ever covetous of the Natural Sciences' «hard» designation, are quick to impose the scientific «discipline» to processes of observation and interpretation, including of poetry. Could greater appreciation of *poetry*, a poetic sensibility and method as it were, transform understanding of the matters and meanings that psychology has approached, the discipline and its very trajectories? These are very basic questions, perhaps naive, to put before an audience so keenly attuned to the complexities of models of perception, the interplay between subject and object, yet they may be disciplinary questions worth periodically revisiting.<sup>1</sup>

Pierre Bayard proposes a comparable reversal of the usual direction of disciplinary focus in his 1999 *American Imago* article «Is It Possible to Apply Literature to Psychoanalysis?». He observed: «As it is often practiced, *the psychoanalytical approach to texts places knowledge on the side of psychoanalysis and not on that of literature*. In doing so, it risks diminishing literature and underestimating literature's own ability to produce knowledge» (pp. 207-208, orig. emphases). Bayard's term for the complementary approach to psychoanalytic literary analysis is «Literature applied to psychoanalysis». He suggested that «... the question asked of literature would be in the order of: What can such a work or such an author – by their richness, complexity, resistance to meaning, the variation of this meaning in time – teach us today about the psychic life?» (p. 219). This approach «... is not interested in the meaning of a text, but its capacities to incite meaning, its *productivity*» (p. 213, orig. emphases). The value of the resulting plurality of interpretation for Bayard, ultimately «... is to show how the text resists interpretation, how it incites or calls for several interpretations, without one alone truly suiting it. Looking for plurality is above all searching, not for accuracy or adequacy, but for *theoretical failing*» (p. 214, orig. emphases). This final twist, the search for «theoretical failing», runs counter to the socialization in the scientifically-oriented psychologies, for which research is specifically oriented towards identifying the theory best supported by the available data.

In another consideration of the relationships between psychology and literature, this one specific to poetry, poet Elizabeth Sewall was asked to contribute to the American Psychological Association's 100-year retrospective volume on *A Century of Psychology as Science* (1992). After acknowledging the prevailing scientific method adopted by much of the field of psychology, she suggested what might be key qualities of the «method» of poetry. Her examples of a «few indications» of the «poetic or imaginative method» include:

- ever-alert power of detailed and loving observation
- readiness to work by synthesis... learning to operate in terms of multiplicity

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Burton Melnick's clarification for me of the long-established awareness within psychoanalytic literary criticism of psychology's tendency towards «imperialism», an awareness articulated, for instance, in Felman (1977/80). Such awareness has not comparably permeated other subdisciplines of psychology.

- complexity irreducible to simple discrete elements, fusion, where everything is always more than one thing...
- to work indirectly, apprehending one thing (or oneself) by looking at another or through another, as is done in all dreams and fictions
- to attune oneself to a universe of overlapping networks of correspondence... (p. 926)

I take the essence of Sewall's «poetic method» as comparable to Bayard's appreciation of the capacities of literatures to «incite» meaning and the source of its «productivity».

Stephen Levine, psychologist and expressive arts therapist, characterizes a key limitation of modern psychology in these terms: «... psychology, in its attempt to develop a scientific understanding of mental life, uses concepts that are clear and distinct, as Descartes said all understanding must be in order to claim the status of scientific knowing. But the object of psychological research, the human psyche or soul, is not clear and articulated in its inner constitution... [it is] characterized by depth rather than clarity» (p. 95). Drawing on the writings of James Hillman, Levine advocates the return of imagination to psychology and psychotherapy. Perhaps of all literary genres, poetry is best poised to allow/incite/demand an appreciation of multiple meanings and of the imagination.

Poet and psychoanalyst Alice Jones, in a wonderful 1997 article in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, considers how poetry and psychoanalytic approach «the unsayable» – psychoanalysis striving to bring that material to fuller consciousness, to give it direct voice; poetry, in other ways, «coming *as close as possible to the edge* of what cannot be said» (p. 694, emphasis added). Jones comments, as have others, on how «poetry calls forth emotion in a way that prose does not» (p. 693). Here she includes consideration of the power, including in psychoanalysis, of not just metaphor and image, but of spaces, silences. This is not the customary territory of academic and scientific psychology.

A poetic stance towards psychology clearly must resist reductionism, each new realm of information and inquiry, including from the scientific disciplines, must be taken as another suggestive, but inherently incomplete, overlay of meaning. Yet, typically we find and feel «answers» differently in psychology – lack of definitive conclusions fueling the call for «further research» on the psychological front. This same condition of «inconclusiveness» could be experienced as the very power and evocative function of poetry.

The application of a «poetic method» to psychology also prompts reappraisal of the nature of «psychological» questions and perspectives. Ultimately, for instance, all consciousness, all feelings, all behavior, have counterpart in subatomic particles – where is it that «psychology» resides? Scientific psychology, Elaine Olayo (1998) has observed in her comparison of psychology and poetry, tends «to focus on the lower levels of functioning» (p. 9). The scientific method, in seeking to find order and causal primacy among different variables will, in «controlling for» those not under study, by necessity narrow down to a few dimensions of experience, excluding direct consideration of the full range of data and also comparably limiting the depth to which it can encounter poetry. It is as if one was picking out the strings of fiber in a piece of fabric in order to understand the design. The poetic method, in contrast, appears more of a process of distillation and intensification. Jay Parini, writing on poems of Alastair Reid and Robert Graves, suggests, «Poems [are] a way of crystalizing experience, of exploring a particular occasion, usually by deepening an image to the point where it became luminous and vivid, a constellation of intellect and emotion in language» (2001, B24).

Parini's description is reminiscent of Ezra Pound's theory of Vorticism. An image, for Pound, «presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time», a vortex «from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing» (Pound, in DiYanni, 1994, p. 348). It is as if an immense reservoir of impressions are roaring into the funnel, the «vortex» of a poem, to then have that energy and intensity re-expand upon the reader's encounter. Psychology often seems poorly positioned to receive and respond to that expansive post-vortex experience.

Would it not seem appropriate for the multi-layered and multi-determined phenomena of «psychology» to be matched by an explicit acknowledgment of its numinous complexity, to have

each psychological subdiscipline's new contribution to scientific knowledge also increase one's appreciation of, as my student had characterized it, the «unexplainable»? In expanding the base of knowing to thus also increase appreciation of the irreducible, the unknowable.

Three lines from Emily Dickinson, a poet expert in the transformative processes, suggest how psychology, visited by the «poetic method», may need reconcile its scientific discipline with its inherently more complex subject matter:

Wonder – is not precisely Knowing  
And not precisely Knowing not –  
A beautiful but bleak condition...  
(from Poem 1331)

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# Psychology of a rooftop killing: The murder of the «father» in Tran Anh Hung's film noir *Cyclo* (1995)

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The gruesome, leisurely drawn-out revenge killing atop the roofs of Saigon at the climax of Tran Anh Hung's film noir *Cyclo* (1995) almost looks like a blood-bespattered homage to Hollywood's master of explicit violence, Brian de Palma. Yet it is the end result of a particular psychological complex of the film's dark anti-hero, the Poet (played by Tony Leung). Classic psychoanalysis can show us root causes for this violent murder that goes beyond the apparent.

On the surface, the Poet kills the Client, a member of Saigon's nouveau riche elite that earns hard currency in ruthless deals with foreign investors, because he has deflowered the Poet's virginal Girlfriend (played by the director's wife, beautifully shot Tran Nu Yen-Khe). The usual agreement under which the Poet prostitutes his Girlfriend includes only acts of bizarre fetishism and voyeurism, which the film has not missed the opportunity to show earlier on. Yet the Client transgresses this boundary and assumes that his money will «pay» for the «damage» he has done, an assumption typical in the ruthless stage of early capitalism rampant in the Saigon of the 1990s, which could be related to the anal phase of personal development.

The Poet, however, has at least completed this phase and does not participate in the exchange of money for previous transgressions. After cutting from his gangster's lair to the rooftop, Hung's film starts the next scene after the first strike has already wounded the Client. Shot from multiple angles and almost in a slow-motion state, the Poet embraces the Client in a murderous dance of death, repeatedly holds him close to his body, and hugs him from behind while again stabbing his belly. The darkly homoerotic tones to this murder, which could almost be classified as a «Lustmord» (killing for sexual gratification), are clearly intended. For this murder is a perversion of homosexuality, if one likes to term it this way, with the object of the act not love or pleasure, but enactment of hate and provision of pain and death.

In the end, with the Client fallen and clutching at the Poet's legs in a cinematic visualization of utter submission, The Poet delivers the coup de grace and kills off his victim. The last gesture of

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stuffing the «blood money» in the Client's mouth and lighting a cigarette for himself offers an interesting analogy to the move from the anal to the oral phase. Unfortunately for the Poet, he has consistently failed to reach the genital stage with his girlfriend. Causes for this are shown in the film and can be analyzed in light of classic psychoanalysis.

Early in *Cyclo*, the Poet is introduced standing in front of a window, through the steel bars of which his older Mistress is visible inside her abode. Earlier, the audience has learned that this middle-aged woman associates with a clan of violent crooks, whose range of criminal behavior ranges from the theft of cyclos (the three-wheeled bicycle taxis which gave the film its title) to murder for hire. She also owns cyclos that she rents to young men, for them to try to make a living, and does not seem to mind if the gangsters steal her cyclos, demanding its replacement fee from the unlucky renters. Hung's allusions to Vittorio de Sica's Neorealist masterpiece *Bicycle Thief* are deliberate here; yet where *Bicycle Thief* is rooted in social theory, Hung's interests lie more in the psychological and visual spectacle.

Shot in blue light, the Poet wears his trademark white jacket and smokes a Western-style, white-filtered cigarette of the same brand his Mistress is shot next as lighting for herself. The bars on the window immediately visually establish the boundaries between the two characters, their isolation from each other, and their desperate quest for «Ersatzbefriedigung» or substitute pleasure, through the oral gratification brought on by the act of smoking.

Their next scene together literally sheds more «blue light» on their relationship, which is borne out of mutual needs and desire, yet remains largely frustrated and is vexed by a high degree of exhaustion, nausea, and ennui. As the camera is with the characters inside their blue-lit mosquito net while they rest on a low mattress, Hung shows the Mistress crushing out a cigarette, adding to the ugly dark and dirty heap of cigarette debris on her side of the mattress. She pours herself and the Poet an alcoholic drink, and during these acts, which show the Poet lying on his back with an expressionless face, tells the story of her frustrated life. As a teenager, she and her young lover suffered from constant hunger and abandonment. When she got pregnant before the age of twenty, her boy child is mentally retarded, and her lover immediately deserts her. Taking care of her boy, who is a teenager now, presumably motivated and hardened her to survive in Saigon's brutal underworld.

In psychoanalytical terms, the Poet is clearly drawn to this woman, who is quite a bit older than himself, as a Mother figure. Yet because she feels that she has failed in realizing her own self as mother and woman – in her and her society's view, her womb was «defective» for giving birth to a «defective» child and she has failed as a wife because her common law husband abandoned her, she has internalized a vicious external propaganda reinforced by her culture and even to some extent by Buddhist religion, which is Viet Nam's predominant religion and can view handicapped people as those who have to suffer for their and their parents' sins in their previous incarnations, even though this is not necessarily the religious belief of the majority of contemporary Buddhists. Her culture and her life has thus traumatized the Mistress, and her own lack of positive self-identity may make her oddly attractive to the Poet as a sexual partner with whom he can perform intercourse.

His Mistress offers him both the comfort of a Mother, and yet there is no threat that he would have to become a Father, for she clearly distrusts her biological abilities to have a non-handicapped child, nor does she expect to be able to care for another child. Thus, without the threat of having to assume the role of the Father, the Poet is free to function sexually with his Mistress, and does not suffer any of the psychosomatic nosebleeds which plague him once he enters the relationship with his Girlfriend.

Making part of his living by prostituting a bevy of young girls who have fallen for him and are willing to do his bidding, the Poet eventually is visited by the woman who becomes his Girlfriend. Before her appearance, one of his girls asks him to sleep with her, which he refuses to do; in another scene, all of his girls half-believe they have been impregnated by him (which the

film clearly shows as merely wishful thinking), before they start a crazy fight with water pistols. The implications are clear: the girls do not present to the Poet the threat that he may become the Father, for he is not serious in his relationship with them and does not entertain any notions of making even one of them a sincere life partner or Mother of his children.

In the case of the Girlfriend, the audience is introduced to her from a high-angle view shot just over the crown of the Poet's black hair as he is standing on his iron-railed third story balcony gazing at her approach in the street. He refuses to make love to her, and suffers the first of his nosebleeds, which ends the discussion. Instead, he prostitutes her to a character looking like a stereotypical Communist minor official, dressed in white shirt and cheap tie. This man pays the Poet to watch his girlfriend «pee» into a white porcelain bowl. After letting in the creepy-looking man, the Poet leaves his apartment and is shown next jumping from one outside balcony to next that is outside his living room. Through the bars of the open window, he is shown in the background watching the man watching the Girlfriend getting ready to urinate, and Hung cuts to a close-up of the Poet, who has a trickle of bright red blood running from his nose to his lips, before fading the scene to black.

It becomes starkly apparent that the Poet is sexually dysfunctional with his Girlfriend, and resorts to oral gratification through smoking and the «Ersatzbefriedigung» (substitute gratification) with his older Mistress who is both an Oedipal Mother and «not quite a woman» by reasons of her and her culture's belief in the deficiency of her womb which renders her less than a «real» woman in this vicious view. The Poet has passed the anal phase, which Hung again visually documents at the very end of his film, when the Poet torches his own apartment after the rooftop killing of the Client. Now, all his stashed away Dollars, which he never spent but merely collected, literally go up in flames. Yet the Poet's development is arrested at the oral stage, and he cannot function at the genital level with a woman whom he can seriously consider becoming the Mother of his children and making him a Father.

The reasons for the Poet's arrested development and dysfunctional behavior lie in the past, and can be accessed through classical psychoanalysis. The film offers its audience a glimpse at the Poet's past, the key to his present problems, when he shows the Poet return to his parents with his Girlfriend in a haunting scene in the middle of *Cyclo*.

It becomes apparent that the Poet loathes his physically abusive father and loves his mild-mannered mother, leading to a strong hatred of the Father, and his subsequent self-denial expressed in his reluctance to envision himself in the role of a father. Hung shows the Mother gently lit, in half-darkness, as she graciously tells the Girlfriend of the Poet's life as a boy, and offers an old family photo as visual proof that he indeed once was a small tyke. Her statement that nosebleeds have plagued him since childhood can be seen as a signal that from childhood on, he suffered from trauma at the hands of his father, and in spite of his assertion that this ailment has pretty much passed now in his adult state, the audience knows this to be untrue from having witnessed scenes like the one discussed previously.

During the visit home by the Poet and his Girlfriend, the Father at first remains an absent presence: he is not seen but merely referred to. Next, the audience hears his voice, ominously clamoring in the background; like a divine presence, he makes himself heard before he can be seen. Off-screen dialogue reveals the Mother's futile attempts at interceding with the Father on her Son's behalf, once she has risen to go into the next room, off-camera. The Father's authority will not be curtailed and he refuses to give in to the pleading entreaties of his wife. Instead, he visually explodes into the scene, curses his son for his sexual transgressions, and starts to whip him violently with his belt. The fact that the Father uses only pejorative terms for the Poet's sexual partners is a clear strategy of undercutting the son's sexuality; only prostitutes would have anything to do with him, and he is sexually unfit and unattractive to a «viable» sexual partner.

The belt of the Father clearly represents the Phallus. The Poet is phallus-whipped by his own Father whose position he dared to threaten by becoming sexually active himself. When his Girlfriend

consoles the Poet after the attack by the Father, she may become a replacement for the Mother, but The Poet's anti-Oedipal inhibitions with her are too strong to lead to a successful mating. Instead, the Poet continues to prostitute his virginal Girlfriend for sexual acts that lack the essence of sexual activity, sexual intercourse. Instead of performing intercourse, the Poet lets other, older men re-enact his own inhibitions and fears about this act, and he limits their paid-for activities to (clinically dysfunctional) substitute behaviors, indirectly limiting the fathers to the same level of sexual frustration, at least from the Poet's point of view (for most of the clients obviously gain sexual satisfaction from their perversions).

When the last Client transgresses this line drawn by the Poet, and deflowers the Girlfriend, the Poet has gathered enough psychological and culturally sanctioned ammunition to embark on his rooftop killing spree of the Father whom he must have hated since he was a child, and whom he never wants to become himself even at the price of prolonged sexual frustration with the true object of his sexual desire, his Girlfriend.

In the end, the Poet chooses to immolate himself in his flat after his murder, which his fellow denizens of Saigon's underworld would have understood as an act of «justifiable homicide», according to their honor code. Fire trucks rush to the scene and kill the disabled son of his Mistress, ending another life. Ironically, the Girlfriend survives the trauma of her rape and her lover's suicide. At the film's end, she is seen bicycling with her family on their recovered cyclo just as Hung's camera has panned from the destruction of old Saigonese buildings across the splendid façade of a new hotel, in the pool of which frolic Westerners and elements of the city's nouveau riche. When the Poet chooses death over becoming fully sexually active with his Girlfriend, it is the price paid for not wanting to become a Father, and for having killed the Father instead. Indeed, the Poet prefers to pay this price, and chooses death over sexual development. The trauma of his childhood has proven itself too strong to be overcome.

# Elektra in Saigon: The play of passion in Jean-Jacques Annaud's adaptation of Marguerite Duras' *The Lover* (1992)

HANH NGUYEN (\*)

Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Lover*, a filmic adaptation from Marguerite Duras' autobiographical novel of the same title, relishes the visualization of a passion born out of mutual fascination with the «Other», which is driven by conflicting psychological impulses to obtain pleasure, pain and cultural/material/sexual status. The fifteen-year-old French schoolgirl (Jane March) feminizes the softness of the body of her thirty-two-year-old Chinese lover (Tony Leung) – the «Other» – yet excepting «the hardness of his sex» as tantalizing, anti-hegemonic representation of his masculinity. However, her lack of socioeconomic status due to the absence of her biological father enables the Asian lover to intercourse with her body until his own father uses the privileges of patrimony to terminate their torrid relationship amid the scorching setting of Saigon, a deliriously decadent city dubbed as the «Paris of the Far East» by the French during the late 1920s.

The director constructs the film in a way that yields productively to an application of Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalytic and Said's Orientalist theories to perform an assessment of the impossible relationship of the two lovers in light of their rampant sexualities, and specifically the schoolgirl's «femaleness» in a Freudian sense and her «feminine» sexuality in a Lacanian sense. Maternal favoritism, sibling rivalries, and poverty create a condition in which psychological ruptures abound in the «horror of the house... It's a suffocating place... of violence, of pain, of despair, of dishonor. But it's from the aridity, the terrible harshness, the malignance of this family» that the schoolgirl tries desperately to separate from.

This desire to separate lies at the heart of the fractured relationship between the schoolgirl and her mother. It encourages an attempt by the schoolgirl to find fulfillment, wholeness in love, and a «self» identity in the realm of the Imaginary, and thus in the image of the «Other», just as for Lacan, «self» identification occurs always in terms of the «Other».

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Essentially unloved by her fickle mother, the schoolgirl is forced to compensate for that lack (of a mother's love) in the object and image of the «Other». And that object and image is the Chinese lover, who is like a mirror that reflects the schoolgirl's sense of (false) «self» and his own «Otherness». The Chinese lover is burdened with the triple duties of being an accommodating lover, of fulfilling the idealized mother figure, and of also compensating for the absence of the schoolgirl's biological father by being the father figure – the Phallus/the Law-of-the-Father/the Center – which lies in the realm of the Symbolic order that the schoolgirl tries to reach.

In Lacanian terms, the schoolgirl must enter the Symbolic order to at least become a somewhat developed adult member of her culture and move away from nature – or the infantile state filled with needs for her mother, which the mother seems not willing to fulfill for her. The schoolgirl enters the Symbolic order not with language, though, but really with her body that is capable of utilizing «female» or «feminine» sexuality in order to negotiate or exchange her body for love, money, wholeness and a «self» identity enabling her to become a full, valorized member of French colonial culture in Indochina. Well, culture in general, or specifically the Chinese culture «from that financial minority that owns all the popular housing of the colony» is represented by the «Otherness» of the Chinese lover who hypothetically resides in the Symbolic order to stabilize meanings and structures of cultural semiotics (language and codes) so that the schoolgirl can find a stable identification of her «self». However, the success of this identification of «self», and the achievement of wholeness, completeness for her psyche through using her body as an instrument of love and sexuality with the «Other», is highly questionable because the «Other», her Chinese lover, is the signifier of everything the subject-that is what the schoolgirl - is not and does not have. He has wealth, money, and a high socioeconomic position in the realm of this colonized native land and its people. The schoolgirl only enjoys racial superiority because she is white, she can only feel superior because of Western (French) cultural and racist constructs. In light of these shortcomings on her part, the question of «how does the [school]girl manage to transfer... her desire or preference to an object of another sex to that of her mother» still remains, and neither could the theories of Freud or Lacan adequately answer it (Safouan, *Feminine Sexuality* 135). Nevertheless, Lacan is at least apt in his observations that:

«To be human is to be subjected to a law which decenters and divides: sexuality is created in a division, the subject [the schoolgirl] is split; but an ideological world conceals this from the conscious subject who is supposed to feel whole and certain of a sexual identity» (Mitchell 26).

Indeed the schoolgirl is a human subject, and her subject position is a decentered one.

The schoolgirl's subject position in her love play with the «Other» Chinese lover, who occupies the position of object, is based on «ego-libido» and «object-libido» in Freud's analysis of sexual pleasure. According to him:

«this ego-libido [of the schoolgirl] becomes conveniently accessible to psychoanalytic study only when the psychic energy is employed in the charging... of sexual objects, that is, when it becomes object-libido.

Then we see it as it concentrates and fixes itself on objects, or as it leaves those objects and passes over to others, from which position it directs the [schoolgirl's] sexual activity...» (Three Contributions 75).

The relationship between the schoolgirl and her mother does not at all constitute a successful pre-Oedipal phase, where tender, inseparable, and unified attachment to a same-sex parent is a smooth and coherent whole. Though the schoolgirl is not literally an infant baby, she still needs and deserves some stability in her mother's love and acknowledgment of her existence. Instead, the mother out rightly favors the older brother, who is an abusive and a violent brute, over the younger brother and herself. When confronted with this unjust favoritism, the mother cannot justify herself

in her unfairness. It is under this condition that the schoolgirl seeks comfort elsewhere. And it is this search for the «Other» to replace or make up for what is lacking in her own biological mother that is fraught with psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic phenomena.

For the schoolgirl, «the mother was the first love-object; how then does the [schoolgirl] find her way to [the object of the “Other” as the father-figure, for there is no biological father in the girl’s life]» (Freud, *Sexuality* 194). Freud could not clearly elucidate this question; however, the film reveals certain visual details that shed light onto the gradual separation of the schoolgirl from her mother and moves on to her attachment of herself to the «Other» object of the Chinese lover, who is also an older man. After all, as filmic evidence indicates, it is futile to hold on to a fractured relationship and be an eternal victim of it. So during the separation phase from the primary love-object: the mother, the schoolgirl already tries to establish her own sense of identification, or at least something that is not dependent on the mother anymore.

Prior to embarking onto her relationship with her lover, this attempt is done with what Freud called «fetishism» by utilizing physical or material things as substitutes for what is lacking in the schoolgirl’s life. The schoolgirl fetishies her cabaret-style high-heel shoes, and especially her fedora hat. It may be a fashion statement when the film shows her as a fifteen-year-old girl in cabaret shoes, fedora hat, and hemline dress, but these material things are indeed fetishied when her own voiceover informs the viewer that the «[hat] all by itself makes me whole. I am never without it». She continues to inform us that no woman, much less a «native» woman, wears a man’s hat, at least not in the colony or in the Indochina that she knows of. It is most obvious that the schoolgirl has issues with the Lack of many substantial factors, such as parental love, care, and other domestic requirements essential to the physical and psychological well being of any human subject. The fedora hat may also imply the schoolgirl’s unconscious desire to masquerade masculinity because in her family no vestiges of patriarchy, or the biological father, exist apart from her despised older brother.

«It seems rather that when the fetish comes to life... some process has been suddenly interrupted-it reminds one of the abrupt halt made by memory in traumatic amnesias. In the case of the Fetish, too, interest is held up at a certain point...before the uncanny traumatic one is preserved as a fetish. Thus the [fedora hat] or shoe owes its attraction as a fetish...» (Freud, *Sexuality* 217).

Her fetishism speaks loud and clear to the fact that she is unable to find her «self» at home in her family but instead in a mere man’s hat, which to her represents her whole essence-her ontology-because she is never without it.

On the path to find her identity and «self», the schoolgirl goes beyond her fetishism. Her psychological impulses strongly incline her to obtain pleasure, pain and cultural/material/sexual status from the Chinese lover. The schoolgirl does not know it yet, but:

«[t]he eye, which is remote from the sexual subject, is most often in position, during the relations of object wooing, to become attracted by that particular quality of excitation, the motive of which we designate as beauty in the sexual object. The excellencies of the sexual object are therefore called ‘attraction’. This attraction is... connected with pleasure, and... results in an increase of the sexual excitation where it is still wanting... for example, the touch of the hand... is the feeling of pleasure which soon becomes enhanced by the pleasure from the preparatory changes, and there is a further increase of the sexual tension which soon changes into a most distinct feeling of displeasure if it cannot proceed to more pleasure» (Freud, *Three Contributions* 68-69).

So in order to alleviate «this distinct feeling of displeasure» for both lovers, the schoolgirl takes command of the situation in a scene most rampant in human sexuality, which takes place in the setting of the Chinese lover’s bachelor flat. As the film relishes on human voyeurism, «she undresses

him... button by button, sleeve by sleeve. [His] skin... is of a sumptuous softness. The body is hairless, without any virility at all, other than that of the sex. She doesn't look him in the face. She touches the softness of the sex, of the skin. She caresses the golden hue, the unknown novelty».

Clearly in this scene, cinematic technique of editing and extreme close-up camera angles construct a moment that is fraught with fetishized visualization of the body of the Chinese lover. This scene is also apt and most conducive to Freud's analysis of the process and the foreplay leading to sexual intercourse leading in turn to sexual gratification or ultimate release of tension that ends in what we commonly term «pleasure». The camera trails along her hand and fingers as she relishes in the pleasure of caressing his «Othered» body, which to her is a «novelty» because the «Other» to her is exotic, erotic, new and different in her schoolgirl eyes.

The Chinese lover's «Otherness» is not just in terms of her «self» identification as Lacan would have it in light of the binary opposition, but this «Otherness» can also be seen in light of Said's charge of «Orientalism», the Western reconceptualization of the «Orient» (Arabic North Africa, Arabia and even Asia in general), along a willful and politically (or even sexually) motivated misrepresentation of indigenous culture, history, politics, and socioeconomics. Here the Asian lover is «Othered» because:

«Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing... the upper hand... [Westerners were] in... the Orient because [they] could be there... with very little resistance on the Orient's part» (Orientalism 7).

Western hegemony was constructed around «anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about... economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national, or religious character (Said, Orientalism 7-8).

In light of these historical facts, the Asian lover is a Saidian «Oriental» who is part of that Orient that must be conquered and civilized by the white Western schoolgirl simply because of her supposed racial superiority. Besides «Othering» him psychologically she also «Others» him consciously (although this is only arguably so), based on this Western belief of colonial hegemony justified by the many aspects mentioned above. This notion is reinforced when the schoolgirl subjectifies her lover along racialized lines as «Chinese what's more». She deems it is fine for her to partake in rampant sexuality with him and to enjoy his wealth and everything erotic and exotic he has to offer, without really knowing him at all. This decentering of the «Other» is evident when she confesses that «It's always appealed to me to go with men you don't know [meaning Asian men]. You don't even see them... you'll never know their face».

In the end, despite her psychological roller coaster with her mother and her torrid love affair with the Chinese lover, the schoolgirl's maturing life is less than stellar and mentally wholesome or healed. The irony of all ironies come about when the father of the Chinese lover gives him an ultimatum that he must marry a young Chinese virgin and not any other woman if he wants to secure his inheritance. In the father's cultural and patriarchal realm, he directly sees the schoolgirl as the «Other». In essence the schoolgirl is being «Othered» by the «Other».

It is now that Annaud's film reaches its critical climax. The Asian Lover is revealed indeed as feminized, for he admits that he is «nothing» without his father's wealth, whom the patriarch can withhold at will like a vengeful husband curtailing his wife's finances. Physically debilitated and addicted to opium, the Father nevertheless acts from an inherited and legalized position of absolute superiority, which the French found themselves willing to support in their colonialist empire. Ironically the schoolgirl finally falls victim to patriarchy as the Father of her Lover successfully terminates her love affair with his son, who is brought back into the fold of culturally sanctioned patriarchy through his marriage to a Chinese bride.

Alone on the sea on her terminal voyage to France, the schoolgirl has failed in her attempt to summon the mantle of colonialism to make up for the «lack» of her sex. Her attempts to valorize

her position in a colonial regime were wrecked against the bedrock of patriarchy, which ironically unites Colonizer and the Colonized in a common subjugation of all who are feminized, daughters and sons alike. The Fathers carry the day, whether they reside in Paris or Indochina.

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# Free association in a poem of Rimbaud

HENK HILLENAAR (\*)

Recently I have been trying to better understand the secrets of free association. Two books have been particularly helpful to me: Anton Ehrenzweig's *The Hidden Order of Art*<sup>1</sup>, and Christopher Bollas' *Cracking Up*<sup>2</sup>. Free Association represents, as it were, the functioning of our mind in its most complete way: impressions, emotions, imagination, thoughts, decisions. Everything is evoked simultaneously. By going more deeply into the ins and outs of free association, one necessarily acquires some new understanding about certain aspects or functions of the mind. In this case the new insights mainly involved imagination. I first intended to take those rather theoretical remarks as the subject of this article and wanted to illustrate them in relation to a poem of Rimbaud, entitled 'Memory' ('Mémoire'). However, working on this fascinating text, I became convinced that it would be best to present a short analysis of Rimbaud's poem and to conclude with a summary of the theoretical insights deriving from it.

*Memory* was written in 1872 by an eighteen-years old Rimbaud. It can be seen rather like a dream in which the writer is inspired by what Freud, thirty years later, would term 'free association'. Rimbaud described his manner of writing as 'hallucinatory'. This resembles free association in most respects, and explains why, many years later, the surrealists would proudly adopt Rimbaud as their predecessor. In the fine biography of Rimbaud which Graham Robb published a few years ago, he mentions these facts when referring to the same poem, *Memory*. He comments: «It is only after a century of modernist literature and cinema that the mind's eye can perform the acrobatic feats that were apparently quite routine for Rimbaud»<sup>3</sup>. However, the title of this poem shows that other forces are present in it. Hallucinations usually try to escape reality, but in these lines, memory does the contrary, clinging to reality, though it is the reality of the past. The poet is associating with images from his childhood. What he gains in doing so is understanding, more than vision: understanding of the past and of himself as the result of what has happened in that past. Such an approach or insight is very rare in the work of this visionary poet<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967. New edition, Phoenix Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> London, Routledge, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Robb, *Rimbaud*, London, Picador, 2000, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> According to J.-P. Giusto, the image of the water allows the poet of *Memory* to imply himself for the first and last time in his inner symbolism, *Rimbaud Créateur*, PUF, 1980, p. 192.

L'eau claire; comme le sel des larmes d'enfance,  
L'assaut au soleil des blancheurs des corps de femmes;  
la soie, en foule et de lys pur, des oriflammes  
sous les murs dont quelque pucelle eut la défense;

l'ébat des anges; – Non... le courant d'or en marche  
meut ses bras, noirs, et lourds, et frais surtout, d'herbe. Elle  
sombre, ayant le Ciel bleu pour ciel-de-lit, appelle  
pour rideaux l'ombre de la colline et de l'arche.

## 2

Eh! l'humide carreau tend ses bouillons limpides!  
L'eau meuble d'or pâle et sans fond les couches prêtes.  
Les robes vertes et déteintes des fillettes  
font les saules, d'où sautent les oiseaux sans brides.

Plus pure qu'un louis, jaune et chaude paupière  
Le souci d'eau – ta foi conjugale, ô l'Épouse! –  
au midi prompt, de son terne miroir, jalouse  
au ciel gris de chaleur la Sphère rose et chère.

## 3

Madame se tient trop debout dans la prairie  
prochaine où neigent les fils du travail; l'ombrelle  
aux doigts; foulant l'ombelle; trop fière pour elle;  
des enfants lisant dans la verdure fleurie

leur livre de maroquin rouge! Hélas, Lui, comme  
mille anges blancs qui se séparent sur la route,  
s'éloigne par-delà la montagne! Elle, toute  
froide, et noire, court! après le départ de l'homme!

## 4

Regrets des bras épais et jeunes d'herbe pure!  
Or des lunes d'avril au cœur du saint lit! Joie  
des chantiers riverains à l'abandon, en proie  
aux soirs d'août qui faisaient germer ces pourritures!

Qu'elle pleure à présent sous les remparts! l'haleine  
Des peupliers d'en haut est pour la seule brise.  
Puis, c'est la nappe, sans reflets, sans source, grise:  
un vieux, dragueur, dans sa barque immobile, peine.

## 5

Jouet de cet œil d'eau morne, je n'y puis prendre,  
ô canot immobile! oh! Bras trop courts! Ni l'une  
ni l'autre fleur: ni la jaune qui m'importune,  
là, ni la bleue, amie à l'eau couleur de cendre.

Ah! la poudre des saules qu'une aile secoue!  
Les roses des roseaux dès longtemps dévorées!  
Mon canot, toujours fixe; et sa chaîne tirée  
au fond de cet œil sans bords, – à quelle boue?

Clear water; salty as childhood tears,  
The whiteness of woman's bodies assaulting the sun;  
silk, pure lilies massed, oriflammes  
beneath walls which some Maid defended;

angels revelling; – No, the current of flowing gold,  
moves its dark, heavy, cool arms of grass. She  
sinks; with the blue Sky as canopy, calls down  
the curtain of the hill's and arch's shadow.

## 2

Look, the humid tiles offer limpid bubbles!  
Water gives the ready beds fathomless pale gold:  
little girls' faded green dresses  
imitate willows, where birds hop freely.

Purer than a gold coin, warm and yellow eyelid,  
the marsh marigold – your conjugal vow, Wife! –  
at noon sharp, from its dull mirror, envies  
the dear and rosy Orb in a fuddled grey sky.

## 3

Madame holds herself too stiff in the next field  
where sons of toil flurry like snow; clutching  
parasol; trampling umbels; too proud for her;  
children in the flower strewn grass, their noses

in books bound in red morocco! Alas, He, like  
a thousand angels dispersing down the road,  
fades beyond the mountain! She, utterly  
cold and dark, runs! After the man has left!

## 4

Regret for the thick, young arms of pure green growth!  
Gold of April moons deep in the sacred bed! Joy  
of abandoned riverside yards, prey  
to August evenings which bred this decay!

Let her weep now, beneath the ramparts! the breath  
of tall poplars is the only breeze.  
Then it's the grey, matt sheet of water without source;  
an old man in a motionless boat, dredging.

## 5

Plaything of this dull eye of water, motionless boat,  
arms too short, I can reach neither one  
flower nor the other; not the yellow one bothering me  
there, nor the blue, friend to the ash-coloured water.

Ah, the powder shaken by a wing from willows!  
The reed-roses long since eaten up!  
My boat, still tied fast; and its chain hauled deep  
In this rimless round of water – into what mud?

Translation: Martin Sorrell (with some changes)

The images of his childhood which inspire the poet in these pages are more or less the following: He sees himself on a sunny day on the shores of a tributary of the river Meuse, near his birthplace Charleville. He is with his mother, whom he calls 'Madame', and other women and children, not to bathe, which was still an unknown practice in 1872, but to find a cool place on the grass along the river's banks. One might think of Seurat's famous painting *Un dimanche après-midi à l'île de la grande Jatte*, now in the museum of Chicago. The poet watches the sun playing on the water, and a yellow flower floating on it. He sees the Ardenne hills, willows, a bridge, and later, when the sun has disappeared, an old man in a little boat, dredging.

*Mémoire* requires to be read with psychoanalytically trained eyes. To my knowledge, this has not yet been attempted. It is often maintained that the point of the poem is the marriage between water and sun, with some allusions to the marriage of Rimbaud's parents, and in particular to the father who on a memorable day had left the family, never to return. But in an psychoanalytical perspective there is more to tell. The first main theme of the poem, in particular, the play between water and sun, can be viewed as a 'primal scene', and the second, the image of the poet's boat which he cannot move, as a birth-fantasy. All this material of a primary process has been submitted to a secondary transformation.

We start with these secondary, rational outlines organizing the poem. Rimbaud creates five parts of two four-line stanzas. The memories he presents mark at the same time the movement of the light of day, from dawn to sunset, and of the light of life, from birth to death. In the associations of parts one and two, the happy union between water and sun dominates, in parts three and four threat and danger emerge, the images of human beings darkening the light that nature enjoyed before. The poet introduces 'Madame', his mother, and later, when the sun has gone, the old man dredging in an immobile boat. Then the tone of the poem again entirely changes. The fifth part tells us about the vain existence of the 'I' figure, the poet who remembers, also in an immobile boat.

In this poem more than anywhere else in Rimbaud's work, life and death are feminine and fatal. I don't know any other poem in French literature that has so many mute e-sounds. All the rhymes are feminine and in an abba rime scheme, termed in French 'embracing rhyme', here, apparently, the embrace of the mother and of death. This embrace is also hidden in the French title of the poem: when we cut 'mémoire' in three syllables: me/moi/re, 'moi' is surrounded by 'me' and 're', by mère. These are the outlines of the poem.

The 'clear water' of the river that starts the chain of associations, brings the poet to a first important comparison 'salty as childhood tears', and sends him and us back to an apparently sad infancy. The microcosm of a glistening children's tear and the macrocosm of the river under the sun apparently refer to the same drama.<sup>5</sup> However, initially the poet tries to escape from this world of tears, in a series of hallucinatory associations, mainly metonymies, ever ascending and ever more sublime: 'woman's bodies assaulting the sun', become, thanks to 'the silk' they are wearing, 'pure lilies', and even 'oriflammes', and then, probably because of that purity, or only because of the syllable 'pu', the 'pucelle', that is the 'virgin' with the oriflammes, a reference to Jeanne d'Arc, who defended the walls of so many French cities.

The poet ends that sublime flight by pronouncing a very clear, resounding 'No'. He does not want to hallucinate but to concentrate on his memories, on the earthly reality. Not angels but lovers who play form the beginning of all earthly reality. Here the metaphor replaces the metonymies of the beginning. Before Rimbaud's visionary eyes the light of the sun makes him see an erotic primitive being whose body in its motion and colours coincides with the streaming river. It is the gold coloured figure of a woman, her arms are the dark grass on the shores. She is not moving upwards like an angel but 'sinks' under the sunlight which plays with her as a groom with his bride. The blue sky forms a canopy of the bed in which this ideal couple, water and sun, make love. The

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<sup>5</sup> After the salt water of a child's tear one would sooner expect an association with the water of the sea as we find it elsewhere in Rimbaud's poems: «la haute mer faite d'une éternité de larmes».

shadows of the surrounding hills and of the arched bridge are the bed curtains. This kind of poetry was absolutely new in France, in 1872. Baudelaire, who had just died and whose work was greatly admired by Rimbaud, never wrote anything like this. He would probably have been thrilled.

In the next stanza the poet evokes a bridal chamber in the river, with tiles, furniture, and of course, a bed. The poet's associations then forge a metaphorical link between willows and bridesmaids; not in the romantic tradition that most of us would expect, discovering human features in nature. This poet does the opposite. His vision is as in a real dream, where everything is centered on the dreamer. The girls he watches, with their faded green dresses, are like 'willows, where birds hop freely'. These are associations in the primary sphere, the laws of time, space, causes and consequences are no longer the same. In such a primordial sphere people actually encounter their origins, and those who gave them birth. Elsewhere Rimbaud will repeatedly have the same vision of the marriage between water and sun – 'the sea gone with the sun', or 'the sea lost in the sun'<sup>6</sup>. The experience is called 'Eternity: Found again. What? Eternity. The sea gone with the sun'<sup>7</sup>. So the poet goes back, swimming in the primal waters, to his own origins, to the place where no memory can reach, to the eternity – of bliss? Of nothingness? – And of course, while he is doing so, the figures of a mother, and a father, and a child, himself, should make an appearance.

However, we are not yet as far as that. The yellow marsh marigold floating on the sun-drenched water supplies the starting point for another series of associations. This little sun<sup>8</sup> among the flowers, is like a golden coin, a 'warm eyelid', watching the sun from the river. From here onwards the image of the eye will play a major role in the poem. For the poet this little flower represents the 'conjugal vow' of the bride, the water. However it causes also the first dissonance in this marriage symphony. The poet is talking of envy, implying a third person in the picture. He now seems to identify with this masculine 'marsh marigold', and envy transforms his vision of marriage into the dream of a little Oedipus. Therefore the sun who hitherto had been masculine too, all of sudden is turned by him into a feminine 'Orb', a 'dear and rosy Orb'. This dream about a sun which sometimes is a 'he', sometimes a 'she', creates the climate of indistinctiveness and ambiguity which appealed so much to Rimbaud, and which originally belongs to a 'pre-oedipal', early childhood.

Finally, in the next stanzas, images of the partners of the real primal scene break through. First and very clearly the mother. The ironic 'Madame' can only refer to the bourgeois lady in black whom the poet loved and hated, his whole life, and who is continuously present or lurking in his poetry. Madame is surrounded by her children in the grass, and by 'sons of toil', who 'flurry'. The French 'où neigent les fils du travail' is one of the most obscure expressions of the text. Depending on the French pronunciation – 'fils' with or without a pronounced 'l' – this evocation could stand for working men in white cloths, as in the English translation. But it could as well refer to threads of gossamer, or to a knitting lady, or even to the 'travail' of a woman who is giving birth, which would fit the meaning of the poem as a whole. However, she is holding herself 'too stiffly' to be imagined in a bed where she is giving birth, let alone in a bridal bed. Evading the sun with her parasol, and trampling little flowers, children of sunlight, she does everything that goes against such an image. The associations with this woman, descriptive but highly symbolical, end with the enigmatic 'too proud for her', 'her' referring either to 'the dear and rosy Orb', or to the water under the golden sun. In both cases the woman is unworthy to play a part in the primal scene just evoked. As a magician, Rimbaud makes us believe that her proud attitude causes the departure of the sun, the groom. After this stanza she disappears from the scene but hides in the 'eye of water' that is going to be determinant in the last stanzas.

We are back in the setting of the beginning: water and sun. The last sunbeams are again associated with 'a thousand angels', who are no longer revelling with each other, but 'dispersing on the

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<sup>6</sup> *Une saison en enfer*. Délires II.

<sup>7</sup> *Collected Poems*, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> The French 'souci' derives from 'solsequia', sunflower.

<sup>9</sup> fils ('l' pronounced) = threads; fils ('l' not pronounced) = son or sons.

road'. The sun disappears behind the mountains, and the water becomes cold and dark. The rest of the poem is a lament on the fate of the water after this departure. This lament encompasses a series of associations based on the feelings of lack and abandonment, when water nor eyes glisten no more<sup>10</sup>. It is likely that Rimbaud, when he wrote these lines, was thinking of the departure of his divorced father, the army officer, he had scarcely known<sup>11</sup>, and whom he would miss until the end of his life.

The old man in his boat, dredging, who, on the water and in the text, takes the place of the sun, after it has gone, appears as a replacement for the groom and the father. The poet keeps the only man on the scene far away, in the text, from Madame'. The old man in his immobile boat, this hardly recognisable father figure is not the fisherman we would expect. His instrument is a dredge. His task is to retrieve from the water anyone or anything which does not belong there. Fathers are necessary when mothers become threatening<sup>12</sup>, which actually is going to happen in the next stanzas. The last word of this scene in the French version is, very eloquently, 'peine', the punishment of those who are expelled from paradise. The one who actually has been expelled from paradise is the poet himself. That's why we see him now, suddenly appearing on the inner scene, also in an immobile boat. Apparently, and in spite of himself, the old man has become his model.

The vision of a 'self', an 'I' who only speaks in the last lines of a poem, is an unique invention, not encountered in Rimbaud's other works. Out of the vague but living memory of the union of his parents, with an idealized beginning and, consequently a disappointment, the 'I' is born as a failure. Born from water and sun, he now has become the 'plaything of this 'dull eye of water' without sunlight, of a 'rimless' maternal element. The reader feels the presence of an incestuous mother ready to devour her child. It becomes clear now that the central images which inspired the poem are the light of the eyes and the light on the water. Rimbaud is writing about himself who once saw the light and its games for the first time in the eyes of his mother<sup>13</sup>. Since then these same eyes, abandoned by the light of the father, have become disappointing, dull eyes which immobilize his life.

In the last stanzas, both parental figures come back as two flowers which the poet is not able to pick: the yellow marsh marigold which 'bothers' him as his mother does, and the mysterious blue flower that, although a 'friend of the ash-coloured water', has the colour of the sky, of the ideal father. Both flowers<sup>14</sup> remain out of his reach. He is an orphan, floating on the water in a boat which cannot move, with a chain, an anchor, that is pulled into the mud. The joyful exclamation 'Eh' (E is white according to Rimbaud) of the beginning has now been definitely converted into the lament 'Ah' (A is black, is darkness for the poet), which dictates the tone of the last stanza. The image of the eye dominates this part of the poem, as an 'eye of water', without borders, without limits or rules set by the father to the desires or threats of the mother. The eye that keeps the life of a child under its spell has the shape of the woman's sex out of which the child has been born. Like a devouring monster, it threatens now to pull him, as 'the reed-roses long eaten up', into the mud, into death.

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<sup>10</sup> Rimbaud again organizes his verses in a very rational way around the oppositions 'regret' and 'joy', 'April moons' and 'August evenings', 'beneath the ramparts' and on top of them, 'en haut' (not in the English translation). The water 'regrets for the thick, young arms' which embraced her that morning, and for the golden days of spring 'in the sacred bed', now gone for ever. The lines devoted to 'the joy' are among the most obscure of the poem, also because Rimbaud's sources of joy are rather macabre. Instead of fresh grass, we see 'abandoned riverside yards' and water where August evenings breed 'decay'. Therefore the water has no other fate than to weep under the ramparts which saw Jeanne d'Arc. Only the poplars above enjoy some breeze, the water cannot. It has become a 'matt sheet', immobile, without life, without colours, without eroticism.

<sup>11</sup> He left when Arthur was not even six years old.

<sup>12</sup> Just as mothers are when fathers become frightening.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Bollas writes marvellous pages on the mother as a clown, 'cracking up' her baby, *Cracking Up*, p. 236-242.

<sup>14</sup> In 'Le bateau ivre', the poet also encounters on the ocean phosphorescent animals who are yellow and blue: 'l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs'

The little boat in *Memory* is the counterpart of the boat in *Le bateau ivre*, Rimbaud's most famous poem written some months before this one. In *Le bateau ivre* too, the poet is, as it were, transformed into a boat lost on the maternal waters of the ocean, but even more on the paternal waters of ideal: 'I, boat tangled in the hair of bights [...] Free, smoking, got up in violent spume, / I, who holed the sky like a wall in flames / Which bears, good poet's exquisite preserve, / Lichen of sun and cerulean snot.' Nothing of that enchanting perspective is remaining here.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

The study of free association in a poem gives us insights, from different points of view, into the functioning of the writer's psyche. A first point of view, 'conscious / unconscious, regards our entire psyche, and a second, primary / secondary, focuses on its rational or irrational character; a third, metonymic / metaphoric corresponds to the imaginary aspects of our mind, in this context the most important part of its functioning.

### 1. *The relationship conscious / unconscious.*

Presumably most unconscious elements of the text will remain unknown to the reader. However some of them may 'break through', suddenly or after a long process of reading and comparison with other texts of the same writer. In the present case the poet himself must have been at least vaguely aware of the references he was making to the history of his parents' marriage. However, it is very doubtful whether he made a conscious association between marriage and birth, between the old man dredging and his father, between the 'eye of water' and his mother. That certainly does not change anything in the poem, but it may enhance our pleasure in reading it. I would like to add that we are inclined to see the unconscious as the mystery of our mind. It's sometimes worthwhile, when reading a poem like *Memory*, for instance, to reverse that perspective and to discover the mystery in the little bit of conscious light that emerges from a sea of not-knowing and unconscious darkness.

### 2. *The relationship primary / secondary*

Something similar occurs when we look at the second articulation, between the primary and the secondary processes of our mind, which determine the movements of free association. The chronological order that we usually perceive between those two processes is too simplistic. Rimbaud's poem shows us once more that they are truly intertwined, that the secondary serves the primary and vice-versa. The primary, for instance, dominates the first stanza, but is rather easy to follow because of the line of images ascending from women to angels. In other stanzas, however, as in 7 and 8, the lines of primary association are not so easily detected. But we should not forget that both primary and secondary process are determined by the drive, our inner necessity to retain, to repeat and to represent life, in images and in words, a necessity that is typical of our thinking and of all human behaviour. We not only want to see the light, we want, just as much, to keep it, and understand it. This shared drive makes it possible to recognize primary processes once we have acquired the secondary skills, and in that sense the secondary might as well be seen as the core of the first. As we just saw, this also applies to the relationship conscious and unconscious. Most important, doubtlessly, is the intertwining. In *Memory*, marriage is a secondary image or idea, but the beauty of the poem is nevertheless mostly due to the primary associations which bring it to life. Moreover, if the unconscious which uses mostly primary structures has the structure of language – language being also the secret of our rational mind – then the secondary constellation must be present in the heart of the primary one.

### 3. *The relationship metonymy / metaphor*

When I am insisting on these phenomena of articulation and intertwining, it is mainly because of the last pair, metonymy and metaphor. They define the two molds our imagination adopts, and since Jakobson we know that human language follows the same scheme. Our mind does not associate randomly, but operates according to fixed patterns. The direction and signification of those patterns often escapes us, because they are not rational and run at a considerable speed<sup>15</sup>. Our imagination and the associational patterns it follows in creating 'intensities' and cracking them up, are metonymical and metaphorical patterns. Christopher Bollas does not refer to this aspect. The first group, metonymy, has everything to do with the world of the mother, of the body and the 'laws' of proximity which govern that world. In *Memory*, for example, we find such a metonymical chain in the description of everything referring to marriage: bride and groom, nuptial room, bed and canopy, curtains, bridesmaids, flowers etcetera. When the imagination of the poet encounters something with which he does not feel comfortable, he keeps it – consciously or unconsciously – out of the chain or replaces it, metaphorically, by something else. 'Mother' becomes 'Madame', later even an 'eye of water'. 'Father' becomes a man dredging, and so forth.

The second way of associating, by metaphors, operates from another inner distance and could be ascribed to the world of the father. Metaphors are inspired by the desire of identification, imitation or even metamorphosis. This kind of association is also omnipresent in Rimbaud's poem, and often has the characteristics of secondary processes, for instance, in the image of the union of the water as the bride and the sun as the groom. A verse like «the current of flowing gold, moves is dark, heavy, cool arms of grass», is an over-extended metaphor which is made possible by the metonymic enumeration. For metonymy and metaphor need each other, like primary process and secondary process, conscious and unconscious imagination do. What counts, time and again, is the intertwining, the articulation of the two. They cannot function separately. They are both needed for representation, being the original constituents of imagination and language. However, if we had to decide which of the two movements is more important, as we have done relating to consciousness and the secondary process, it would be the metaphoric movement. Metaphor is, after all, the condition for existence of representation, which defines all human functioning. Therefore metaphor is at the basis of metonymy, although metonymy seems to come first in human development. Their articulation is their secret and their source of creativity.

Therefore, referring to association, we inevitably must discuss articulation: Articulation of notions, of functions which cannot be considered rationally or 'dialectically'. To trace or retrace the different layers and perspectives in the game of metonymy and metaphor, or between conscious and unconscious, we need another approach, another way of listening to a text, looking at a picture, hearing a piece of music. The best description of this approach can be found in Freud's 'evenly suspended attention' (*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*), as practised in psychoanalysis. The reader, viewer or listener becomes the third in the game, and as such he operates between these two poles. To be third means to be able to take one's distance, it indicates freedom on the inner scene. The reader is no longer the prisoner of one interpretation, he participates in the work of creation. And traditional pairings as conscious / unconscious, primary / secondary, and metonymy / metaphor turn out to offer, time and again, new articulations, new creations. That is what the study of Rimbaud's *Memory* illustrates and confirms.

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<sup>15</sup> Very often 'speed' offers the solution to difficult questions about the functioning of the brains. When Pascal comments on the difference between the 'esprit de géométrie', outstanding example of a secondary thinker, and the 'esprit de finesse', a typically intuitive mind, with lots of imagination, 'speed' turns out to be the only (beginning of an) answer.

# ‘Puzzled masculinity’: Beyond the symptom – On David Fincher’s cult film *Fight Club*

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David Fincher’s movie *Fight Club*<sup>1</sup> devises a cosmos without fathers, a cosmos beyond authority-producing forces that bestow consistence upon the symbolic order. The protagonists evade ‘the Law’ and therefore live, to put it with Žizek, in a sphere «beyond the symptom», a purely autistic sphere, a sphere of psychical suicide, of the death drive.<sup>2</sup> They enter a room beyond the fiction of identity;<sup>3</sup> the film stages once again the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the well-known story of a ‘doppelgänger’. Tyler Duden, whose initials T. D. can be read as an abbreviation of ‘the doppelgänger’, comes into being as the phantasmagorized perfect alter ego of the nameless protagonist, drunk on the consumption of mass products.<sup>4</sup> Tyler, played by brawny Brad Pitt, embodies – literally – all that the main protagonist, played by Edward Norton, longs for. He is the unbound, uninhibited person, the autonomous man beyond all societal conventions; at the same time, however, he is only one side of a split ego, a projection. Fincher’s film conveys the desire for an integral masculinity as the expression of a troubled, a ‘puzzled masculinity’, while revealing it as a phantasm at the same time.

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<sup>1</sup> Featuring Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, and Helena Bonham Carter; screenwriter Jim Uhls was responsible for adapting the novel by Chuck Palahniuk, the director of photography was Jeff Cronenweth.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Slavoj Žizek (1992), «Symptom». In: *Feminism and Psychoanalysis. A Critical Dictionary*. Oxford, p. 425. The development of the symptom alone helps the subject to prevent insanity, because he or she is able to choose something (the symptom) instead of choosing nothing. The symptom connects the enjoyment with a certain symbolic formation; cp. also Elisabeth Bronfen (1999), *Heimweh. Illusionsspiele in Hollywood*. Berlin, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> This continues the story of masculinity in crisis, discussed frequently; cp. Susan Faludi (1999), *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*. New York.

<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on this perfection is stronger in Chuck Palahniuk’s text. Jack meets Tyler on the beach, where Tyler is building a figure out of tree trunks. For a moment the trees’ shadows look like the image of a hand: «The giant shadow hand was perfect for one minute, and for one perfect minute Tyler had sat in the palm of a perfection he’d created himself»; Chuck Palahniuk (1996), *Fight Club*. New York, p. 33.

This is one of the reasons why the interpretation, Fincher's film was celebrating the «hard bodies»,<sup>5</sup> the epiphany of a physically armored masculinity,<sup>6</sup> why this interpretation is objectionable – even if the guys beat each other up in the basements as if there was no tomorrow. The creation of an anti-civilizing order of male bodies, of strength, of ritual fight and sacrifice is only a pretense. Fact is – and this is what I'll be trying to show in my first section – that the space of anarchy, of subversion and of splitting, which the main protagonist – let's call him Jack – enters, fact is, that this space is semantically encoded as female in a very fundamental way, i.e. by recourse to cultural representations of femininity. The world outside the symbolic order is the sphere of decay, of the body, of death, of growth, of cancer and the splitting of the subject; hence – according to binding cultural semantics – a place associated with femininity. Emblematic of this world is femme fatale Marla Singer. It is this female sphere that is being erected in opposition to the symbolic order, to the absent fathers; Fincher's film thus also suspends the oedipal conflict. Besides, the splitting of consciousness that *Fight Club* deals with, is realized on the formal level as well – I will demonstrate this in my second section. Single frames inserted into the film's visual texture are discussed at length, the audience, however, cannot see them. Perception and knowledge are separated on the level of reception; the defective consciousness, the amnesias of the protagonist return as those of the audience.

#### 1. THE WOUND 'FEMININITY' – SELF-DESTRUCTION AS SUBVERSION

The film is told in flash backs – it begins at its ending: A pistol in his mouth, Jack is sitting in front of a large window; the panorama of the New York skyline lies before him, the phallic emblems of an economic order, that are to be blown up by one great explosion. This scene already indicates the two great narratives the movie calls up: paradise and apocalypse. The destruction of the skyscrapers – all of them credit card companies – promises freedom from debts (in the sense of guilt, too), promises a fresh start, the return to a heavenly primeval state. Interestingly enough, this gigantic explosion is linked to a female figure; one of the protagonist's first words is: «All of this, the gun, the bombs, the revolution, has got to do with a girl named Marla Singer» – Marla Singer, I have mentioned, is the femme fatale of this fantastical psycho-thriller that turns into a terrorist-thriller hybrid half way through the movie. This prominent clue, which places a woman at the center of the narration, this clue opens the space of destruction, of death, and of mutilated masculinity; a space signified as femininity, with Freud and – through an ironic twist – against Freud at the same time. The next focus, starting off the flash backs, shows Bob, a figure utterly marked by a deficient masculinity. Jack, who has been suffering from insomnia for months, visits self-help-groups in order to encounter *real* suffering, self-help-groups for cancer patients. Here he meets Bob, introduced by the voice over as «Bob with bitch tits». He is a member of the testicular cancer group, and the testosterone caused him – Jack's voice explains – to grow breasts. That this space of deficient masculinity is in fact connoted as female, is revealed when Jack's first doppelganger Marla Singer<sup>7</sup> – she is, too, on the hunt for misery, a tourist vacationing in those self-help-groups – when Marla Singer declares the testicular cancer group as her terrain. When Jack and Marla divide up the groups among each other in order not to run into the other, she declares: «Technically, I have more of a right to be there [i.e. the testicular cancer group] than you. You still

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<sup>5</sup> Cp. Susan Jeffords (1994), *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. New Brunswick/New Jersey.

<sup>6</sup> The film was accused of Fascist tendencies, especially in connection with the training camp Tyler sets up. *Fight Club* has further been criticized for its glorification of violence.

<sup>7</sup> When Jack first meets Marla in the novel, he says: «Marla's lie reflects my lie, and all I can see are lies»; Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, p. 23. Of course this is also a reference to the notorious alliance of femininity and lying.

have your balls». This is an ironic reference to Freud's notion of the castrated woman – Marla is put on a par with impotent men. A reference also, to the traditional equation of woman and disease; in a hyperbolic and very blatant way. Marla Singer is not only a frail, weakening, ailing, death-driven woman, she herself is the tumor, the open sore, the 'Wunde Rosa', to say it with Kafka. Jack imagines the name Marla explicitly as the name of a tumor: «If I did have a tumor I'd name it Marla», he says. The proximity to «malus», «maligne», supports the association. And Jack compares troublemaker Marla to a «little scratch on the roof of your mouth that would heal if only you could stop tonguing it». The woman becomes the wound perforating the male integral body, the 'skin-ego'; she destroys the vision of a protected body surface through (cancerous) growth of the flesh.

The alignment of woman and cancer is in itself a tradition, as Susan Sontag has shown. There is a close metaphorical relation between pregnancy, that is femininity, and cancer, dating back to the 18th century. Novalis for example «in an entry written around 1798 for his encyclopedia project, defines cancer, along with gangrene, as 'full-fledged *parasites* – they grow, are engendered, engender, have their structure, secrete, eat.' Cancer is a demonic pregnancy. St. Jerome must have been thinking of a cancer when he wrote: 'The one there with his swollen belly is pregnant with his own death'.»<sup>8</sup> In Fincher's film woman thus functions as an objection against physical and psychical integrity, as an objection against the phallic order; she is the difference, the lack, to put it with Lacan, and she occupies precisely the place – Fincher's film stages this with great consistency – the place in which the construction of the male subject, in which phallo-centrism collapses.

One other element of Fincher's film fulfills a function quite similar to that of the female figure: the element of – and this might be surprising at first: the fights, the fight clubs. These orgies of destruction, too, intervene against the anonymous world of perfection, of smooth surfaces, of Ikea-uniformity. This space, too, is ruled by the wound, the dissolution of inside and outside.<sup>9</sup> Body fluids like blood and saliva are disposed of, the vision of a specular identity, of an 'I' with clear-cut boundaries is rejected. While the well-built male bodies on subway billboards are referred to as masturbation, Jack and Tyler indulge in self-destruction. Consequently, the battered body quite literally appears as protestation against the phallic order, for example when Jack parades his destroyed face in the men's room, his blue eye disrupting the semi-public 'rite of phallus', the act of representing the phallus as cultural evidence for integrity. Tyler's credo runs: «Never be complete». The injuries of the bodies – even if they appear to be plain spectacles of manhood – the injuries of the bodies continue the subversion of the symbolic order, the subversion through disease and cancer, through the 'woman as wound'. Accordingly, the boxing matches could be described as hysterical spectacles of masculinity, bearing the trace of a troubled male identity – it is no accident that Jack mentions the hysterical screams accompanying these fighting orgies.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Sontag (1979), *Illness as Metaphor*. London, pp. 13-14.

<sup>9</sup> The film eradicates boundaries by staging interior and exterior as analogous – due to the numerous detail shots, diffusing concrete objects and rendering them unfamiliar; or, for example through image analogies: the wires of the bomb resemble the brain fibers, combed through in David W. Prescott's main title. This strategy connects the parasites in the body with the disintegrating house Jack and Tyler are living in.

<sup>10</sup> Bronfen, too, relates the strategy of self-destruction to the traditional model of the hysteric. It is therefore not quite plausible why she reads the fight clubs as answers to the effemination of man; cp. Elisabeth Bronfen (2000), «Der Doppelgänger und die *femme fatale*», paper delivered at the Universität Freiburg im Breisgau on June 26th 2000 (unpublished manuscript, 11 pp.), p. 5; for an abbreviated version s.: *Basler Zeitung*, 24. November 1999. Bronfen understands *Fight Club* as a story of socialization: Jack escapes from the encounter with 'the Other', the woman, by converting to narcissism. Marla, however, functions as the reality principle, ultimately shattering Jack's delusive world. It remains questionable, however, whether the movie really produces such an undisturbed happy ending as Bronfen reads it. Physical injury is countered, Bronfen states, with «faith in the unconditional devotion to the loved woman»; Bronfen, p. 10. Apart from the fact that not a lot of this «unconditional devotion» is visible to the eye, the final screen seems to be an ironic reproduction of the Adam-and-Eve-icon. Besides, Jack is wounded to the point of dropping to the floor at any second, thus remaining the cripple he has been throughout the movie.

At the same time, this kind of anarchical resistance suspends the oedipal model. The objection against the symbolic order of absent fathers doesn't come about in the name of sons, but in the name of femaleness. Femininity, existing outside the symbolic order, becomes the general cipher of insurrection, of the uncanny, of revolution and explosion – in a cross-cut Jack's apartment blows up the exact moment Marla picks up her phone. Tyler and Jack do *indeed* imagine the struggle against father figures – against the boss and the absent father –, but the battles they are fighting are based on self-destruction and denial. Tyler – like a sacrificial lamb – lets himself be beaten up by the owner of the bar;<sup>11</sup> Jack batters himself in his boss' office. The confrontation of father and son is substituted by the annihilation of self – hence refiguring, by the way, the notorious alliance of femininity and death, or auto-aggression respectively. The sons attack the symbolic order by adapting the female part, by staging the splitting of identity, the fantasies of death, the renouncing of a subject, in multiple roles and hysteria – not Oedipus, but Christ, or else Marla Singer.

It is thus highly consistent that a woman is depicted as the key to this story of non-identities.<sup>12</sup> She represents the modern subject, that doesn't pass itself off as the crown of creation, as having a coherent identity, but according to Luther's famous claim, that «man was just the excrement dropping from God's bottom. Modern subjectivity (Zizek goes on) has nothing to do with the idea of man as the highest creature in 'the great chain of being', as the final step of the evolution of the universe: modern subjectivity emerges when the subject experiences a 'loss of the center', the exclusion from the 'order of things', from the positive order of entities».<sup>13</sup> The ever-recurring images of waste and garbage in Fincher's film correspond to this exclusion.<sup>14</sup> And Tyler's maxim goes: «You are the all-singing and all-dancing crap of the world», a motto that Norton, in an interview, attributed to Nietzsche. It is characteristic of the camera work in *Fight Club* that precisely the moment Tyler and later Jack speak this motto, the images turn blurry, seem to be trembling. If the waste and the crap<sup>15</sup> indicate the sphere beyond the symbolic order and beyond identities, the shaking of the camera *reflects* this transgression – the images aren't 'identical', coherent ones anymore either.

## 2. THE PHYSIOLOGICAL DRAMATURGY OF SPLITTING – THE 'UNKNOWN' OF THE IMAGES

Similar to his movies *Seven* and *The Game*, Fincher employs a physiological dramaturgy in *Fight Club*.<sup>16</sup> A physiological dramaturgy that *visualizes* the dissolution of physical identity the

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<sup>11</sup> Bronfen comments on the barkeeper running from the scene: «The figure of paternal authority runs from the son whose parodic performance – and I am inclined to think of Judith Butlers definition of *gender trouble* – brings to the eye the radical consequence of the obedience demanded of a son. The destruction of self destroys the bond between father and son, you could even say it renders the father fundamentally more helpless than the son»; Bronfen, «Der Doppelgänger und die *femme fatale*», p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> With Bronfen Jack's story could also be read as the loss of a home, enabling the «pleasure of pure contingency, of coincidence, the lack of a structuring, meaningful illusion»; Bronfen, *Heimweh. Illusionsspiele in Hollywood*, p. 220.

<sup>13</sup> Slavoj Zizek (1998), *Das Unbehagen im Subjekt*, ed. by Peter Engelmann, transl. by Andreas Leopold Hofbauer. Wien, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Again, it is Marla who is explicitly associated with waste, with garbage. She tries to kill herself – femininity as death – and calls herself «infectious human waste».

<sup>15</sup> At a different time there is talk of «decaying organic matter»; Tyler's buddies are depicted as «part of the same compost heap».

<sup>16</sup> Cp. Britta-Karolin Öhding (1998), *Thriller der 90er Jahre. Über den Zusammenhang von Struktur, Spannung und Bedeutung an ausgewählten Spielfilmen*. Bardowick, p. 66. Also Michael Staiger (2001), *Körper-Bilder im Film der 90er Jahre*, dissertation at the Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg, pp. 68, 76, and passim.

movie deals with. Close-ups, rattling the relation of space and size, confound inside and outside rooms, disintegrate objects and bodies. Besides, the splitting of consciousness, the fact that the cogito is infused by spots of amnesia and blindness – it takes Jack a long time to realize that Tyler is his creation –, this splitting of consciousness is *achieved* on the formal as well as discussed on the content level. Tyler works – a reference to the medium – as a movie projectionist. When Jack presents Tyler at his workplace, he makes use of the opportunity to demonstrate the procedure of the ‘change over’, a term that, on the one hand, literally denotes the flipping of the projectors, on the other hand indicates schizophrenia. Later on in the movie, when Jack recognizes Tyler as his alter ego, when he stands facing ‘himself’, but then – after a change to black – turns into one person again, he says: «It’s called a change over. The movie goes on and nobody in the audience has any idea». In Fincher’s film, however, the psychical as well as the medial ‘change over’ can be *felt* – the little dots in the upper right hand corner of the screen, indicating the end of a film reel for the projectionist, these dots are rendered visible to the audience. This technique points to the fact that the central illusion of Hollywood cinema, the illusion of telling a *coherent* story, is merely the effect of a construction, the result of something pieced together, a montage eluding consciousness. Coherence, continuity (including those of biography and consciousness) are the effects of gaps and pieces stuck together, dealt with in the movie in various ways. The projectionist Tyler, for example, entertains himself by placing single frames of pornography into sentimental family films; Jack comments: «Nobody knows that they saw it». Knowledge and perception are described as principles of exclusion. The forbidden image is perceived beyond consciousness, beyond knowledge; Freud made a similar statement in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Beyond the Pleasure Principle) arguing that perception functions as a guard against stimuli [«Reizschutz»], that perception and memory exclude one another. This principle of representation, which takes a split consciousness into account, is replicated on the meta-level of *Fight Club*, that is to say on the level of reception. Long before he is visible to the audience, the doppelgänger Tyler is present in the movie. Single frames are placed into the film, images, which already show Tyler – but which remain invisible to the human eye when the movie is run at regular speed. The film presents material, which cannot be perceived consciously, which exceeds the space of knowledge. The amnesias of the consciousness flowing through Jack’s identity are restaged as blind spots and gaps accompanying the perception of the movie. On the one hand, this procedure can be read with Virilio: «Precisely because the knowledge is interrupted, an autonomous time is created. This rhythm of alternating between conscious and unconscious can be diagnosed as picnolepsy, as tiny absences, as a picnoleptic interruption (after the Greek *piknos*, often). We can thus exist within a duration that is ours and that we are aware of.»<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, this strategy can be explained in analogy to Freud – consciousness comes into being when something evades it, as soon as a space of *unconsciousness* is constituted. Consciousness is only possible in a split existence – the movie’s images as well as the plot work according to this principle.

Because those single frames that are actually *discernible*, are penises, these images ‘erect’ an ironic monument to the phallus-idolatry of the symbolic order.<sup>18</sup> The secret center of phallic power, excluded as pornography but yet so obviously the center, is covertly reinserted into sentimental

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Virilio (1990), «Technik und Fragmentierung. Paul Virilio im Gespräch mit Sylvère Lotringer». In: Karlheinz Barck, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris, Stefan Richter (Eds), *Aisthesis. Wahrnehmungen heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*. Leipzig, pp. 72-82, here 74.

<sup>18</sup> This, by the way, corresponds to the fact that the highest punishment in this film-cosmos is cutting off one’s testicles, «taking someone’s balls», which people are repeatedly threatened with and which represents everyone’s greatest fear.

fairytale and family movies such as *Cinderella*, and this is done in the form of images, in the form of projections. The penis becomes the star of the silver screen and thereby reveals its illusory character, appearing as a ghostly silhouette. The anarchic gestures<sup>19</sup> of the doppelgänger, of the split consciousness, thus deconstruct the foundations of the symbolic order, in the name of femininity they expose them as constructions.

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<sup>19</sup> The film is shifting signs and meanings, by staging the multiple semantics of things and signs. Not only can certain chemical ingredients be made into soap or into a bomb, not only can waste be turned into a hygienic device – the fat from the liposuction clinics is used in the production of soap –, but the kiss Tyler gives Jack becomes pain, a wound, the mark of Cain. A space is thus constructed in which fixed meanings are subverted, in which processes of transformation are carried out, in which the civilizing drawing of boundaries is suspended – waste becomes hygiene, excrement and sperm become food. The waiter Tyler loves to decorate the plates with body fluids.

# On the denial of metaphORIZATION by young children

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The theory of conceptual metaphor holds that much of our discourse is structured by a vast network of unconscious metaphors. These metaphors tend to be rooted in the physical, often in basic bodily experience, and thus allow us to use the physical to conceptualize more abstract domains. For example, we may conceptualize ideas as material entities, and see them, via the «conduit metaphor», as being placed into containers so as to be transmitted across space, as in «It's difficult to put my ideas into words» or «It's hard to get that idea across to him».

The theory suggests that conceptual metaphor is largely grounded in the experience of individuals, particularly their early experience. But can any individual say that conceptual metaphor reflects *her* infantile experience? Infantile experience is largely pre-verbal. Conceptual metaphor is embedded in language, which the individual does not invent but acquires ready-made from outside herself.

In fact, there does exist a simple, common-sense explanation of how linguistic expressions learned only later can nevertheless express pre-verbal experiences. For if, as psychoanalysis maintains, we retain some kind of memories of early experience, even of pre-verbal experience, then when we learn language, there will be some kind of fit between those memories and our newly acquired linguistic categories and relations. The assumption is that we possess, pre-linguistically, a kind of associative substrate in which, say, the experience of *warmth* is linked with the experience of *affection*. Thus, when we come to learn the linguistic expressions that follow from the conceptual metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH, they unconsciously feel right to us, even though we are not consciously aware of the connections involved.

This explanation appears, however, to be contradicted by a well-known study of children's perception of conceptual metaphor carried out by Asch and Nerlove in 1960, two decades before the term «conceptual metaphor» was invented. Asch and Nerlove are interested in what they call «double-function terms» – words like *sweet* or *warm* that can be applied both to the physical properties of things and to the character or psychology of human beings. In fact all of the double

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function terms they investigate – *hard, cold, soft, bright, deep, and crooked*, in addition to *sweet* and *warm* – can be expressed as conceptual metaphors.

Here are their results, which Asch and Nerlove found surprising:

(1) Children first master the object reference of double-function terms. (2) They acquire the psychological sense of these terms later, and then apparently as a separate meaning, as if in independence of the object reference .... (3) The dual property of the terms is realized last, and then not spontaneously as a rule. (pp. 55-56)

Asch and Nerlove comment:

The striking finding is not that psychological meanings appear later in development, but that they are initially divorced from the corresponding object reference. The acquisition of psychological meanings does not, it appears, make contact with the physical meaning that the terms already possess. Taken at face value, this result signifies that, for the child, double-function terms are initially homonyms, and that only later he reaches a stage when he can discern the relation between them. (p. 56)

Now, if the speakers of a language acquire conceptual metaphors as mere homonyms, what is the psychological status of the metaphorical relation? A metaphorical relation exists *in the language*. But does it exist in any active way in the minds of individual speakers?

That question is clarified if we remember that conceptual metaphors normally function unconsciously. «Unconsciously» here is not a psychoanalytic concept. Simply, according to cognitive scientists, most cognition takes place without our being aware of the processes involved. When we speak our mother tongue we make unconscious use of its syntax. Similarly, we employ conceptual metaphor without being aware of what we are doing and without necessarily being able to express what we are doing. Nevertheless, Asch and Nerlove point out, «once their attention is called to» the relations between the two meanings of double function words, *adults* «are quite capable... of realizing and explaining them» (p. 57).

So too are the oldest children. For Asch and Nerlove found that children's perception of double-function words develops over time – as does their *attitude* towards the relationship between the physical and psychological meanings of the same word. Among three and four year olds Asch and Nerlove found a tendency to reject – sometimes vehemently – the very idea that a word like *deep* might be applicable to people. Five and six year olds made only rare use of the psychological meaning of double-function words. Children of seven and eight tended to recognize that double-function words had both physical and psychological meanings, but usually failed to acknowledge any relation between the two. Eleven and twelve year olds, however, showed not only «a noticeable advance in the comprehension of the dual function» (p. 53) but also, often, a keen interest in it. These children gave «few reports of having earlier thought about the dual meanings», but when that question was brought to their attention, many of them «were completely fascinated» (p. 54).

I think that a key for understanding the children's perceptions of metaphor may be found in their attitudes – especially in the vehemence with which younger children reject the possibility of any relation between physical and psychological meanings. The «surprised and indignant» (p. 50) reactions of these young children are strongly colored by affect, and we are familiar with affectively charged refusals to envisage the possibility of certain truths. Such refusals constitute *denial*, a defense mechanism. And in the reactions of the young children there is something that feels very much like a defense mechanism. Denial may indeed be operating in their responses. (Along the same lines, the very great interest in double-function terms displayed by the oldest children reminds me of the intellectual fascination with the newly available material sometimes seen in analysands when a repression is unblocked.) But if there is denial in the young children's reactions, what is it shutting out?

The denial could well result, in the first place, from the *content* of the words in question. At least five of Asch and Nerlove's eight terms – *soft, warm, sweet, hard, cold* – refer to important

sensations in the life of an infant. Connected as they are to the organs and bodily zones that are the foci of infantile development, they are likely to have close associations with potentially frightening infantile feelings and with repressed infantile wishes. This may not be entirely fortuitous. The «source domains» of conceptual metaphor tend to come down to simple, basic, bodily experiences, many of which go back to the earliest part of our lives and inevitably partake of irrational infantile fears and wishes. Take the much-analyzed «container» schema. As Mark Turner (1994) has pointed out, our initial awareness of the container schema has a great deal to do with our «early experience with objects going into or out of the body» (p. 96). Of that early experience a very high proportion concerns the activities of nursing and excreting. Consequently, our very concept of a container is colored from the outset by the infantile fantasies and wishes and fears connected with those two activities. The influence of infantile emotions could certainly help to explain why nursery school children seem to have strong defenses against speaking metaphorically of people as *soft* or *warm* or *hard*. Children of that age are just emerging from a time when they passionately experienced people as having those qualities literally. They may still be too close to the feelings and fantasies involved to want to be reminded of them.

Those feelings and fantasies, however, normally remain repressed more or less throughout life. This suggests that if Asch and Nerlove's oldest subjects no longer engaged in denial, their being older may not in itself be a sufficient explanation. I suspect that the original denial in fact comes from *two* causes. One is, as I have been saying, the libidinally invested nature of the terms that Asch and Nerlove asked about. The other is the frightening nature of the metaphoric link itself.

Three of the very few psychoanalysts who have written on conceptual metaphor (Borbely, 1998; Carveth, 1984 and unpublished manuscript; Modell, 1997) all, independently of one another, lay great stress on the same phenomenon: the tendency of analytic patients (and others) to «literalize» metaphor – to take it as expressing complete identification and thus to perceive absolute, rigid equivalencies between entities which in reality bear only a metaphorical resemblance to each other. This phenomenon, which is among other things the basis of transference, is very common in neurosis and it is typical of schizophrenia.

«Literalization» of this kind means non-differentiation – a failure to discriminate. Now, the potential for non-differentiation is especially associated with the experience of the new-born infant. It used to be a commonplace that the new-born fails to discriminate one object from another, internal reality from external reality, self from other. Today we have evidence that from birth on the infant does in fact make significant discriminations. But clearly an infant's ability to differentiate is weaker than an adult's or an older child's – and also it is *different*. There is good reason to believe, for example, that new-borns live in a largely synesthetic (in the sense of cross-modal) world (Maurer, 1993; Maurer & Maurer, 1988; Meltzoff & Moore, 1993; Stern, 1985).

When this infantile synesthesia recedes – normally very early on – it probably does so on account of anatomical changes in the brain – a normal part of development. And this early physiological shift from a neo-natal to a more mature type of perception may have important consequences apart from the obvious ones. Such a shift means that at a certain point in development the older infant or very young child finds himself perceiving the world in a significantly different – and more highly differentiated – way than in the recent past. If he retained any memories of his earlier modes of perception, they would necessarily be extremely shadowy and insubstantial. Given our tendency to structure experience in terms of polarities, the older infant or very young child might well «retranscribe» this tenuous memory into a vague, pre-conscious (or unconscious) sense of an earlier time characterized by «non-differentiation» or «unity» and contrasted with the «differentiated» present. This oversimplified and partially fictitious representation of the past would also include a feeling of having had even more difficulty than at present in making sense of the world and of having been even more helpless and dependent. (That earlier period might also appear, in retrospect, to have had certain advantages: fusion, omnipotence, and so on.)

Now, most adult logic and perception depend utterly on the ability to differentiate. Consequently, anyone who feels significant uncertainty about his own ability to make correct «adult» discriminations will, I suspect, be subject to unconscious fears of losing his grip on reality. In such a situation, metaphorical utterances, which on the face of it deny differentiation and discrimination, would be particularly frightening.

In an adult, fears of losing one's ability to discriminate are relatively rare. They may take the form of fear of madness. But in young children, whose mastery of differentiation is more recent and less confident, unconscious fears of this sort will be stronger and more frequent. They are likely to take the form of fear of regression to an earlier time of life – one which may have its appeal but which is nevertheless frightening since it is remembered as a time of intellectual and physical helplessness. Fears like this cannot arise *very* early on, since the opposition undifferentiated/differentiated cannot be constructed until after the child has already had some experience of post-neo-natal differentiation. But such would be the case with those three and four year olds who responded with vehement denial to suggestions that people could be *deep* or *hard*.

These, then, are my four hypotheses:

- (1) There exists a kind of associative substrate which links the individual's pre-verbal experience to subsequently acquired conceptual metaphors.
- (2) Until puberty a kind of repression operates that interferes with conscious understanding of many conceptual metaphors.
- (3) One reason for this repression is that many conceptual metaphors arise out of experience involving parts of the body that are libidinally invested during early development.
- (4) The nature of the metaphorical link, which implies the possibility of full identity between two different things, is itself frightening, since it recalls a very early period of life characterized (in memory) both by a relative inability to differentiate and by nearly total helplessness.

This last hypothesis would, incidentally, explain the re-awakening of interest in metaphor near the age of puberty. A child emerging from latency feels confident of her ability to use language literally and to analyze the world in terms of conventional adult categories. Fear of regression to a «non-differentiated» phase has receded, and the pre-adolescent is free to discover the metaphorical relations embedded in her language. Indeed, she may be free to *appreciate* metaphor – to experience the gratifying «shock of recognition» that it entails. For much of the feeling of numinousness involved may come from a connection between the operation of metaphor and unconscious memories (fictitious though they may in part be) of the *positive* aspects of the time of non-differentiation – unity with one's surroundings linked to a kind of mental omnipotence.

All of this is speculative, of course. But at least some of my hypotheses are, I think, testable. And testability is important to me because if these hypotheses were to be tested and confirmed, that confirmation would help to establish a principle to which, at present, cognitive scientists pay too little attention: that there is significant interaction between the «cognitive» unconscious of cognitive science and the «dynamic» unconscious of psychoanalysis.

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# Puzzled Masculinity II: Michael Bay's *Pearl Harbor*

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While Franziska Schößler's article deals with the staging and performing of masculinity in *Fight Club*, this text focuses on homosexual connotations of male bonding and their dissolution or non-dissolution in Michael Bay's *Pearl Harbor* (USA 2001). Bay's film is an ambitious enterprise: not only because it has claims to the title of *Most Expensive Movie Ever*,<sup>1</sup> costing more than 200 million US-dollars after the initial – already sky-rocketing – estimate of 140 million, but because the subject chosen by the producers Bruckheimer and Bay, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, is one of the fundamental American traumata (comparable in its alarming and startling effects only to Vietnam or to last year's September 11). Film critics seem to agree that the movie fails mainly because of its subject: it doesn't illuminate clearly enough the complex political circumstances of America's entering the war – so they say –; in a way, the United States as well as the aggressor Japan come off too well. On the one hand, the film does not mention that Roosevelt was actually looking for a reason to enter the war. It is never brought up, for instance, that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor didn't come quite as unexpected as the movie is suggesting: all valuable aircraft carriers had been moved long before the attack, leaving behind outdated battleships. «The Japanese only destroyed a bunch of old hardware», an unidentified admiral is quoted by journalist John Gregory Dunne in the *New Yorker*. «They basically did us a favor».<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the film

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<sup>1</sup> Cast: Ben Affleck, Josh Hartnett, Kate Beckinsale, William Lee Scott, James King, Alec Baldwin, Cuba Gooding Jr.; directed by: Michael Bay; screenplay: Randall Wallace; cinematography: John Schwartzman; production design: Nigel Phelps; art direction: Jon Billington, William Ladd Skinner; set decoration: Jennifer Williams; costume design: Michael Kaplan.

*Pearl Harbor* made 198 million US-dollars, rendering it the third most successful movie of 2001. It ranks 38th on the *Best Movies of All Time*, inflation included it still comes in 94th. However, both no. 2 of 2001, *Shrek* (USA, d: Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson), as well as no. 1, *Harry Potter* (USA, d: Chris Columbus), were a lot less expensive (budget *Pearl Harbor*: 152, takings 198, budget *Shrek*: 60, takings 268, budget *Harry Potter*: 130, takings up to date 286 million dollars). To cover its expenses on the cinema market a movie should take in double its budget; *Pearl Harbor* did not succeed in doing this.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hütlin: «Top Gun in Pearl Harbor», in: *Der Spiegel* 22 (2001), S. 238.

doesn't consider the attack on Pearl Harbor as an act of Japanese imperialism but as one of economical reasoning. Roger Ebert states: «[A]ccording to this movie, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor because America cut off its oil supply, and they were down to an 18 months reserve. Would going to war restore the fuel sources? Did they perhaps also have imperialist designs? Movie doesn't say.»<sup>3</sup> The 'friendly' interpretation of the story was possibly motivated by designs for the Japanese film market. The producers Bruckheimer and Bay were aiming to market their movie worldwide, not only in the USA. Dramaturgically *Pearl Harbor* tries to imitate – and to outdo – Cameron's *Titanic* (USA 1997). In *Titanic* we are faced with two – skillfully connected – stories: the movie tells the story of the shipwreck of the 'mythic' luxury liner, taking the life of fifteen hundred people; and it tells cinema's favorite story: *boy meets girl* – in a (slightly modified) version of *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>4</sup> Two young people, she upper class, he an underprivileged chap from Wisconsin, who has been trying to make it in Paris as an artist, fall in love with each other and choose to live their love against all odds. Bay copies the blend of catastrophe and love story, and he complicates it, turns the boy-meets-girl-pattern into *Jules et Jim*. He also complicates, he 'exceeds' the topic of catastrophe: Bay doesn't sink *one* ship but a whole fleet, the one anchoring in Pearl Harbor.

The story of *Pearl Harbor* in a nut shell: Two friends from Tennessee (*Tennessee* was also the working title of the movie) join the air force. One of them, Rafe (Ben Affleck), falls in love with the nurse Evelyn (Kate Beckinsale), but still volunteers for aerial combat over England. His plane is shot down and Rafe is declared dead. The girlfriend and his best friend Danny (Josh Hartnett) grieve for him – and what is bound to happen, happens in best melodramatic manner: Danny and Evelyn find comfort in *each other*. Evelyn gets pregnant – just when Rafe – who was saved by French fishermen – returns to duty on Pearl Harbor naval base. A private catastrophe for all three of them – which the film tops with the American, the national one: Japanese planes sink the American pacific fleet with their bombs, several thousand sailors die. Nevertheless, Rafe and Danny – both terrific pilots – manage to shoot down six Japanese bombers in aerial combat. They are decorated with medals and trained for the American counter-attack, the bombardment of Tokyo under the command of Doolittle. Danny is killed in this counter-offensive reminiscent of a suicide or kamikaze commando. Evelyn's love trouble is thus solved: together with Rafe she raises Danny's son (who looks just like his father) – a storybook family.

So much for an overview of the three hours long movie. In the following I will be interested mainly in how the movie deals with concepts and constructions of gender. As a starting point I take the notion that gender texts in movies not only organize the *plot* but the whole *system of representation*. There are simply no narrative models (including cinematic ones) which do not semantically encode gender. To name just one genre example: when a cowboy rides into the wilderness of the prairie in a conventional Western movie, this action is a *gendered one*. The active and mobile, traditionally 'male' hero is penetrating a 'female' space (which is dangerous, mysterious and uncanny, signifying the dark unknown continent Sigmund Freud wasn't the first to equate with 'womanliness'; in this case, the countryside is a substitute for the female body). This structure does not depend on the biologically predetermined sex of the hero (however, the hero is more often a man than a woman). Therefore, an analysis of the gendering of spaces, of the re-construction of gender-topics deals with a relatively fixed 'cast' of gendered rooms, costumes, properties, focuses

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Ebert: «Pearl Harbor», in: Chicago Sun-Times [[http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert\\_reviews/2001/05/052501.html](http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/2001/05/052501.html)].

<sup>4</sup> The main difference to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is the social inequality between Rose and Jack. Shakespeare's heroes stem from hostile families, but they belong to the same class; both are of patrician families. What makes the *Titanic* audience associate the *Romeo and Juliet* pattern is the strikingly young age of the lovers (and DiCaprio is even younger than Winslet). What is more, before shooting *Titanic* DiCaprio was successful in a movie adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (*Romeo + Juliet*, USA 1996, d: Baz Luhrmann). His fans will have remembered that.

or montages – governed by the cultural image repertoire. Nevertheless, such an analysis will always need to examine these stereotypical patterns with much scrutiny and allow for their possible subversion.

Applying this to Bay's film, the story of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is told as the story of a rape: the extremely virile Japanese overpower the American naval fleet in her shell-shaped harbor 'from behind', the military action is staged as a sexual act, as the penetration of ships by torpedoes and bombs. This partly explains the humiliation that Pearl Harbor has come to mean for the USA: Hawaii, as *pars pro toto* for the country, is taken 'like a woman', or, to be more precise: like a gay man. Only the counterattack – Bay's film tells us – can restore America's active masculinity. It therefore makes sense that the projected American counter-attack against Japan and Nazi-Germany is also visualized as a penetration: President Roosevelt keeps a little Hitler figure on his desk, whose behind takes the shape of a small cushion, in which needles can be stuck. The genre conflict between patriotic war movie and melodrama, processed by *Pearl Harbor*, is brought to a standstill on a level best described as a gender-topographical one. Not only the love plot but also the catastrophe is concerned with acts of penetration. The ones penetrating the passive American people (i.e. the dormant pacific fleet), the Japanese, are portrayed (and this is what distinguishes *Pearl Harbor* from Hollywood's representational conventions) as exceedingly 'virile' (not a trace of the traditional semantic encoding of the orient, including Japan, as 'female', first illustrated by Said in his well-known book *Orientalism*)<sup>5</sup>.

Bay's re-enactment of the Japanese bomb-raid on Pearl Harbor is a forceful one. The movie is practically obsessed with bombs, their launching and their impact.<sup>6</sup> The primal scene of the movie, according to the director the scene all other scenes were developed from, is the focus in which the camera closely trails a bomb that penetrates a battle ship, blowing it up in an enormous explosion. Bay's film stages the 'trial of fate' Pearl Harbor as a wake-up-call for dormant America through the rape of Hawaii. Hawaii, of all places – hence not the 'real' America that the Midwestern boys Rafe and Danny come from (those two who will eventually take revenge for the rape).

The Japanese strike against Hawaii is described as an attack with a hammer, the Doolittle command on the other hand as a needle piercing in places where it hurts. The alignment of war and penetration, the narrative model about the activation of 'real' masculinity, can also be applied to the love story. On his last night with Evelyn<sup>7</sup> before his departure for England – the United States have not yet entered the war –, Rafe denies Evelyn the *physical* love she is longing for (demonstrating some sort of mental impotence, to say the least). Trying to rationalize it, he explains that he doesn't want her to regret anything afterwards, but not even Ev is convinced. Hence Rafe is portrayed as someone who cannot fulfil his chores of penetration. What is more: on his first date with Ev his nose is injured (an injury she isn't altogether innocent of); more 'evidence', presented at 'face value' so to speak, hinting at the fact that his masculinity, or more precisely: his *performing* masculinity, is a rather troubled one. Ironically, the nurses, including Ev, are much less troubled with their 'male performance'. The 'nurse with the needle' or syringe, literally and figuratively pricking and piercing the soldier-men, comes to be one of the running gags in the early stages of

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Said: *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books 1978.

<sup>6</sup> «The trailer already scared the audience, in one scene you could see a bomb falling from the sky, from above, because the camera followed it right behind; and the movie keeps its promise: the small propellers, obviously stabilizing the flight path of Japanese bombs, are filmed with more consideration and thoughtfulness than the pretty nose of the even prettier Kate Beckinsale. Again and again the camera's gaze plummets down on Pearl Harbor, as if the film was the bomb whose explosions it shows» (Claudius Seidel: «Verdummt in alle Ewigkeit. Vorsicht, Explosionsgefahr: Wie ich lernte, die Bomben zu lieben», in: sueddeutsche.de [http://www.sueddeutsche.de/index.php?url=/kultur/kino/leinwand/12273/index.php, my translation C.L.]).

<sup>7</sup> Evelyn is generally called Ev throughout the movie, thus carrying the most generic of all female names.

the movie. Later on, their self-possessed and composed attitude will allow these nurses to tend to the wounded of Pearl Harbor with strong determination and willpower.

I have already mentioned that Bay's film takes up features of Cameron's *Titanic*, especially the female connotation of ships (in *Pearl Harbor* planes, too, are feminine: near the end of the movie the big B-52 has to 'loose weight' as if she was an oversized lady). The semantic encoding of ships as 'female' is part of the cultural system of representation and is staged in grand manner by the movie Bay's film imitates: by Cameron's *Titanic*. In the initial sequences of the film, treasure hunters approach the mythic Titanic using the latest underwater technology.<sup>8</sup> Their interest in the ship is a pecuniary one; they believe an extremely precious stone with the poetic name *Le Cœur de la mer* to be hidden in the safe of one of the luxury cabins. The jewel refers to the 'treasure' of a woman, her virginity<sup>9</sup> – and the ship is also a virginal one: Rose and Jack, the two protagonists, witness her erotically charged 'maiden voyage' ("nobody had ever slept in these beds", Rose says). The crew fears no expenses to own the treasure, the 'heart of the ocean'; equipped with a submarine and with robots it explores the amorphous, dark, mysterious depth of the ocean, a *terra incognita* harbouring the enigmatic shipwreck. Just as the ship herself is, of course, a *She* (in the English language even grammatically), so the depths of the ocean stand in for the dark, unknown continent western systems of representation generally equate with femaleness.<sup>10</sup> A small robot penetrates the shipwreck through a hole in her 'body', a whole that reminds us of the *vagina dentata* of the cultural image repertoire. (Intimate) views of womanliness are exposed to the voyeuristic gaze of the robot's left eye. The robot moves into a bedroom that contains a safe which the crew forces open, assuming that it holds the treasure of femaleness, the *Cœur de la mer*. This object of desire, the bijou, is hidden in *Pearl Harbor*, too (judging by its name at least): the haven is shell-shaped, the assumption that it harbors a secret pearl goes without saying. The Japanese, however, approach 'from behind' (mirroring the homosexual grounding of the love story), they advance from the hinterland; the film doesn't once show the Japanese submarines that attacked the American ships by sea.

Let's return to Cameron. When Jack and Rose are sleeping together on the maiden voyage of the Titanic an iceberg rips up the ship's body: the penetration of Rose and the penetration of the Titanic are aligned, little death and great death correlate with each other. *Pearl Harbor* takes up this sexual-metaphorical composition of *Titanic*. It doesn't only imitate Cameron's catastrophe epic, however, but an assembly of melodramas of the 30s and 40s. The images of *Pearl Harbor* don't refer to a – however – 'real' 1940s America but to the mediated representation of a celluloid 'antebellum America', portrayed in the romantic movies of the 30s and 40s. Even the triangle love story Bay's film employs, reminds us of the melodramas of those decades, above all of *Casablanca*. *Pearl Harbor*, however, makes it perfectly clear that it is not really about relationships between men and women. The fascinating couple in *Pearl Harbor* is neither Rafe and Ev nor Ev and Danny, both relationships seem to lack emotional energy. The real couple, the one going 'way back', is Danny and Rafe; they love each other, they protect each other: it's only logical that they share everything, even the woman. Ev merely functions as a copula, the linking element described by

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<sup>8</sup> The crew trying to haul the treasures from the shipwreck Titanic, equipped with every conceivable means of the latest technology, is quite obviously blind to the lesson the catastrophe of the Titanic teaches in technical hubris and its destructive outcome.

<sup>9</sup> The bijou doesn't only refer to virginity but also to its loss, to defloration (and promiscuity – Madame Bijou in Jack's port folio is a representative of it). The film demonstrates that jewellery stands in for the (female) sex, when Rose is given the 'heart' with her fiancé asking her to open her heart to him. Rose covers the stone with her hand, the gesture implying the protection of her genital. On the alignment of 'bijou' and the female genital cf. Diderot's, *Les Bijoux indiscrets*.

<sup>10</sup> The ground of the ocean coming into view is almost reminiscent of a lunar landscape – and the appliances for its exploration remind us of the robots used to investigate satellites: the moon, too, is traditionally referred to as female (in the German language merely not grammatically).

Sedgwick – ‘where man meets man’.<sup>11</sup> The female protagonist acts as a mediator between the two friends: through her the men are able to experience physical contact with each other – through the possession of Ev’s body or Ev’s love. Because of Ev Danny and Rafe wrestle with each other, because of Ev’s pregnancy the friends basically co-father a child. Henry Taylor of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* already observed the homosexual grounding of the movie in his review.<sup>12</sup> Taylor considers the American attack a vehicle for the solution of a “homoerotic love conflict between the three main protagonists towards a heterosexual liaison”.<sup>13</sup> One might ask, however, how ‘successful’ the solution of the homosexual love trouble really is. If one takes a closer look, the film essentially ends the way it started: in the opening sequence we watch young Rafe and young Danny flying over the vast lands of Tennessee. In the final sequences we again see Rafe, this time with Little-Danny, who looks just like his father (late Danny senior). The portrait of homosociality that starts the film off seems to carry a pederastic tint. We are faced with male parthogenesis. After the lover/friend dies, Rafe continues – keeping up the Castor-Pollux-constellation – with Little-Danny; the woman beside them doesn’t interest (and therefore doesn’t bother) anyone. Rafe will teach Little-Danny how to fly (just as he taught Danny senior) and he will grapple with him (just as he did with Little-Danny’s father) in acrobatic air games and mock battles, that are really playful and frisky love games – flying, Bay’s film makes this perfectly clear, is an analogy of having sex. And it is war that allows men to deliver spectacular and acrobatic aerial battles – it is war that allows men to hold close another man as if they were holding a woman. When Danny dies, after having saved Rafe’s life in the Doolittle command, he lies in Rafe-Pietà’s lap like the figure of Christ after he was taken down from the cross.<sup>14</sup> Rafe actually functions as a screen woman in this scene: he tells Danny that he is going to be a father, as if he, Rafe, was the pregnant woman. And of course, Danny’s death proves to us that we are faced with a genuine ‘romantic love story’: one that can only be verified as such through the death of at least one of its partners.

The significance of the Doolittle command probably lies in enabling such images of the two men lying in each other’s arms, rather than in displaying American retaliatory force. Doolittle’s name seems to be a telling one: he *really* does little; the damage the American bombers inflict on Tokyo are not to be underestimated, but it is no match for the disaster at Pearl Harbor. Even dramaturgically the Doolittle command doesn’t level out the almost one hour long Pearl Harbor sequence: the score is not even yet, this is made very clear to the audience, the *real* punishment for the Japanese is yet to come. By staging the ‘imbalance’ in such a blatant way, Bay’s movie seems to promote an explanatory context for US-martial action unmentioned by the film: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The movie is hence dealing with that nuclear bomb not even featured in its images and its soundtrack.<sup>15</sup>

Bay’s war movie portrays the kind of homosociality so characteristic of the genre and – so it seems – of war itself. The final sequence then, presenting a ‘normal’ heterosexual all-American family, seems to be promoting traditional family values. A closer look, however, reveals that the heterosexual patchwork family<sup>16</sup> only serves as a screen for the truly relevant relationship: the one

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<sup>11</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: *Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press 1985.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also Georg Seeßlen: «Liebe wird durch Krieg erst schön. Michael Bays ‘Pearl Harbor’ ist ein Film aus dem Geist von Propaganda, Computerspiel und Seifenoper», in: *Die Zeit* 24 (7. Juni 2001), S. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Taylor: «Lovestory mit Schlachtenlärm. ‘Pearl Harbor’ oder Wie Jerry Bruckheimer und Disney sich den Zweiten Weltkrieg vorstellen», in: *NZZ Online* [<http://www.nzz.ch/2001/06/08/fi/page-article7FQBL.html>].

<sup>14</sup> This, too, is part of the iconographical program of the movie.

<sup>15</sup> And it also alludes to the Holocaust: the scene in which Ev divides the soldiers into those who will live and those who will have to die: the nurse as Parca and supervisor of a concentration camp.

<sup>16</sup> Which, by the way, resembles an advertisement for some family-oriented product. Bay’s film, it has rightfully been maintained, is highly influenced by the aesthetics of commercial advertising.

between Rafe and Little-Danny. These two climb on board the plane, Ev stays behind. Family values, so it seems, might not be restored but dismissed by the end of the movie. To put it in Paul de Man's useful terms: the film doesn't practise what it preaches. Pretending to tell us about the solution of a homoerotic love conflict – it *shows* us how homoerotic wishes can survive within the traditional family.

# Body double/body politic: Psychoanalysis and cultural binary in *Fatal Attraction*

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## BODY DOUBLE AS BODY POLITIC: PSYCHOSOCIAL MYTH IN ADRIAN LYNE'S *FATAL ATTRACTION*

When *Fatal Attraction* appeared in 1987 it was generally dismissed as a formulaic Hollywood horror movie: Film critic Roger Ebert dubbed it «Friday the 13th for grownups».<sup>1</sup> The narrative is all too predictable (particularly for those who are familiar with Lyne's other work): a happily married Manhattan attorney Dan Gallagher (Michael Douglas) engages in a weekend sexual encounter with a single woman named Alex Forrest (Glen Close) while his family is out of town. The woman refuses to relinquish the relationship and threatens to destroy his domestic life. Neither director Adrian Lyne nor screenwriter James Deardon (who had written an earlier version of the story which appeared as the BBC film *Diversion* (1979) are interested in investigating the dynamics or relational issues in marital infidelity or the motivations driving the husband's behavior.<sup>2</sup> The fact that instead of engaging in such character development the film retreats to the conventions of the horror/monster film genre is precisely because it is unable to resolve the conflicts that it projects; in its inability to express ambivalence in a conscious capacity the film exhibits the «blind spot» that has led to the characterization of the screen itself as «something of a symptom» by film theorist Judith Mayne (1990, p. 41). In this context, reading the film as a manifestation of the contemporary collective psyche and socio-political reality proves a more productive enterprise.

*Fatal Attraction* belongs to a group of Hollywood films that emerged in the post-feminist period of 1980's and early '90's which might well be called «backlash» films applying Faludi's model (1991) of establishment male reaction to changes in women's economic and political status. Such films as *Sea of Love* (1990), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Black Widow* (1987), *Disclosure* (1994), and *Working Girl* (1988) depict women who either through sexual seduction or professional power

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<sup>1</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 18, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Lyne said in a recent interview about the film's narrative motivation: «It just happened... It's just a story about everyday people.» *Fatal Attraction* DVD, Paramount, 2001. In contrast, Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (2000) was to provide a far more psychologically realized analysis of sexual jealousy, fantasy, and infidelity in marriage.

seek to dominate or destroy a male protagonist overwhelmed by the female drive to possess, devour or annihilate him. Psychoanalytic interpretations of the cinematic convention of the predatory woman stalking a helpless male (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1993; Lurie, 1981/2; Modelski, 1988) have suggested that popular Hollywood mainstream cinema produced and for the most part directed by males (although *Fatal Attraction* was co-produced by a woman, Sherry Lansing) are projections of male anxiety about their «castration» or loss of potency – i.e. loss of exclusive dominance and entitlement in the workplace, the bedroom, the military and other institutional domains. As such, these films represent a form of cultural myth-making which seeks to regain a sense of control over the social forces threatening traditional patriarchal order and stability. The myth in these backlash films is embodied in the cinematic image of the female predator, who represents the monstrous or murderous nature of feminine power; the social message behind the myth is that women who have large appetites for competition, exertion of will and assertion of their own needs must indeed be monsters-unnatural, grotesque, and most decidedly «unfeminine». Ultimately, they must be destroyed and contained if order – i.e. male dominated order – is to be restored. Thus *Fatal Attraction*'s use of the horror genre template goes beyond convention to serve as an expression of the unconscious need to kill off the invading monster who would destroy not only hearth and home but also the fundamental organization of power and dominance in domestic life, where a man's home is indeed his castle. The female «monster» in *Fatal Attraction* becomes, in the most literal and symbolic sense, a man's worst nightmare.

Beyond the psycho-social context, which must also include acknowledgement of the growing anxiety in the 1980's about the AIDS epidemic, it is the projected subjectivity of husband-lover Dan Gallagher's opposing relationship to the two women in his life that best reflects the gender binary informing the cultural construct of the feminine. And since that construct has been historically split between the maternal and the sexual – the traditional Madonna/whore dichotomy – the Kleinian psychoanalytic model of the paranoid-schizoid position provides the most useful frame in which to investigate the unconscious anxieties of both the film and its audience. Klein re-frames Freud's opposing libidinal and aggressive impulses as loving vs. destructive self objects which in the primitive pre-oedipal stage are projected outside the self in an attempt to control them. The terrible fear of annihilation and outside invasion takes the form of persecutory anxiety (i.e. the paranoid) while the schizoid «splitting» is a projective defense to keep the hated part from «contaminating» the good. Thus the paranoid-schizoid position informs both external and internal reality: «There is a malevolent breast trying to destroy me, which I must escape from and destroy (first)... There is also a good breast that loves me and protects me and which I in turn love and protect» (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 93-94).

Gallagher's inability to fuse the aggressive and nurturant parts of his psyche, to merge his disparate needs for safety, security, and order on the one hand; and the drive for sexual excitement, destruction, and the orgiastic possibilities within the darker side of disordered experience on the other; is first embodied and then «projected» onto the screen in the forms of mistress and wife, split representations of the feminine. Alex Forrest's sexual promiscuity and aggression, her dangerous manipulation and seductiveness, is continually contrasted to Gallagher's wife Beth (Ann Archer) who is the domesticated «good» woman, the moral center of the family and source of maternity, order, and stability. The cinematic vehicle which serves as a visual code expressing this split is the motif of the double, in which mise en scene, cinematography and narrative structure illuminate the psychic polarization that the two females images represent.

Each woman is associated with two contrasting worlds, the urban and the pastoral, a doubling which is played out in the film's settings and imagery. In the opening shot, the camera slowly pans across the New York cityscape of rooftops and watertowers silhouetted against a lurid orange sunset, while an eerily silent sound track is broken only by sounds of traffic rising from below – the rush of a train, honking cars – as the camera closes in on a window in an apartment building to reveal the Gallaghers getting dressed for a party, a scene designed to immediately establish the

domestic equilibrium of a happy family unit.<sup>3</sup> Gallagher's wife Beth is intent on moving to the suburbs – and cajoles her reluctant husband into buying a house there. It is worth noting a doubling here in that Beth uses her sexuality with her husband in the service of attaining a suburban domestic paradise, whereas Alex uses it for seduction and sexual possession. The new home is imaged in the film as veritable pastoral idyll – complete with lush foliage, spacious gardens, and the proverbial white picket fence. Inside the hearth burns cheerily, the little daughter romps with the family dog, homey colonial furniture and paintings adorn the spotless kitchen. In stark contrast to this tidy bucolic paradise, Alex Forrest dwells in an urban Hades: she lures Dan to her loft in the bowels of the city, a meat packing district where fires burn in trash barrels ghoulishly illuminating raw and bloody carcasses. Shadowy figures of nighttime revelers emerge and disappear into dimly lit alleys. After dancing all night at a Latin music club, Alex engages Gallagher in a wild sexual orgy in a huge creaking freight elevator. In short, Alex Forrest is a denizen of the urban underworld – and looks the part. Her fingernails are long and painted red, her hair is a wild tangle of loose curls, and in one scene she greets Gallagher wearing an undergarment straight from a bordello wardrobe; she is depicted as the «wicked woman», a modern day siren who would lure the innocent husband from his happy home.

The doubling motif underscores the duality between the two women in Gallagher's life in another major aspect of the feminine, that of the maternal. Much of the narrative revolves around Alex's insistence that she is pregnant with Gallagher's child, which she uses to confront him with his responsibility as she continues to stalk him and his family. The film contextualizes the possibility of her maternity as unnatural and highly suspect – she will stop at nothing to get her man – and she is so pathological and monstrous in her rage at rejection that the prospect of maternity is designed to repulse the viewer. The doubling of the maternal as sinister, *i.e.* the good mother/bad mother, occurs in a peak moment in the film when Alex spirits Ellen, the Gallagher's daughter, from her school; here the editing continuously cuts from the panic stricken «real» mother searching for her abducted child to the false mother holding Ellen's hand and taking her on a wild roller coaster ride in an amusement park. The little girl screams in combined terror and delight at the thrilling danger of the roller coaster, another doubling, this time of her father Dan's ambivalent attraction the wild freedom Alex represents. As the imposter-mother drops the child off after their escapade, she asks for a good bye kiss. The child dutifully responds, as if she accepts this stranger as a sufficiently recognizable facsimile of her «real» mother.

The relationship with Alex Forrest forces Gallagher to confront his own sexual animalism and aggression as she displays her own. Here the images of the film suggest the conflicted subjectivity of its protagonist through doubling of scene and setting as the camera cuts constantly between the two worlds of the urban loft and the suburban home. The first sexual encounter with Alex, depicted as a moment of great passion and wild abandon, takes place in Alex's loft kitchen – literally on the sink filled with dirty dishes. The kitchen represents the domestic world as well, and in fact in an ensuing scene Alex cooks a spaghetti dinner for Gallagher. Later, however, he returns to the same kitchen, this time in a murderous rage, and the struggle between him and Alex for a kitchen knife generates the same sexual energy as when they had made love. His face contorts with brutal fury as he grips her neck and smashes her head against the tile of her bathroom while the sounds of breaking glass and furniture are amplified in the best horror genre tradition. Gallagher's face is distorted with rage, both are sweating and gasping for breath, much like they were depicted in the earlier sex scene in the kitchen. Once again, Alex turns on the faucet in the kitchen sink and splashes water on her face, providing yet another doubling image. After Gallagher releases her, Alex's face takes on a smile of gratification as if she has just had an orgasm.

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<sup>3</sup> This scene is the first of several references to Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), which also begins with a camera voyeuristically entering through a window into a room where a woman is dressed in her underwear.

The return to the loft kitchen also allows us to «double back» in time to trace Gallagher's descent into increasingly more unrestrained behavior. As he struggles to push back against the desire of forbidden untapped passions and aggressive drives, his only resolution to the conflict would appear to be to destroy the woman who embodies these desires. As Elizabeth Cowie points out in her discussion of the femme fatale in *film noir*: «The violent retribution so often enacted upon the femme fatale by the plot and/or the male hero bears witness not so much to patriarchal ideology as to the man's inverse desire to control and punish the object of desire who has unmanned him by arousing his passive desire» (1993, p. 125).

And indeed, Alex «unmans» Gallagher after arousing that desire. At their very first encounter at the office cocktail party she taunts him for his domesticated state: «Better run along», she teases as his wife beckons from across the room. The ensuing scene shows him very much domesticated: his desire for sex with his wife must be postponed for household chores – walking the dog, attending to his daughter; in a later scene, he stares longingly at his wife's half-dressed body as she puts on her lipstick but his initiation of lovemaking is interrupted by the arrival of dinner guests. Although the film takes pains to idealize the erotic possibilities of the marriage, it never allows for their sexual fulfillment; and in fact there are no scenes showing the conjugal couple making love. Beth Gallagher remains an elusive object of desire, thus representing the pure maternal aspect of the feminine split off from the sexual.

Conversely, Alex Forrest both encourages Gallagher's sexual desire and challenges him to risk the security of his domestic ties; she is the knowing adult, the sophisticated woman of the world, who sees his vulnerability and mockingly chastises him for «being a naughty boy». Initially Gallagher is intrigued and allows the seduction, but he is also frightened by his new lover's wild energy and exhausted by her sexual appetite. His passivity to stop her advances is most apparent in the scene where he discovers she has gained entrance to his New York apartment and stands helplessly trapped between her and his wife as Alex weaves her spider's web of deception and invasion of his domestic bastion. Gallagher is indeed lost in this Forrest-spun web; he is, after all, a «babe in the woods» in her experienced hands. As Alex continues to stalk her prey, invading his suburban idyll, killing the pet rabbit (thus the term «bunny boiler» which has since entered colloquial gender terminology) and blowing up his car (another assault on his masculinity!) the film's cinematic elements dramatize Gallagher's heightened fear and sense of loss of control over his domain: the telephone's shrill ring shatters the peace of the Edenic home, the editing and pacing of scenes becomes more jagged and the camera angles unnaturally tilted, employing Dutch-angle shots to reflect not only Alex's psychological imbalance but also Gallagher's own confusion at a world fast spinning out of his control. This is the nightmare vision of a disruption in the social order which would render him passive and conquered by the sexual power and dominance of unrestrained female energy-as well as a visualization of the paranoid fear of annihilation from outside the self.

Male anxiety at the prospect of impotence in such a world is underscored by the climactic bathroom scene. The interplay of doubling between the two women finds final expression here as Alex and Beth struggle symbolically not only for the man but also for their lives. Wiping the fog from the bathroom mirror, the wife looks into the mirror just before the assault only to see the reflection of the Other Woman. As the struggle between the two ensues, the knife-wielding Alex asserts her possession of the home and the man: «What are you doing here?» she demands of the terrified wife. Have the roles reversed, or is Alex disintegrating into psychosis? To add to the

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted here that not only has Alex cut herself in a previous scene – slashing her wrists when Gallagher tries to leave her loft – but she is often explained in psychopathological terms as a characterization of

confusion of identity, the scene is shot with sufficient ambiguity that, despite Alex's grimace as she rips a white robe, it is difficult to discern whose body she is cutting – her own or that of her rival.<sup>4</sup>

While Gallagher would appear to have regained his prior place as head of his household and protector of its occupants (he is seen locking all the doors as his wife is taking her bath upstairs to keeping out the alien invasion from the Other Woman) it is in actuality his wife, not he, who ultimately vanquishes Alex Forrest. True to the Hollywood horror genre formula, the monster does not die readily: Gallagher once again attempts to destroy her using the knife, then strangling and drowning her, but she rises from the watery bathtub depths for a final assault – only to be killed at last by a gun fired by Beth Gallagher. Indeed, despite all his tough talk and counter-threats, as well as reports to the police, Gallagher's efforts to protect his family and home from the invading predator prove ineffective, symbolic of his inability to fuse his intrapsychic split. In the end it is left to his wife to make good on her threat, announced in a previous scene, in which she tells Alex Forrest: «If you ever come near my family again I'll kill you, you understand?» To quote the Gabbards: «Once again ... Hollywood has recuperated a maternal phallic woman at the expense of a transgressively non-maternal one.» (1993, p. 436).

This impotence of the male protagonist to defend and defeat the female predator is connected to yet another doubling in the film subtext – that of gender duality. The first resonance of a gender binary appears with the name of the central protagonist, «Alex». And indeed throughout the film Alex Forrest represents not only the gender stereotype of femininity as fantasized by the male psyche – seductive, manipulative, changeable, emotionally intense and «irrational» – but also aggressive, independent, and assertive – all traditionally «masculine» gender traits. It is only after Alex manifests the male tendencies of anger, violence and over-assertiveness that she is depicted as monstrous and out of control.

The theme of gender duality recurs with Alex's attack on Gallagher's sexual orientation. Enraged at his rejection of her advances, Alex sends her a vitriolic tape in which she assaults his masculinity. She calls him a «flaming fucking faggot», and taunts: «I bet you don't even like girls do you?» She goes on to suggest he is «probably scared» of girls, a statement in this case not too far from the truth in that we have already noted that he certainly becomes frightened of the strength of Alex's sexual energy and intense drives and impulses. He listens to the accusatory tapes with grim fascination, only torn away by his wife's invitation to bed and with it the re-assurance of his masculine sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, despite the chaotic undermining of traditional gender roles and the assault on male dominance, social and familial order is restored. In the film's final scene the alien intruder is finally vanquished, and peace descends once again upon the Gallagher home. We see Gallagher walk back inside the protected confines of the white picket fence, close the stained glass front door which features a red heart in its center (!), and turn to embrace his wife. As soft nostalgic music swells, the camera slowly pans in and lingers on a happy family photo in the hall as credits roll up

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borderline personality disorder. Her «symptoms» of mood instability, self-mutilation, sexual promiscuity and impulsive behavior, do indeed meet the diagnostic criteria for the disorder (Wedding & Boyd, 1999, pp. 65-68). While the film provides sufficient behavioral «evidence» to establish the psychopathology, Alex's mental illness serves an equally important function in the unconscious psychosocial unease embedded in the film; its anxiety about the power of strong and passionate women who must be contained by a process of marginalization as the alien «other». What more effective way to accomplish this process than to transform this seemingly independent and assertive woman into a madwoman, driven to acts of terror and violence? Alex's descent into insanity is foreshadowed by two images in the film: in the first, after slashing her wrists she is shown wearing a white gown which looks very much like a hospital straight jacket, while in the second, when she floats in the bathtub in her white gown during the final scene, she reminds us of the drowned Ophelia after she has gone mad for love.

<sup>5</sup> A lighter reflection of the theme of sexual ambiguity is the scene in which the couple's daughter is dressed up in top hat and tie rehearsing for the role of Miles Standish in a school play.

the screen. Gallagher's nightmare is over; he has regained his dream of marital bliss and the primacy of the intact family is reinstated. It is easy to read this final image as simply the formulaic conclusion of the horror film genre, where natural order is restored following the defeat of a monstrous destructive force. It is also possible to read it as the appropriate conclusion of a «cautionary» film tale (Kael, 1994, p. 1150) which serves to warn potentially erring mates about the dangers of infidelity with strangers. Thus the film allows the viewer to indulge in a fantasy of sex and adventure while simultaneously providing the opportunity to identify with its moral condemnation of such dangerous and destructive exploits. It is also of interest in this context to note that the film originally was scripted with a different ending in which Alex Forrest commits suicide with the knife that had Gallagher's fingerprints on it in a final attempt to punish and destroy him. Apparently that ending met with disapproval from sample audiences, and was replaced (Wedding & Boyd, 78) with the climactic bathroom scene and the subsequent restoration of domestic harmony. No doubt leaving the male protagonist in danger, still controlled by Alex's malevolence from the grave, would have been too unsettling for the sensibility of the psychological undercurrent that runs through the film.

If *Fatal Attraction* and other films of this period are indeed the manifestations of male anxiety at the perceived threat of loss of social and political power, then the cultural myth of the destructive and devouring predatory woman demands her clear and unequivocal defeat. The male hero may have been sorely tested and tempted, but in the end, he (and his wife) overcome the forces that would subvert the traditional order. Thus he is able to maintain a safe distance from the destructive half of his own internal «double» nature which, while it may remain forever unintegrated within his psyche, gets «projected» onto the screen of popular cinema. In turn, Dan Gallagher's intrapsychic split is «doubled» by his contemporary culture's inability to fuse the erotic sexual with loving nurturant aspects of the feminine. In this regard it is worth noting that Klein follows the primitive paranoid-schizoid state with the more developmentally advanced depressive position which allows for integration and reparative balance between libidinal and aggressive drives. Despite dismal news from Lyne's latest film *Unfaithful* (2002) perhaps we can look forward to replacing cultural as well as psychoanalytic theoretical gender binarism with more fluid possibilities of human experience.

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# The phenomenology of space – Huts

*SHERRY LUTZ ZIVLEY (\*)*

Characters who retreat to either upper rooms or to huts in the wilderness usually do so in order to examine and reconfigure and improve themselves or their condition in the world. In contrast with characters who retreat or are banished to upper rooms, where, alone, they can examine their conscious and subconscious selves in order to confront their individual problems, characters who leave their houses huts, cabins, or other retreats in nature usually do so to escape difficult or intolerable situations in their families or societies. They retreat to huts in the wilderness to reconsider their roles in their family or society and to decide to flee permanently or to reconfigure their roles – in order to gain more autonomy or authenticity and improve their lives or self images

Some retreat from society permanently and achieve a kind of serenity and spirituality that transcends their previous lives. Gaston Bachelard associates the hut with the dwelling place «of primitive man», «the tap-root of the function of inhabiting», and «the hermit's hut» (31). He explains that the hut is «extreme solitude» (32), in which «the hermit is alone before God» in a place of «absolute refuge» (32). Such was the experience, explains Thomas Merton, of the fourth century desert fathers of Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Persia. These «first Christian hermits... abandoned the cities of the pagan world to live in their calls» (1). They did so because their society – «limited by the horizons and prospects of life 'in this world' – was regarded by them as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life» (2). They «were men who did not believe in letting themselves be passively guided and ruled by a decadent state» (4). They did not necessarily «fly from human fellowship» (5). Rather what they sought was «their own true self, in Christ» (6). In another era, in China, Han Shan retreated permanently to Cold Mountain, where there were no trails for men and where «trouble ceases» and his mind is no longer «tangled, hung up» (Snyder 29).

Like these hermits the fictional characters who retreat from society seem to sense intuitively that Abbot Moses in *Scete* was on the right track when he admonished other monks to «Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything» (48). Such characters seek to find themselves, but not necessarily in Christ. They seek to free themselves from the restrictions of their societies or families in order to discover who they are, some by staying apart from those societies or families forever and a few by returning to their societies and families in altered roles. In Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*, Tom Outland and a friend herd cattle near Blue Mesa (Mesa

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Verde), where they discover the Anazazi cliff dwellings, which they excavate. While Outland was in away, seeking Smithsonian in funding, his partner, sells all the artifacts to a German, who takes them out of the country. Only when Outland returns to Blue Mesa alone does he fully experiences the place. He explains that alone in the cliff dwellings

Something had happened in me that made it possible for me to coordinate and simplify, and that process, going on in my mind, brought with it great happiness. It was possession.... For me the mesa was no longer an adventure, but a religious experience.

And he says,

Every morning... I wakened with the feeling that I had found everything, instead of having lost everything. (251)

Without seeking it, he had found what Thoreau went into the woods to find.

Some people retreat to huts permanently in old age, like mature Hindu men, who, when they had finished supporting and raising their families, simply «went into the forest» to live the life of a spiritual hermit. In American fiction, some people retreat from their societies and responsibilities. In Katherine Anne Porter's «The Last Leaf», Nannie, the old Negro woman who was born a slave and stayed on after emancipation as a family retainer, asks for an abandoned cabin, saying, «Lemme go there and pass my last days in peace» (349). Similarly, in William Faulkner's «The Bear», Uncle Buddy and Uncle Buck, seeking only to live apart from the Old South's slave culture, move out of their big house and into a cabin «which the two men built themselves..., refusing to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle, and domiciled all the slaves in the big house» (262). Characters such as these attribute their personal improvement or satisfaction from living alone in their hut apart from civilization.

Some retreat to huts in order to think about their relationships with society and achieve enough serenity to return and live in society untroubled by it. They seek to rejuvenate themselves, then are able to return to their families or societies and maintain their integrity. Henry Thoreau, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, and Richard Brautigan write of such men. Henry Thoreau insists that in civilization, «the mass of men live lives of quiet desperation» (Walden, 35) and explains that there is a «stereotyped but unconscious despair even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind» (36). But Thoreau says, «I went into the woods because I wanted to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived» (47). As a result of his retreat to his cabin at Walden Pond, Thoreau claims to have «learned... that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours» and «new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves and within him» (124). Having learned from his experience in isolation, he can return to civilization and be comfortable there.

The narrator/protagonist in Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, gives up his wandering, but remains apart from city life. He has «come home from Trout Fishing in America» [the process, not the character] and now lives «in this strange cabin above Mill Valley» (92), which is sufficiently remote that it «has no garbage service» (100). That he has been consciously working on his own consciousness is implied by his saying, «It took my whole life to get here» (92). He sleeps outside and takes comfort in the smell of blueberry bushes and the beauty of the quail (94).

Only a very rare few return from their huts and induce change in their families or societies. Such is the case in Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp* and Robert Parker's *Wilderness*. In *The Grass Harp*, five characters, Colin Fenwick (a young adolescent), Dolly Talbo, Catherine (the black servant), a judge, and Riley Henderson, a drop-out who lives in the woods, go to live in a tree house, the first three in protest against Dolly's bullying sister, Verena. As a result of their stay,

Colin gradually gets up enough courage to go north to seek his future, Dolly becomes independent of her sister's bullying, Catherine quits doing the family's work for them, the Judge moves out of his children's house to live happily in a rooming house, and Riley Henderson builds a successful business and falls in love with and eventually marries the smartest girl in school. Verena is forced to quit being a bully, and the Judge and Dolly become enamored with each other.

In Robert Parker's *Wilderness*, Aaron Newman can only make his family safe by going into the wilderness. Newman witnessed a murder and identified a powerful gangster, Adolf Kar, as the murderer. But the gangster has a plant in the police department, and Newman comes home to find his wife bound, gagged, and naked, with the gangster's initials carved on her stomach. The only way Newman can remove the threat from his family is to kill the mobster, which he cannot do in the city, where he would inevitably be caught. Finally he, his wife, and a friend follow Karl and four other gangsters to the Maine woods. There, when the five go on a fishing excursion into the woods, Newman, his wife, and his friend track and kill all five, with Newman's friend being killed in the process. The Newmans are finally safe to return home to a normal life.

Some boys grow to be men by retreating to a hut in the wilderness to be trained by older and much wiser mentors. In Faulkner's «The Bear», Isaac McCaslin grows into a responsible adult as a result of spending many Novembers in a hunting cabin in the Mississippi wilderness». There he learns how to be a hunter and a good man under the tutelage of the half African-American/ half Indian Sam Fathers, who knows about the wilderness and hunting bear. Having lived as an ordinary child until he went hunting with Sam Fathers every November from the time he was ten until he was sixteen, Ike knew «that only after he had served his apprenticeship in the woods would» he be «worthy to be a hunter» (184). After hunting «rabbits and such», he «entered his novitiate» in bear country (185). Ike had felt «that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth» (195). Later he realized that he had achieved a major step when he «knew the bear [Old Ben] was looking at him» (203). By that time he had reached a state, unlike all that of the other white men, in which «he knew he would never fire it [the gun] at it [Old Ben], now or ever» (203). Only when he had become a good enough woodsman to navigate the wilderness without a watch or compass and courageous enough to go into bear country without a gun, does Old Ben allow Ike to see him. From then Ike is not like other men; he believes that God expected man to refuse to exploit and abuse nature and to be God's «overseer on earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name» (257). Ike can say of his experiences in the wilderness, «Sam Fathers set me free» (300).<sup>1</sup>

In Robert Parker's *Early Autumn*, Spenser takes responsibility for Paul Giacomini, a neglected, sullen, poor little rich adolescent. In order to try to build some character in the boy, Spenser takes him, for the summer, to some undeveloped land his girlfriend owns to build a cabin with Spenser. Paul's response to the idea is typical of all his responses. He says, «I don't want to build a house» (Autumn 104), or «to get up», or to have «breakfast». He also says, «I don't like» whatever it is or «I can't» (Autumn 112). By making Paul get up, live by a schedule, run, lift weights, and help build a house, Spenser transforms Paul into a young man who can run, lift weights, and build a cabin, who is alive and enthusiastic, and who knows what he wants to do with his life and is willing to work hard to achieve it. Paul says, «I never thought we'd build it» nor that he would «run five miles», or «bench press a hundred fifty pounds» (Autumn, 219). Spenser explains that Paul spent the summer, «catching up on.... his life» (Autumn 221).

Many characters that go out into the wilderness are never seen settling into a hut; they simply disappear. But the implications of these stories is that whatever happens to those characters, they are better off than they had been in civilization that was destroying them. To avoid such destruction, some characters run away and simply disappear – permanently. In Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Bromden («Chief Broom») finally allows himself to smell «burning oak leaves» (141). Then he looks outside for the first time in years and sees the natural world. Later, when he

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<sup>1</sup> This statement alludes to Christ's «Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set ye free».

finally escapes by throwing a bathtub through the window to break its screen, he runs toward the highway, «taking huge strides as I ran, seeming to step and float a long ways before my next foot struck the earth». He felt he «was flying. Free» (272). Only in the wilderness can Bromden remain free. Stopping briefly to revisit his Columbian River home, he then hitchhikes to the Canadian wilderness, for only in the wilderness can he avoid incarceration and madness.

In Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*, two sisters, Sylvie and Ruth, who is still in public school, live alone in the house the family owned after their grandmother and great-aunts died and their aunt abandoned them. But when the town do-gooders, the school authorities, and the sheriff make plans to put Ruth in a foster home, Sylvie sets fire to the house, as a distraction, and the sisters flee. They feel they were now «truly cast out to wander» (209). They keep moving on, because, as Ruth says, «they could always get you for erratic behavior» (213). At the end of the novel, Ruth explains, «We are drifters. And once you have set your foot on that path, it is hard to imagine another one» (214). They drift through many cities in the Pacific Northwest, occasionally stopping to make enough money to live on, but, as Ruth says that when townspeople «begin to look at me like that [as if there is something wrong with her], it is best that I leave» (214). Occasionally she and Silvie return to civilization to make enough money to keep going, where they act like ordinary townspeople. But, she says, «finally the imposture becomes burdensome» and they know they must move on. Ruth asks, «What have I to do with these ceremonies of sustenance, of nurturing» (214). They had to leave civilization because, there, as she says, «I knew we were doomed» (190).

Similarly, in Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*, the mythic figure who represents all that is good in nature, named «Trout Fishing in America», finds he can no longer live in a society that desecrates nature – even to the point of selling trout streams by the foot. Unable to find unpolluted and undamaged nature in the forty-eight states, he heads to Alaska, saying, «I'm going to find an ice-cold creek near the Arctic where that strange beautiful moss grows and spend a week with the grayling» (77).<sup>2</sup>

Others who disappear permanently include Huck Finn, Vivian Stamper in Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*, Bobby Dupea (Jack Nicholson) in *Five Easy Pieces*, and, in one of the optional endings in Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*.

Unfortunately, not all who retreat to isolation in a hut are improved by their experience. Some deteriorate into madness. In Larry Woiwode's *What I'm Going to Do, I Think*, newlyweds move to a lake in northern Michigan, where John Wade deteriorates mentally. He hears noises and believes «there was someone watching him... in the dark» (136). He loses «all time sense» (155). He admits that «some dark thing was overtaking him» and feels that «helpless against it» (188). Once, when he pretends to hold a rifle and shoot a small animal, his wife, Ellen, explains that no one hunts because hunting «would ruin the place... violate it» (59). Nevertheless he buys a 22 rifle that he knows is «a deadly weapon» (193). He begins target practice, grows «tired of shooting at tin cans» (366), then shoots at a woodchuck to «give him a scare», then shoots and kills a starling (267) and then a catbird (272), even though his wife loves birds. His excuses are «I was just playing, for God's sake» (267) and «I didn't mean to do that» (272). At one point, he sees a gull and «fired several shots at it before realizing that «[h]e had fired in her [his wife's] direction, then becomes hysterical, thinking he has killed her» (291). Later, he takes the gun when he goes out on a walk and composes and recomposes a suicide note in his head. Only at the very last minute, and in the last words of the novel, does he fire the last round «out over the open lake» (311). But at the end of the novel, his mental problems remain.

In Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, a young woman and three friends go to the Ontario woods to look for her missing father. In the woods, she spends more and more time alone and decides she

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<sup>2</sup> Brautigan even hints that one of the reasons Ernest Hemingway killed himself was because he could find no more undefiled wilderness. And it is in Ketchum, Idaho, that the narrator sees Trout Fishing in America for the very last time (89).

must live alone in a state of nature. Hiding in the woods, she feels she is being reborn (191). She destroys everything she can in the cabin, including her clothes and eats only raw peas, beans, and carrots» (209). She makes what she calls «a lair» for herself with «dry leaves and dead branches» (209). When her friends return to search for her, she hides, fearing they will put her in a hospital or zoo (222). Although the novel's ending is indeterminate, it suggests she will remain paranoid and in the woods.

Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* offers multiple possibilities for an ending. In it John Wade is overwhelmingly defeated for senator when the press learns he was involved in the Mai Lai massacre. He and his wife, Cathy, retreat to a cabin in the northern Minnesota woods to try to recover and make new plans for their lives. Once there, John has nightmares, wakes yelling «Kill Jesus», and destroys the house plants with boiling water. When he awakes the next morning, Cathy is missing, as is their boat and motor. No one – including John – knows what has happened to her. John believes «Everything's true. Everything's not true» (56). So he can believe «maybe she walked away into the night. Or maybe not» (57). He knew he was «sick» and says, «I don't feel real sometimes. Like I'm not here» (73). The novel offers several possibilities of what happened: They had a fight and she left him – temporarily or permanently. She had an accident, is stranded, injured, or drowned. She left him. She went to meet a lover. She committed suicide. John killed her with boiling water and disposed of the body, boat, and motor. Several options are also offered for John's subsequent disappearance: He disappeared when he went out looking for her. He and Cathy disappeared into the north woods and died. They ran away together, got fake passports, and flew to Verona, Italy, to begin new lives under assumed names. The only certainty is that after moving to the cabin, John suffered severe mental problems.

Although all of these characters leave their families and societies to improve their own lives, only a few succeed. Those who leave in order to seek something – a religious experience, enlightenment, or simply peace and privacy – are successful. But those who leave to flee from society, family, or responsibility only rarely achieve their goals. The first group succeeds because they are trying to change themselves. The latter group usually fails because they are attempting to change others or to find a place where they will fit in without changing themselves.

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# ‘Not Guilty By Reason Of Insanity’ – A case study of bipolar disorder in Schiller’s *Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre*

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Friedrich Schiller, one of the icons of German literature, is not usually recognized for his prose narratives. In fact, Schiller’s «Kunstprosa», as Achim Aurnhammer puts it, «[nimmt] in Schillers Oeuvre nur einen kleinen Platz [ein]», and besides, is limited only «grosso modo auf den Zeitraum 1785-1790», i.e. long before Schiller wrote his famous dramas and essays that have since become part of the canon of German literary studies.<sup>1</sup> Nor is Schiller known for his knowledge of law and jurisdiction, or, for that matter, do we associate his name with the medical profession. Yet, this analysis will draw from all three fields of Schiller’s extensive studies of all these very diverse topics.

When Schiller’s father sent his son, albeit reluctantly, to the *Karlsschule* near Stuttgart, it was with the understanding that young Schiller would study law. But Friedrich had other plans. He transferred to medical studies that were followed by a brief service in the military, before he finally devoted all of his time to writing literature. 1780 marks the year when Schiller started out on his earliest and one of his most famous plays *The Robbers*. Moreover, it was also the year that Schiller completed his studies in the medical field by finishing his doctoral dissertation. Thus, not only do his literary beginnings coincide with the completion of his medical course, but one can also detect traces of his medical expertise influencing his early writings and portrayals of his characters.

Historically seen the eighteenth century is intricately intertwined with the notion of enlightenment and the belief in individual self-determination. Reason and rational thinking were the catchwords and the key to the understanding of man’s action and thought. Man as a rational and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Achim Aurnhammer, «Engagiertes Erzählen: ‘Der Verbrecher aus Verlorener Ehre’», *Schiller und die höfische Welt*, Achim Aurnhammer (ed.), Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990: 254. See also Hildburg Herbst, «Zur Sprache des Sonnenwirtes in Schillers Erzählung ‘Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre’», *Friedrich Schiller: Kunst, Humanität und Politik in der späten Aufklärung*, Wolfgang Wittkowski (ed.), Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1982: «Schillers Prosäerzählungen gelten im allgemeinen nicht als wesentlicher Teil seines Gesamtwerkes» (48).

autonomous being was destined to bring order to the chaos of elementary forces and drives by virtue of his reason. This, according to the enlightened era, he accomplished by means of the agency of his 'free will', a will that is built upon the prerequisites of a free and self-determined autonomy of the individual. Yet, this postulation of freedom of will and self-determination bases its belief on the omnipotence of human reasonable capabilities, concentrates solely on the mind, and as a consequence neglects the matter.<sup>2</sup> Schiller, needless to say, was part of the circle of writers of the *Storm and Stress* period, who refused and reacted against the glorification of the individual's potential for reasoning, and countered this one-sided emphasis on the mind with their concept of the 'return to nature' and the portrayal of passions and emotions. This revolt manifested itself visibly in the literature of that time. While enlightenment had often neglected to look at the sensual side of man's nature, existence and nature now became the exclusive course of studies by way of analytical examination and observation.

The polarities of mind and matter, intellect and sensation, likewise occupied the mind of the young Schiller, and when he chose a topic for his dissertation, he wrote about and titled it *Versuch über den Zusammenhang der tierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner geistigen* [*On the Connection Between the Animal and the Spiritual Nature in Man*].<sup>3</sup> In his dissertation Schiller writes that the human body is governed by two conditions – the intellect, and what he labels as the 'animal sensations'. Clearly, his thesis is an early work on psychoanalysis, as Schiller here ostensibly mulls about the theory of what Freud later called the structure and dynamic interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness. While Schiller does not ponder too much on what he defines as the intellect or spirit, he does say that complete harmony of both powers is a requisite to the «Vollkommenheit des Menschen» (XIII: 463). «Beide Naturen», Schiller writes, «geistige und tierische, [wurden] also eng ineinander verschlungen, daß ihre Modifikationen sich wechselseitig mitteilen und verstärken» (XIII: 479). Hence, the «Flor des tierischen Lebens ist [...] für den Flor der Seelenwirkungen äußerst wichtig und darf ohne die Totalaufhebung dieser letztern niemals aufgehoben werden» (XIII: 466). Schiller is without a doubt more fascinated by the animal nature of man than he is by his intellect. His whole dissertation is dedicated to the examination of the impact of animal sensations on the body and mind. He ascertains that there are several laws of mechanisms that forces man to act and react in a certain way. One of Schiller's laws states that the animal drive is a «blinde Notwendigkeit» and is stronger than the spirit which gives an explanation to «warum die tierische Empfindungen mit unwiderstehlicher und gleichsam tyrannischer Macht die Seele zu Leidenschaften und Handlungen fortreißen und über die geistigsten selbst nicht selten die Oberhand bekommen» (XIII: 467). Thus, Schiller deduces, «wider die überhandnehmenden tierischen Fühlungen vermag endlich die höchste Anstrengung des Geistes nichts mehr» (XIII: 469). Schiller argues that this imbalance will automatically lead to physical as well as psychological aberrations. A person ruled by his animal nature will not uncommonly become evil and vicious or even a «Verräter und Mörder» (XIII: 469). Physically, his body frame will reflect his inner disorder and viciousness, since bodily appearances are in accordance with passions, and consequently «werden die geheimsten Rührungen der Seele auf der Außenseite des Körpers geoffenbart, und die Leidenschaft dringt selbst durch den Schleier des Heuchlers» (XIII: 491). Simply put, Schiller

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant's essay «Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung». Kant writes: «Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung» (*Werke in sechs Bänden*, Wilhelm Weischedel [ed.], Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975: Vol. VI: 53).

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Schillers Werke*, 14 Vols., Ludwig Beller mann (ed.), Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1895: Vol. XIII: 458-499. Also, Friedrich Schiller, *The Complete Works of Friedrich von Schiller*, Vol. I, Nathan Haskell Dole (ed.), Boston: Aldine Publishing Company, 1910: 131-172.

writes, «beobachtet man, daß die Bösartigkeit der Seele gar oft in kranken Körpern wohnt» (XIII: 488). As a result the whole organism is then caught in a *circulus vitiosus*, as the body will pervert the mind, which in return will corrupt the animal sensations. This constitutes yet another Schillerian law, namely «daß mit der Zerrüttung [der Organe] auch eine Zerrüttung des Denkens und Empfindens sollte verbunden sein» (XIII: 486).

When Schiller establishes «daß die allgemeine Empfindung tierischer Harmonie die Quelle geistiger Lust und die tierische Unlust die Quelle geistiger Unlust sein sollte» (XIII: 486), he obviously analyses the effects of mental imbalances on an overall sense and state of being. Unmistakably this marks an early attempt to write about psychological disorders, or to be more precise, mood disorders. Though he uses the archaic terminology of his time, Schiller nevertheless comes up with findings that still hold true today. He explains depression by writing: «Die Erstarrung der Seele unter dem Schrecken, dem Erstaunen u.s.w. wird zuweilen von einer allgemeinen Aufhebung der physischen Thätigkeit begleitet» (XIII: 485). In a textbook on psychology this very insight is explained as follows: «Depression is often brought on by stressful experiences – losing a job, getting divorced or rejected, physical trauma – anything that disrupts your sense of who you are». It continues by pointing out that when depressed a patient's «brooding amplifies negative feelings, which in turn trigger depression's other cognitive and behavioral symptoms».<sup>4</sup> In many cases depression is often accompanied by mania, a mood disorder of the «opposite emotional extreme – a euphoric, hyperactive, wildly optimistic state» (Myers 468). In a similar vein in Schiller's dissertation we come across this astute observation: «Die Freude tötet», Schiller writes, «wenn sie zur Ekstasi [sic] hinaufsteigt, die Natur erträgt den Schwung nicht, in den in einem Moment das ganze Nervengebäude gerät [...] Auch die Freude der endlichen Wesen hat ihre Schranken, so wie der Schmerz; diese darf sie nicht überschreiten, oder sie muß untergehen» (XIII: 484).<sup>5</sup> 'Joy' and 'grief', mania and depression, are the symptoms of bipolar disorder, a «mood disorder in which the person alternates between the hopelessness and lethargy of depression and the overexcited state of mania» (Myers 468). Bipolar disorder, or also known as manic-depression is «one of the oldest and most reliably recognized psychiatric disorders», David Miklowitz writes in his study on this particular illness.<sup>6</sup> From all the evidence we have, I believe it is not too far fetched to say that Schiller's medical training not only presented him with profound knowledge of the human psyche, but that he was also aware of some severe forms of psychological disorders, and that, furthermore, Schiller integrated his research into his literary production.

Critics have often chosen two of Schiller's early works, *The Robbers* (1781), and *Criminal out of Infamy* (1786), to investigate the affinities of his «interactionist theory of the relation between body and mind» and his portrayal of villains that are «controlled by sensuous desire» and «psychological imbalance».<sup>7</sup> But while a drama can only give so much insight into a character, the novella *Criminal out of Infamy* is laden with an abundance of psychological comments that seem to come straight out of Schiller's medical observations of mental aberrations. Additionally, Schiller's intriguing psychological study of the *Criminal out of Infamy* has been said to be the launch of the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. David G. Myers, *Psychology*, 5th ed., New York: Worth Publishers, 1998: 473.

<sup>5</sup> Even seasonal depression, a condition experienced by many during the dark months of winter, is mentioned in Schiller's dissertation: «Die Bewohner düsterer Gegenden trauren mit der sie umgebenden Natur, der Mensch verwildert in wilden, stürmischen Zonen, lacht in freundlichen Lüften und fühlt Sympathie in gereinigten Atmosphären» (XIII: 487).

<sup>6</sup> David J. Miklowitz, «Bipolar Disorder», *Clinical Handbook of Psychological Disorders*, 3rd ed., David H. Barlow (ed.), New York: Guilford Press, 2001: 523.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Steven D. Martinson, *Harmonious Tensions: The Writings of Friedrich Schiller*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996: 76.

popular genre of crime stories.<sup>8</sup> This proclamation, however, has led many critics to stay within the confines of interpreting Schiller's story as an indictment of the criminal justice system, and the protagonist Christian Wolf as a victim of circumstance.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, this study aims to take a closer look at the primary question of 'who was Christian Wolf', and only secondarily at 'why did he become a criminal'.

Although based on a true story – Schiller had heard about the case of an actual criminal named Johann Friedrich Schwan from his teacher Friedrich Abel – Schiller took a lot of poetic license with the historic accuracy of his novella.<sup>10</sup> Most notably is the change of name. The name 'Christian Wolf' indicates already the internal struggle and dualism inherent in Schiller's protagonist – on one hand the *christian*-moralistic mindset, on the other hand the animalistic-*wolfish* nature of the person.<sup>11</sup> And this is precisely the intention that Schiller's narrator has in mind, that is, to show the complexity of the human condition that is neither only good nor bad, black nor white, reason nor emotion. The initial first-person narrator – later on Wolf himself becomes a second first-person narrator – begins his account by advising the reader to remain objective but compassionate at the same time, that is, to listen to the evidence but to also keep an open mind about the personal circumstances surrounding this case:

Es ist etwas so Einförmiges und doch wieder so Zusammengesetztes, das menschliche Herz. Eine und eben dieselbe Fertigkeit oder Begierde kann in tausenderlei Formen und Richtungen spielen, kann tausend widersprechende Phänomene bewirken, kann in tausend Charakteren anders gemischt erscheinen, und tausend ungleiche Charaktere und Handlungen können wieder aus einerlei Neigung gesponnen sein, wenn auch der Mensch, von welchem die Rede ist, nichts weniger denn eine solche Verwandtschaft ahndet [...] Wir sehen den Unglücklichen, der doch in eben der Stunde, wo er die That beging, sowie in der, wo er dafür büßet, Mensch war wie wir, für ein Geschöpf fremder Gattung an, dessen Blut anders umläuft als das unsrige, dessen Wille andern Regeln gehorcht als der unsrige [...] Der Held muß kalt werden wie der Leser, oder, was hier ebensoviel sagt, wir müssen mit ihm bekannt werden, eh' er handelt; wir müssen ihn seine Handlung nicht bloß vollbringen, sondern auch wollen sehen. An seinen Gedanken liegt uns unendlich mehr als an seinen Thaten und noch weit mehr an den Quellen seiner Gedanken als an den Folgen jener Thaten.<sup>12</sup>

Who is Christian Wolf? The facts of this case are as such: we learn that Wolf grew up as a half-orphan, who helped his mother to run a down and out tavern until the age of twenty (VI: 10). He has

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<sup>8</sup> See Rainer Schönhaar, *Novelle und Kriminalscheina: Ein Strukturmodell deutscher Erzählkunst um 1800*, Bad Homburg: Gehlen, 1969; Adolf Haslinger, «Friedrich Schiller und die Kriminalliteratur», *Sprachkunst* 2 (1971): 173-187; Edgar Marsch, *Die Kriminalerzählung: Theorie-Geschichte-Analyse*, München: Winkler, 1972.

<sup>9</sup> See Roswitha Jacobsen, «Schillers 'Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre'», *Weimarer Beiträge* 34 (1988): 746-760; Rainer Kawa, *Friedrich Schiller: Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre. Grundlagen und Gedanken zum Verständnis erzählender Literatur*, Frankfurt: Diesterweg, 1990; Gerhard Neumann, «Die Anfänge Deutscher Novellistik: Schillers 'Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre'-Goethes 'Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten'», *Unser Commercium: Goethes und Schillers Literaturpolitik*, Wilfried Barner et al. (eds.), Stuttgart: Cotta, 1984: 433-460; Klaus Oettinger, «Schillers Erzählung 'Der Verbrecher aus Infamie': Ein Beitrag zur Rechtsaufklärung der Zeit», *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 16 (1972): 266-276; Lesley Sharpe, «Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre: An Early Exercise in Schillerian Psychology», *German Life and Letters* 33 (1980): 102-110.

<sup>10</sup> The story is nowadays known as «Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre». The original title «Verbrecher aus Infamie» was changed when Schiller rewrote the story for the 1792 publication of *Kleinere Prosaische Schriften*.

<sup>11</sup> Also Rainer Kawa, who interprets the name change as Schiller's objective to show the problem «wie aus den niedrigen Kräften des Menschen, die ihn mit dem Tier verbinden, sich die spezifisch menschliche Fähigkeit zur freien Willensentscheidung nach Maßgabe moralischer Kriterien entwickelt – oder aber nicht entwickelt» (41).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Schillers Werke*, Vol. VI: 7-9.

a rather disputable reputation among the town's people – he is feared for his lewdness and obnoxious behavior. What is more, he is also stricken with a repulsive exterior. His environment shuns him, and Wolf becomes a social outcast. One can almost expect his next developmental stage – his progression into a life of crime. Christian Wolf becomes a poacher. And while poaching at that time was largely considered to be a petty crime, Wolf's repeated misdemeanors are nonetheless met with a harsh sentence – three years in a maximum-security prison.<sup>13</sup> Prison life, we hear from Wolf himself, was initially harsh and unbearable, but, as so often happens, Wolf adjusts eventually to his new surroundings, and upon his release has turned into an all out criminal (VI: 13). Now, he promises, he will earn his bad reputation by turning life for his fellow human beings into a constant nightmare. One day, while out in the woods, he crosses path with his *nemesis*, the forest ranger Robert, the man who stole his girlfriend, and the man who also had notified law enforcement about Wolf's activities. Wolf goes mad! In the heat of the moment he shoots Robert, panics, and runs off into the wilderness (VI: 16-17). There, he comes upon a band of robbers, who invite him to stay and be their leader. Wolf lives with the robbers for one year, and during that interval his reign of terror settles over the land.<sup>14</sup> But life as a hunted criminal takes its toll on Wolf. Knowing that the government has announced a considerable reward for his capture, he fears for his life, and as a result mistrusts every living soul (VI: 25). Eventually, he is overwhelmed by feelings of despair, and is nagged by intensely negative thoughts about his worthlessness, as he now sees it. He decides to surrender to justice. In a letter to the governor he proposes to make a deal:

Wenn Ihre fürstliche Huld sich nicht ekelt, bis zu mir herunterzusteigen, wenn Verbrecher meiner Art nicht außerhalb Ihrer Erbarmung liegen, so gönnen Sie mir Gehör, durchlauchtigster Oberherr! Ich bin Mörder und Dieb, das Gesetz verdammt mich zum Tode, die Gerichte suchen mich auf – und ich biete mich an, mich freiwillig zu stellen. Aber ich bringe zugleich eine seltsame Bitte vor Ihren Thron. Ich verabscheue mein Leben und fürchte den Tod nicht, aber schrecklich ist mir's zu sterben, ohne gelebt zu haben [...] Ich hasse das Laster und sehne mich feurig nach Rechtschaffenheit und Tugend. Ich habe Fähigkeiten gezeigt, meinem Vaterland furchtbar zu werden; ich hoffe, daß mir noch einige übriggeblieben sind, ihm zu nützen [...] Lassen Sie Gnade für Recht ergehen, mein Fürst! Wenn es in Ihrer fürstlichen Macht steht, das Gesetz für mich zu erbitten, so schenken Sie mir das Leben. Es soll Ihrem Dienste von nun an gewidmet sein. Wenn Sie es können, so lassen Sie mich Ihren gnädigsten Willen aus öffentlichen Blättern vernehmen, und ich werde mich auf Ihr fürstliches Wort in der Hauptstadt stellen. Haben Sie es anders mit mir beschlossen, so thue die Gerechtigkeit denn das Ihrige, ich muß das Meinige thun. (VI: 25-26)

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<sup>13</sup> See Kawa's clarification on the topic of poaching. He compares poaching with a symbolic act of anti-feudal resistance: «Das Jagdprivileg, also das ausschließliche Vorrecht des Feudalherrn auf die Jagd und damit das allgemeine Jagdverbot, geht zurück auf die feudal-herrschaftliche Aneignung der Allmende, die ursprünglich von den Dorfgenossen gemeinsam genutzt worden war [...] Gerade dieser Umstand sicherte ihnen [the poachers] immer wieder die Sympathie und Unterstützung der Landbevölkerung» (Kawa 12-13).

<sup>14</sup> Schiller shows the prevailing and overpowering nature of the 'animalistic' drive in his protagonist through his use of symbolic language. Obviously, Schiller «desired the reciprocal cooperation of body and mind – the healthy human being is moderate and well-balanced» (Martinson, *Harmonious Tensions* 76). The overabundance of animal sensations, on the other side, carries destruction with it: «Die Erfahrung hat gelehrt, daß mehr das Übermaß als der Mangel der tierischen Empfindung verdorben hat» (XIII: 469). For that reason Schiller depicts Wolf's descent into the realm of 'animal nature' as evil and abysmal. After Wolf encountered the Mephisto-like figure of one of the robbers, he is led to the gang's hideout. Wolf recalls the scene vividly: «Wir waren eine kleine Viertelmeile gegangen. Der Wald wurde immer abschüssiger, unwegsamer und wilder, keiner von uns sprach ein Wort, bis mich endlich die Pfeife meines Führers aus meinen Betrachtungen aufschreckte. Ich schlug die Augen auf, wir standen am schroffen Absturz eines Felsen, der sich in eine tiefe Kluft hinunterbückte [...] Jetzt stand ich allein vor dem Abgrund, und ich wußte recht gut, daß ich allein war [...] Ich sah in den Schlund hinab, der mich jetzt aufnehmen sollte; es erinnerte mich dunkel an den Abgrund der Hölle, woraus keine Erlösung mehr ist» (VI: 21-22).

Unsurprisingly, his arrogant request is met with silence. After three such letters and no reply, Christian's hope for pardon has evaporated. He comes to the decision to flee the country. When he tries to cross the border, Christian Wolf's demeanor arouses suspicion and he is taken into custody. Tired of running away and tired of hiding his identity, Wolf capitulates and gives a full confession (VI: 28-30). As the reader already knows from the introduction of this case, Christian Wolf is finally sentenced to death.

Did Wolf's criminal acts warrant to be punished so severely? Could there have been mitigating circumstances that would have allowed for a more compassionate and humane verdict? Those are the questions that Schiller's narrative invites us, the readers, to consider, and we are accordingly asked to posthumously reinvestigate the case, to 'prove beyond a reasonable doubt' that Christian Wolf deserved to die: «Ich will dem Ausspruch des Lesers nicht vorgreifen», the narrator says, «Unsre Gelindigkeit fruchtet ihm nichts mehr, denn er starb durch des Henkers Hand, aber die Leichenöffnung seines Lasters unterrichtet vielleicht die Menschheit und – es ist möglich, auch die Gerechtigkeit» (VI: 10). Acting as Wolf's lawyer, the narrator in his opening remarks urges us, the jury, to remain unbiased, to not let prejudices guide us, and to look beyond the mere listing and recounting of Wolf's crimes. We hear, through Wolf's own testimony, that the murder of Robert, his most atrocious crime, was not premeditated. Recalling the moment, Wolf states:

Eine unsichtbare, fürchterliche Hand schwebte über mir, der Stundenweiser meines Schicksals zeigte unwiderruflich auf diese schwarze Minute. Der Arm zitterte mir, da ich meiner Flinte die schreckliche Wahl erlaubte, meine Zähne schlugen zusammen wie im Fieberfrost, und der Odem sperrte sich erstickend in meiner Lunge. Eine Minute lang blieb der Lauf meiner Flinte ungewiß zwischen dem Menschen und dem Hirsch mitten inne schwanken – eine Minute – und noch eine – und wieder eine. Rache und Gewissen rangen hartnäckig und zweifelhaft, aber die Rache gewann's, und der Jäger lag tot am Boden [...] Auf mehreres besinne ich mich nicht mehr. Ich wünschte gleich darauf, daß er noch lebte [...] Ich begriff gar nicht, wie ich zu dieser Mordthat gekommen war. (VI: 16-17).

If we believe his sworn statement, the slaying of the forest ranger was committed involuntarily and as a crime of passion, and in view of that, the charge of manslaughter rather than first-degree murder would definitely have been a more appropriate indictment. However, more crimes were committed, crimes whose significance and severity are not being disclosed to us, the jury. The narrator wants us to believe that knowledge of the various crimes will not play a significant role for our finding: «Das bloß Abscheuliche hat nichts Unterrichtendes für den Leser» (VI: 24), he tells us. What should be under scrutiny, instead, are Christian's persona and his state of mind. For that let us proceed then by calling to the stand, as it were, an expert on criminal-personality profiling. John Douglas, a veteran of the *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, and the 'pioneer of modern criminal investigative analysis', known to many of us as the model for the character of Jack Crawford in the movie *Silence of the Lambs*, investigates in his book *The Anatomy of Motive* the personality of violent offenders.<sup>15</sup> He writes: "All of them [violent offenders], on one level or another, c[o]me from dysfunctional backgrounds. Sometimes this [is] overt: physical and/or sexual abuse; alcoholic parents or guardians; being shuttled – unwanted – from one foster home to another. In other cases it [is] more subtle: the absence of a loving or nurturing atmosphere; inconsistent or nonexistent discipline; a kid, who, for whatever reason, never adjust[s] or fit[s] in" (Douglas 31). Comparing Douglas' observation with the upbringing of Christian Wolf, we see several parallels: Wolf was raised by his mother, without the disciplinary hand of a father figure; since the livelihood of his family rested on his shoulders, he was forced to function as an adult at an early age; Christian, too,

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<sup>15</sup> John Douglas and Mark Olshaker, *The Anatomy of Motive*, New York: Scribner, 1999.

did not fit in, or adjust to his surroundings. Compelling within the context of Christian Wolf's background is Douglas' next pronouncement: «Most violent offenders [...] ha[ve] two factors warring within them. One [is] a feeling of superiority, grandiosity: societal mores [are] not meant for them; they [are] too smart or too clever to have to start at the bottom and work their way up, or to live by the normal rules that govern a relationship. The other, equally strong feeling [is] of inadequacy, of not being able to measure up, of knowing they [are] losers no matter what they [do]» (Douglas 33). This 'outsider status' is clearly depicted in Wolf's personal history. On one hand, Wolf wishes to be an honorable member of his community, to please and be regarded with sympathy and respect; on the other hand, however, he is too proud and self-righteous to adhere to the societal rules and conform to them. That is why, Douglas informs us, «unlike better-adapted men [...] the male who is going to grow into a violent or predator personality becomes aggressive to his peers. He gets involved in antisocial acts such as burglary, arson, theft [...] He will act impulsively without considering the implications of his actions, either for himself or for others. And he will feel a growing sense of isolation from his peers and from society in general, so that any way he decides to lash out will be justified in his own mind» (Douglas 39). Again, Christian Wolf's conduct is an attestation to this line of argument. Wolf tells us that he considered his actions to be provoked by the harshness of his accusers; that he did not concern himself with the law; and that he, furthermore, saw himself as a martyr and victim of the social order and its institutions: «Alle Menschen hatten mich beleidigt, denn alle waren besser und glücklicher als ich. Ich betrachtete mich als den Märtyrer des natürlichen Rechts und als ein Schlachtopfer der Gesetze» (VI: 13). Consequently, in Wolf's mind, his actions against society were absolutely justifiable!

Despite Christian Wolf's confession to a series of crimes, the question whether he solely can be held responsible for his criminal acts, or if there is evidence that Wolf can be partially exonerated – conceivably he could or should be regarded as mentally instable – still lingers. In other words, is there enough substantiation to pursue an insanity plea? As mentioned before, many critics have argued that Schiller puts society itself and its justice system on trial in his story. While this kind of interpretation holds true to a certain extent, the fact that several times Schiller's narrator mentions, verbatim, the benefits of a psychological approach into the mind of the accused, i.e. the protagonist Christian Wolf, and not into the constitution of the people, cannot be easily omitted or disregarded. In that case what exactly is Christian Wolf's mental state? John Douglas summarizes his profiling of criminal offenders by stressing the point that «essentially all the men in [his] study can be said to have mental problems of one sort or another» (Douglas 35). As shown, Schiller was aware of and familiar with mental aberrations, i.e. with depression, schizophrenia, and manic-depressive disorder. Therefore, I believe it can be argued that Schiller in this particular story describes a medical case study of a mental illness, more precisely of bipolar disorder, an illness left untreated and which plagued his protagonist most of his life.

It is remarkable that the medical explanation of bipolar disorder has certain characteristics in common with what Douglas asserts can be said about serial criminals, which is not to say that all criminal offenders are bipolar. First, let us get a deeper understanding of this very illness, and how it expresses itself through the psychology, perception, and behavior of a human being. In their book *Overcoming Depression*, Demitri and Janice Papolos write: «Stressful events such as loss or separation have long been implicated as possible precipitants of or antecedents to depression».<sup>16</sup> Research studies suggest, «separation events are anything a person may experience as a 'loss', whether it be the death of a loved one, separation by divorce, the loss of a job or *one's status in the community* [my emphasis]» (Papolos 97).<sup>17</sup> As the title of Schiller's narrative already implicates, it

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<sup>16</sup> Demitri and Janice Papolos, *Overcoming Depression*, New York: HarperCollins, 1992: 97.

<sup>17</sup> I find especially intriguing in discussing Schiller's likely knowledge of bipolar disorder the following remark from Papolos: «The written description of mood disorders dates back 40 centuries to Pharaonic Egypt» (32).

is the loss of his honor, his social status that perpetuates Christian Wolf's downfall to a life of crime. Christian also underscores the importance of this piece of information when he writes to the governor that «Die Zeitrechnung meiner Verbrechen fängt mit dem Urteilspruch an, der mich auf immer um meine Ehre brachte» (VI: 26). Depression, of course, has a strong impact on the mood and self-esteem of an individual. «When depressed, a person often dwells on exaggerated memories of losses or failures, or focuses on the morbid and negative aspects of his life to the exclusion of all else» (Papolos 4-5). During the length of his testimony, Wolf calls to mind a mere banality in vivid images, a moment that is important in its own right as it fostered Wolf's rage and spitefulness against humanity. When Wolf went back to his hometown, after he had been released from prison, he runs into a little boy and offers him a coin. The boy's response is to throw the coin back at Wolf. In hindsight, Wolf realizes that his grim looks from having been imprisoned so long must have caused the child's reaction. However, at the time this incident happens, Wolf's thoughts and feelings run amok with him: «Wäre mein Blut nur etwas ruhiger gewesen, so hätte ich mich erinnert, daß der Bart, den ich noch von der Festung mitbrachte, meine Gesichtszüge bis zum Gräßlichen entstellte – aber mein böses Herz hatte meine Vernunft angesteckt [...] Alle Welt floh mich wie einen Giftigen, aber ich hatte endlich verlernt, mich zu schämen [...] Ich wollte Böses thun» (VI: 14-15). From here on out, it is Wolf's intention to break society's laws and regulations.

On the brink of being sentenced to death, it is understandable that Wolf repents. But does he truly mean it? It is intriguing to notice specific points he makes in his deposition about his character and his life that seem to be fairly contradictory to each other. Wolf calls himself a pious and chaste *Christian* who had to endure shameful *infamous* and loose conduct for his godliness from fellow prisoners. He had to adopt this wickedness, he tells us, out of sheer fear for his life: «Wie ich auf die Festung gebracht war, sperrte man mich zu dreiundzwanzig Gefangenen ein, unter denen zwei Mörder und die übrigen alle berüchtigte Diebe und Vagabunden waren. Man verhöhrte mich, wenn ich von Gott sprach, und setzte mir zu, schändliche Lästerungen gegen den Erlöser zu sagen [...] Kein Tag verging, wo nicht irgend ein schändlicher Lebenslauf wiederholt, irgend ein schlimmer Anschlag geschmiedet ward» (VI: 12-13). Yet, several instances prior to this statement, we have heard that he was an immoral and malicious boy of whom the town's girls and women were afraid. In addition, during the same testimony he admits that unbridled passion and lust is his biggest vice (VI: 23). And furthermore, that he never thought of or feared God's punishment (VI: 17). He conveys that the little boy's reaction caused him to shed tears like never before; yet, at the same time it also enraged him beyond reason. He initially views the band of robbers as a 'band of brothers', and he appreciates and treasures their friendliness, trust, and sincere kindness. Shortly thereafter, though, he portrays the robbers as vile trash (VI: 24). Obviously, Christian both enjoys and despises his way of life as he equally loves and hates himself. At times, he feels worthless and inadequate, is plagued by his conscience, and wishes he could undo the things he did. Life does not seem to have given him a square deal. He is overcome with self-pity and abandonment, and we plainly catch sight of Wolf's depressed self. It echoes Demitri Papolos' description when he writes: «Negative thoughts or perceptions about oneself can erode self-esteem, resulting in an unrealistic sense of worthlessness and the feeling of being a burden to others» (Papolos 5). Moreover, Papolos adds, «the depressed person may wrestle constantly with punitive thoughts and self-accusations. He or she may magnify minor failings or transgressions, experience excessive guilt, and feel that some terrible punishment is deserved» (Papolos 16). Yet, in contrast, we also get to know a diametrically opposed side of Wolf's character. That aspect of his personality embodies excitement, overconfidence, reckless behavior, and grandiose thinking. Once more, this part of the depiction of Schiller's protagonist could have come straight out of a textbook on manic behavior. During the cycle of mania a person «has boundless energy, unshakable drive, but little capacity to appraise the consequences of his actions realistically [...] Judgment and insight can be so impaired in the manic state that patients may flout all authority and become so intrusive and demanding as to harass others and violate social and sexual mores. At the worst, they may become irritable,

aggressive, or even assaultive, leading to the involvement of the police and legal authorities» (Papolos 255-256).<sup>18</sup> Patterns of bipolar disorder are said to manifest during puberty but symptoms can also be detected in young children. As the disorder is greatly affected by emotional surroundings, it often is brought on and/or aggravated by a difficult childhood. Behavior of irritability, temper tantrums, «a low frustration tolerance, and outbursts of rage» (Papolos 221) are early warning signs of this illness in children. Unquestionably, Christian Wolf's childhood drama and upbringing – his father dead; Christian being the laughing stock for the entire community; his subsequent infuriated and gross conduct – correspond almost in detail to this outline of bipolar disorder.

Manic depression runs in cycles that can last a week, a month or even a year.<sup>19</sup> Mood fluctuates «ranging from mild euphoria to extreme irritability» (Papolos 256), interspersed by intervals of relative 'normalcy' and lucidity. Observing Christian Wolf's recurring progression from the pits of despair to the highest of highs in such short orders bears an extraordinary resemblance to the portrayal of classic behavior of the bipolar person. As Demitri Papolos writes: «Those who have manic-depression will veer from periods of superactivity, manic elation and grandiose schemes to periods of despondency, immobility, guilt and inability to experience pleasure or even to think normally» (Papolos 3). Can we, Schiller's jury, therefore declare Christian Wolf legally insane, even though we are not given a full disclosure of all established facts of the case? Certainly Wolf's lawyer is not about or eager to present all the specifics that link his client to the crimes committed, yet, do we actually need them to come to an impartial judgment?<sup>20</sup> Has Wolf's lawyer succeeded in providing enough data to leave us with 'reasonable doubt' about Wolf's guilt, or better, his mental imbalance? I believe he has!

Evidently it seems crucial for the interpretation of *Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre* to create the link between the writer Friedrich Schiller and the Friedrich Schiller who had substantial learning in both medicine and law. It explains why the narrator, who serves as Schiller's sounding board, repeatedly calls to mind the benefits that the field of psychology could provide when it comes to judge the evil protagonist. Certainly, readers nowadays might smile at the terminology and a few notions that are presented in this story; however, when all is said and done we cannot rebuff the fact that Schiller's early employment of psychology in defending Christian Wolf is still being exercised in our courtrooms today. It is as if we almost hear Schiller asking us: «Have you reached a verdict?» – «Yes, your Honor, we have. We, the jury, find the defendant Christian Wolf 'not guilty by reason of insanity'!»

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<sup>18</sup> Also David J. Miklowitz: «Patients in a manic episode have euphoric, elevated mood or irritable mood; behavioral activation (e.g., increased goal-directed activity, excessive involvement in high-risk activities, decreased need for sleep, increased talkativeness or pressure of speech); and altered cognitive functioning (grandiose delusions or inflated self-worth, flight of ideas or racing thoughts, distractibility) - typically for more than 1 week» (523).

<sup>19</sup> See Papolos, 7: «Typically, episodes of illness are time-limited: they come and go, last from several weeks to several months, and are followed by periods of relatively normal mood and behavior. Untreated, the average depressive episode lasts about four months, and the average manic episode about three months. Periods of depression, however, can last for twelve months or more without remitting».

<sup>20</sup> See Douglas' comments on defense strategies: «The accused offender and his attorney aren't going to be very successful with a defense that admits he raped and killed [...] because of the intense thrill of control, power, and heightened sexuality it gave him. So if you, as the defendant, can't dispute the facts of the case, your best shot at cutting a break from the jury or sentencing judge is to try to come up with an explanation [...] that puts you in a somewhat more sympathetic and understandable light. Something must have strongly influenced you to do the terrible thing you're accused of. But for that influence, you never would have committed such a bestial act on your own» (81).

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# Sylvia Plath's «Panic Bird» and psychoanalysis in the Boston Year

LYNDA K. BUNDTZEN (\*)

You were like a religious fanatic  
Without a god – unable to pray.  
You wanted to be a writer.  
Wanted to write? What was it within you  
Had to tell its tale?  
The story that has to be told  
Is the writer's God, who calls  
Out of sleep, inaudibly: 'Write.'  
Write what?

(Ted Hughes, «The God»)

Got at some deep things with Beuscher: facing dark and terrible things: those dreams of deformity and death. If I really think I killed and castrated my father may all my dreams of deformed and tortured people be my guilty visions of him or fears of punishment for me? And how to lay them? To stop them operating through the rest of my life. I have a vision of the poems I would write, but do not. When will they come?

(Sylvia Plath, *Journals*, March 29, 1959)

After teaching for one year, 1957-58, at her alma mater Smith, Sylvia Plath decided to yield to her husband Ted Hughes's desire that they devote the following year solely to their writing. For him, it was easy to embrace the vocation of writer and artist and forsake all other possibilities. He did not want a nine-to-five job, which represented stultifying bourgeois and American ambitions, but only to write, read, and give himself over to his art. He fears what a job might do to his

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imaginative powers, and Plath describes him «as pathological as I am in his own way: compulsive against society so he envisions ‘getting a job’ as a kind of prison term.... He is afraid of the Image: so many have regular jobs and are dead why wouldn’t it kill him?» (451).<sup>1</sup> Plath counsels herself to «take a lesson from Ted. He works and works. Rewrites, struggles, loses himself. I must work for independence. Make him proud. Keep my sorrow and despairs to myself. Work and work for self-respect: study language, read avidly. Work, not expect miracles to follow on a hastily-written nothing» (518). Throughout 1958-59, Plath is incapable of self-forgetfulness, the famed Keatsian «negative capability», even though she is constantly giving herself commands: «Try to get into a story. Forget self and give blood to creation» (473); or «forget myself, myself. Become a vehicle of the world, a tongue, a voice. Abandon my ego» (502). The recurring complaints are paralysis, fear, and her «Panic Bird»: it is «as if a great muscular owl were sitting on my chest, its talons clenching and constricting my heart». Her «limbs are paralyzed», and she feels a «bristling inner recalcitrance: sloth, fear, vanity, meekness» block her from any creative expression (395). She cannot, she says, «get rid of the accusing, never-satisfied gods who surround me like a crown of thorns» (502) with a clamor of self-reproaches.

These attacks are recorded in the *Journals*, eloquently and at considerable length, in a self-analysis that is replete with self-loathing and self-abasement that are almost luxurious in their extremity:

Where was life? It dissipated, vanished into thin air, & my life stood weighed and found wanting because it had no ready-made novel plot, because I couldn’t simply sit down at the typewriter & by sheer genius & will power begin a novel dense & fascinating today & finish next month. Where, how, with what & for what to begin? No incident in my life seemed ready to stand up for even a 20 page story. I sat paralyzed... in a self-induced vacuum. I felt sicker & sicker. I couldn’t happily be anything but a writer & I couldn’t be a writer: I couldn’t even set down one sentence: I was paralyzed with fear, with deadly hysteria.... I had been living in an idle dream of *being a writer*. And here stupid housewives... were getting their stories into the *Satevepost* (404-405).

After breaking down in tears and declaring herself «Useless, goodfornothing» to Ted, they «talked it out, analyzed it», and she vows «doggedly [to] work, wait & expect the minimum» (405). Anyone who has read the *Journals* knows that this visitation by the Panic Bird of writer’s block and its attendant demons of self-disgust, self-belittling, and self-devastation happens over and over again this year. What changes is Plath’s therapy and the catharsis she seeks.

Before looking at the psychoanalysis Plath turned to and what relief it gave her, one might well ask why Ted was unequal to the task of counseling. He is certainly portrayed as an exemplary model for the artist, and a mentor ready with advice, exercises, and plans of study. Increasingly, though, Plath feels uncomfortable confiding in her husband, because she suspects her fears are burdensome and become more real when voiced: «I think the worst thing is to exteriorize these jitters & so will try to shut up & not blither to Ted» (409); or, «I must learn to lead my own life with him, but not lean on him for every move» (412); and later, «He gets bothered because I am bothered and then I feel bad for his being bothered and so on» (462). Eventually, this reluctance to tell all to Ted comes to express an ambivalence toward this choice – *his* choice – of a writer’s life, and an underlying hostility toward being absorbed by Hughes’s vocation, which is, she says, «so much stronger than mine» (525): «I am a bungler, who has taken a bad turn in fortune – rejected by an adult world, part of nothing – of neither an external career of Ted’s – his internal career when written out, perhaps – nor a career of my own, nor, vicariously, the life of friends, nor part of motherhood – I long for an external view of myself & my room to confirm its reality» (409).

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<sup>1</sup> All prose quotations by Plath are from the *Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*, ed. Karen V. Kukil (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

She begins to think it would have been better to remain at Smith, which is a truly shocking turnaround from her earlier appraisal of teaching literature as, yes, fit only for «those who can't» create literature; or she dreams vaguely of getting a Ph.D. in psychology. Always there is a nagging desire for more money and fear about what this desire might say about her authenticity as an artist. She is especially sensitive about what Hughes might think, since he seems totally uninterested in marketing his talent, completely oblivious to the fears and insecurities about money Plath suffers. Plath desperately wonders «what one needs to sacrifice to have money for a home & children», knowing that she and Hughes need «to be alas, wealthy, simply to ever have a family»; but then she is «horrified at voicing the American dream of a home & children» and embraces a Bohemian identity as Hughes's «impractical vagabond wife & mother, a manner of exile» (411) from such humdrum American ambitions. Hughes wanted neither a permanent home nor children, but to be a free spirit like his friend, poet W.S. Merwin, unfettered by children and free to roam the world with his wife Dido, who apparently shared his aspirations. Plath desperately wants a child, so her musings, even though confided only to her journal, she occasionally regards as marital betrayals of their – Hughes's and Plath's – joint venture. She oscillates ambivalently,

I am too close to the bourgeois society of suburbia: too close to people I know: I must sever myself from them, or be part of their world: this half-and-half compromise is intolerable. If only Ted wanted to do something. Saw a career he'd enjoy. But I wonder: he says 'get a job' as if it were a prison sentence. I feel the weight on me. The old misery of money seeping away. A cold corpse between me and any work at all. I need a flow of life on the outside, a child, a job, a community I know from preacher to baker. Not this drift of fairytales. (459)

Hughes has assigned her fairy tales to read, and as she says in a more docile mood, «Whatever Ted does, I would like to submit myself to it. It would require a long discipleship» (450-51).

What is striking about Plath's blockage as a writer is that she cannot do anything right, and therefore she also cannot write. She is tormented, she says, by «my queen-bitch superego: what I should, what I ought» (520). If she attempts to satisfy her «puritan conscience» (396), her «commercial American superego» (521), and thinks in terms of the marketability and potential riches of selling a popular novel or short stories to *Ladies' Home Journal* or *Saturday Evening Post*, then she is straying from Ted's demands, and «he is didactic», «he gives orders» (401) – «poetry subjects & assignments which are highly exciting» (399) exercises to hone her talent, not necessarily to lead to monetary success. But «the ghost of the unborn novel is a Medusa-head» (401) that paralyzes her, makes her impotent to write: «I feel paltry, wanting in richness. Fearful, inadequate, desperate» (397). On the other hand, if she works on her poetry, she feels as though she has «a life of doing nothing [that] is death. Our life is ridiculously ingrown, sedentary. Ted has fanatic ideas...» (411), and this reminds her that her relatives disapprove: her aunt and uncle «Dot & Frank probably don't like Ted simply because he 'won't get a job, a steady career'» (411), and she knows that «we can't now and maybe never will earn a living by our writing», because they are living off their savings from teaching. Worst of all, Plath asks, «What if our work isn't good enough? We get rejections. Isn't this the world telling us we shouldn't bother to be writers? Weren't the mothers and businessmen right after all? Shouldn't we have avoided these disquieting questions and taken steady jobs...?» (436).

She certainly cannot confide in her mother Aurelia, because she senses Aurelia's «unspoken nervousness about our fortunes, my lack of a job – and the sense of nothing written, nothing read, nothing done» (423), which only confirms Aurelia's anxieties and leads Plath to seek secretarial work to calm her own fears. She ventriloquizes Aurelia's doubts, and these echo her own:

She is worried about me and the man I married. How awful we are, to make her worry. We had good jobs and were earning between us about six thousand a year. My god. And we deliberately and with full possession of our senses threw these jobs (and no doubt our

careers as teachers) over to live without lifting a finger. Writing. What would we do: next year, twenty years from now: when the babies came.... We were crazy one way or another.... She would take that job teaching English at Smith: if only she had had a chance like that. She said this. She wants to be me: she wants me to be her: she wants to crawl into my stomach and be my baby and ride along. But I must go her way.  
I'll have my own babies, thank you.  
I'll have my own husband, thank you. (433-34)

Notice how at the end of this passage, Plath shifts from a reasonable or quasi-reasonable fending off of maternal disapproval into a tirade against a mother who is intrusive, suffocating, and so possessive she threatens to inhabit her daughter's life, body and soul.

Plath insists that «a wall, soundproof, must mount between» (421) her and Hughes as well, because too many of her doubts about her writing, too many of her worries about money, are tainted by their association with Aurelia. When Plath addresses her mother in her *Journals*, she also seems to be exorcising her own demons, her fear that she is unequal to a year devoted solely to her writing: «So keep out. Your breath stinks worse than Undertaker's Basement when it comes to trying to rear a soul in its perfect freedom. You won't make my husband mad by raving about houses and babies. You won't make him ashamed by offering me \$300 for a course in stenotyping for my birthday (by implication, so I can work and earn money because he probably never will). My husband supports me in soul, body, and by feeding me bread and poems.... I love his work.... He wants me to change and make things too» (434); but Plath is perilously uncertain that she can «change and make things too». According to Hughes's biographer Elaine Feinstein, Plath's friend and confidante, Suzette Macedo, sensed that «one of the pressures on the marriage was Sylvia's insistence that Ted should at least write *commercially* if he was determined to do nothing but write» (107), suggesting that Plath would eventually forsake her rhapsodic view of Hughes in the Boston year: «the smell & feel of him is worth a private fortune a year» (412), she declares, and not the security of him being a good provider in the conventional sense, or so she assures herself in 1958. The question, of course, is why does she weigh her husband against a private fortune a year, if she is not comparing their virtues. Ironically, too, «trying to rear a soul in its perfect freedom» is probably Hughes's idea originally, not Plath's. Feinstein describes him as «like William Blake» – he regularly «fulminated against the pleasure-denying ordinances of his upbringing, with their seeming unawareness that there was a natural and God-given imperative to live your life richly». Hence his determination «that his children should be allowed to find their own way», despite some rather reckless choices by his daughter Frieda, who marries and divorces a biker while still in her teens. Ultimately, Hughes congratulates himself as a father, because «he was satisfied that she was fully alive» (213).

Plath must therefore avoid voicing her fears to both husband Ted and mother Aurelia. They both pose threats of exposure that she is not a true writer, but a fraud. Retrospectively, Hughes wrote to Aurelia, «We assumed my writing would carry on anyway somehow. Our great anxiety was for hers.... That was the dominant theme – it was our big invalid» (quoted in Feinstein, 109). Aurelia only intensifies this invalid condition. As Plath says, she «is a source of great depression – a beacon of terrible warning» (422) that her daughter's life has gone fearfully awry.

With Hughes's approval, Plath decides to unburden herself of this obsessive self-criticism, these incessant self-reproaches, this «panic, absolute & self-obliterating» (421) with a psychoanalyst: Ruth Beuscher, who was also her doctor in 1953 when she fell into a deep depression and attempted suicide. Hughes was, according to Plath, very supportive of this decision. Beuscher asks Plath, «'Does Ted want you to get better?'" and Plath responds, «Yes. He does. He wants me to see RB and is excited about my upswing in emotion and joy. He wants me to fight my devils with the best weapons I can muster and to win» (437). As we shall see, Hughes is eventually skeptical of what analysis did for her. In «Night-Ride on Ariel», he describes Beuscher as a manipulative puppeteer:

Beutscher [sic]  
Twanging the puppet strings  
That waltzed you in air out of your mythical grave  
To jig with your Daddy's bones on a kind of tightrope  
Over the gap of your real grave. (BL 174)

If anything, Beutscher seems to be complicit in Plath's eventual discovery of her «real» as opposed to her «mythical grave», and therefore instrumental in Plath's decision to kill herself. In her biography of Hughes, Feinstein also seems to be expressing Hughes's (and probably Olwyn Hughes's as well) doubts about what Freudian psychoanalysis did for Plath:

Sylvia was living in a period when psychological illness was assumed to turn on the discovery of a key childhood trauma, as suggested by the 1964 Hitchcock film *Marnie*. Freudian analysis, at its very high watermark of acceptance, was on hand to interpret her violent mood swings and self-destructive impulses in terms of an Oedipus complex. Some of our certainties about Freud's reading of the world have wobbled since then, but several of Plath's most extraordinary poems use the story of her childhood loss as their central myth. (54)

Plath may have found in Freudian analysis the central myth for her poems, but, according to Feinstein, «she was given an explanation of her inner distress that was to prove highly dangerous» (54).

What did happen that year in analysis? First, Plath finds almost immediate relief – not only from self-loathing, but also, she says, from her sense of creative blockage. After her first session, she exclaims,

Ever since Wednesday I have been feeling like a 'new person'. Like a shot of brandy went home, a sniff of cocaine, hit me where I live and I am alive & so-there. Better than a shock treatment: 'I give you permission to hate your mother.'

'I hate her, doctor.' So I feel terrific. In a smarmy matriarchy of togetherness it is hard to get a sanction to hate one's mother especially a sanction one believes in. I believe in RB's because she is a clever woman who knows her business & I admire her. She is for me 'a permissive mother figure.' I can tell her anything, and she won't turn a hair or scold or withhold [sic] her listening which is a pleasant substitute for love.

But although it makes me feel good as hell to express my hostility for my mother, frees me from the Panic Bird on my heart and my typewriter (why?), I can't go through life calling RB up from Paris, London, the wilds of Maine long-distance: 'Doctor, can I still go on hating my mother?' 'Of course you can: hate her hate her hate her.' 'Thank you, doctor. I sure do hate her.' (429).

Although Plath doesn't articulate her dilemma here, what she seems to be saying is that while hating her mother gives her release from hating herself, she also needs a substitute mother figure, another outside authority stronger than her mother, in order to give her permission to do so, because *self*-permission is impossible. She also poses the question whether this analysis might ever be terminated or whether it is interminable – whether she will ever master her hatred for her mother or continue to need Beutscher to affirm the legitimacy and strength of her feelings.

Perhaps this sanctioning of mother-hatred only creates a momentary or intermittent displacement of what is an unconscious sense of guilt. Even after several sessions with Beutscher, Plath is again blocked and baffled by her self-torment: «I think I'm going to get well and then I feel I can't; need to be punished» (467); and she is still asking, «Why do I feel now I should be guilty, unhappy: and feel guilty if I am not?» (455). The circularity is mind-numbing: she feels guilty for not feeling guilty? In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud describes the «normal, conscious sense of guilt (conscience) as presenting «no difficulties; it is based on the tension between the ego and the ego ideal and is the

expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency» (40-41). Plath's conscience, however, is not normal; it presents her with constant difficulties, because it appears to be making incessant, unreasonable, and contradictory demands on her. If we are to believe the *Journals* from this year, she feels herself to be always in the wrong, and from every direction – from her mother, from her husband, and from the outside world of publishing and prizes: her first book of poems is rejected by Houghton Mifflin, while Anne Sexton's is accepted; she is not given the coveted Yale prize for young poets, while George Starbuck's volume, which she feels to be inferior, wins. She «is grim, sour. Rejection will follow rejection» (492), and then chastises herself for being jealous of her peers: «How many thousands of people as writers more successful than I. If I don't write in spite of this, in spite of rejections, I don't deserve acceptances» (493). She is earning no money, and feels guilty; she has no huge success with her writing and feels guilty; and worst of all, she has no vocation, no calling. If anything, she is guilty of being guilty.

Freud describes «two very familiar maladies» where «the sense of guilt is over-strongly conscious [as it would seem to be with Plath]; in them the ego ideal displays particular severity and often rages against the ego in a cruel fashion» (*EI* 41). These two maladies are obsessional neurosis and melancholia. In Plath's psychoanalysis, both of these maladies are addressed, and both play a role in Plath's understanding – and perhaps misunderstanding – of her writer's block. Plath will not permit herself to write, but does document in obsessive detail all of her blockages, and she then punishes herself with self-loathing for her «destructive rationalizing», «as if my mind stopped & let the phenomena of nature... roll over me like a juggernaut» (408). When she is given permission to hate her mother, however, she suddenly feels in control, capable of writing for herself and no longer worried that her mother is controlling her. As Ruth Beuscher explains it to her patient, the cure is a simple reversal, an act of will. Plath reports Beuscher's counsel in her notes on their sessions:

You are trying to do two mutually incompatible things this year. 1) spite your mother. 2) write. To spite your mother, you don't write because you feel you have to give the stories to her, or that she will appropriate them. (As I was afraid of having her around to appropriate my baby, because I didn't want it to be hers). So I can't write. And I hate her because my not writing plays into her hands and argues that she is right, I was foolish not to teach, or do something secure, when what I have renounced security for is nonexistent. My rejection-fear is bound up with the fear that this will mean my rejection by her, for not succeeding... So my work is to have fun in my work and to FEEL THAT MY WORKS ARE MINE. She may use them, put them about her room when published, but I did them and she has nothing to do with them. (448)

So there! Problem solved. But it is not solved, the obsessive self-flagellation for not performing adequately as a writer continues, and why? And how does one «work to have fun» in one's work? Now she is guilty for not having fun!

Freud would have warned Beuscher, I suspect, that her sanctioning of mother-hatred was probably not a wise strategy. According to Freud,

In certain forms of obsessional neurosis the sense of guilt is over-noisy but cannot justify itself to the ego. Consequently the patient's ego rebels against the imputation of guilt and seeks the physician's support in repudiating it. *It would be folly to acquiesce in this, for to do so would have no effect.* Analysis eventually shows that the super-ego is being influenced by processes that have remained unknown to the ego. It is possible to discover the repressed impulses which are really at the bottom of the sense of guilt. Thus in this case the super-ego knew more than the ego about the unconscious id. (*EI* 41; emphasis mine)

The task of analysis would be to bring to consciousness in the patient what «repressed impulses», wishes, desires are triggering the guilt, not simply telling Plath as Beuscher does that she has permission to hate her mother. In Freud's terms, the important question is what does Plath's superego know that her ego does not?

In the midst of her first long attack on her mother, Plath narrates a dream. Strangely, it is not her dream, but her mother Aurelia's, and for Plath, it is laden with maternal disapproval. Complicating the point-of-view is that it sustains Plath's sarcastic ventriloquizing of what Aurelia felt throughout the harangue, even as she assumes a third-person voice: Hence, in an earlier passage, she reads Aurelia's mind: «What did her Daughter do? She slept with people, hugged them and kissed them. Turned down the nicest boys whom *she* would have married like a shot & got older and still didn't marry anybody. She was too sharp and smart-tongued for any nice man to stand. Oh, she was a cross to bear. Now this is what I feel my mother felt» (432). The dream also focuses on Plath's sexual activity, her mother's feelings that her daughter is a source of pollution, and that this pollution directly contributed to her father's death:

It was her daughter's fault partly. She had a dream: her daughter was all gaudy-dressed about to go out and be a chorus girl, a prostitute too, probably. (She had a lover, didn't she? She necked and petted and flew to New York to visit Estonian artists and Persian Jew wealthy boys and her pants were wet with the sticky white filth of desire. Put her in a cell, that's all you could do. She's not *my* daughter. Not my nice girl. Where did that girl go?). The Husband, brought alive in dream to relive the curse of his old angers, slammed out of the house in rage that the daughter was going to be a chorus girl. The poor Mother runs along the sand beach, her feet sinking in the sand of life, her moneybag open and the money and coins falling into the sand, turning to sand. The father had driven, in a fury, to spite her, off the road bridge and was floating dead, face down and bloated, in the slosh of ocean water by the pillars of the country club. Everybody was looking down from the pier at them. Everybody knew everything. (432)

Plath dreams her mother's dream, feeling, as she says, «what I feel my mother felt» – that her daughter's sexual promiscuity was partly responsible for Otto Plath's death. How can this be? Plath was only eight years old when her father fell ill – too young to have sex as she eventually did in her twenties with «Persian Jew wealthy boys» like Richard Sassoon. Why does Plath link her later sexual experiences with Otto Plath's death in her childhood?

Otto is «brought alive» initially as «The Husband» to «relive the curse of his old angers», suggesting that Plath is resurrecting memories of her father's power to intimidate his family, and especially Aurelia, who is portrayed as the «poor mother» both because she deserves sympathy and because she is impoverished by him. The word «curse» also hints at Otto Plath's omnipotence beyond death – a curse that continues to be activated by his daughter's loose sexual behavior and Aurelia's ineffectual efforts to control her. «The Husband» deserts Aurelia in a fit of rage over his daughter becoming a chorus girl – a woman who gets paid for seductive dancing, or, if she becomes a prostitute, sexual services as well. But it is the mother who suffers financial hardship, as Aurelia apparently did: «He didn't leave hardly enough money to bury him because he lost on the stocks, just like her own father did, and wasn't it awful. Men men men» (430). One senses here Plath's narrative mingling of Otto Plath with the daughter's own Husband, Ted Hughes, and a doubling of the complaint that husbands empty women's moneybags, perhaps use them up sexually as well as leaving them financially impoverished, sinking in «the sands of life».

The most sensational moment, though, is the mother's discovery of the «sticky white filth of desire» in the daughter's pants, and, in fact, this part of the passage in parentheses was originally cut, probably at Aurelia Plath's urging, from the first edition of the *Journals*.<sup>2</sup> It also seems

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<sup>2</sup> In a later passage, Plath returns to this dream, and once again, the *Unabridged Journals* restores a brief passage where Plath is interpreting her mother: «I have lost a father and his love early; feel angry at her because of this 'and feel she feels I killed him' (her dream about me being a chorus girl and his driving off and drowninghimself)» (447). One other place where Aurelia's dream is alluded to is in the poem «Electra on Azalea Path»: «My mother dreamed you face down in the sea» (CP 117). In the Editor's Note to the abridged

doubtful that Aurelia would have said this to her daughter in the context of reporting a dream. She may have wanted to disown and lock up, censor, this passage, just as she wants to disown her daughter and «put her in a cell» in the dream. But this is also Plath dreaming her mother's dream, foisting on her mother what may be Plath's own unconscious guilt for «the sticky white filth of desire». But the phrase itself is ambiguous: Whose desire? Plath's? The men for whom she dances? The Husband's – and whose Husband? All sexual desire? Ejaculatory semen belongs to the man, and this is presumably what Aurelia discovers and finds so disgusting. The dream ends emphatically with a sense of public shame and exposure. The dead body of the father is found by the pillars – of society, of course – at the upper-class country club, and one senses the daughter's whoredom is suddenly a source of public infamy and will lead to social ostracism for the mother. If Plath is dreaming her mother's dream, then this is presumably her mother's deepest fear – that everyone will know everything about Sylvia's and maybe Otto Plath's filthy desires.

One way to read this dream is that it is about father-daughter incest. Let us assume, as Freud would, that the incest is not real, but fantasized. In his essay on «Female Sexuality», Freud argues that even though «the mother so unavoidably initiates the [daughter] into the phallic phase» because her «first or at any rate strongest genital sensations came to [her] when... being cleansed and tended by [her] mother», the father will necessarily be «the sexual seducer» in «the phantasies of later years». For Freud, this is an important moment in the development of femininity, an important moment of transition in the daughter's version of the Oedipal complex: «When the girl turns away from the mother she transfers to the father at the same time the responsibility for having introduced her to sexual life» (207), and «the way to femininity then lies open to the girl, except in so far as she is hampered by remains of the pre-Oedipus mother-attachment which she has passed through» (208). Plath's well-known embrace of the Electra-complex as her story necessarily entails a betrayal of an original pre-Oedipal symbiosis with the mother and a denial of an original desire to possess the mother's body. This symbiosis is very real in the *Journals*. At one point, Plath wishes Aurelia would die «so I could be sure of what I am: so I could know that what feelings I have, even though some resemble hers, are really my own. Now I find it hard to distinguish between the semblance and the reality» (449).<sup>3</sup>

Further, Plath's unremitting hatred for Aurelia in the Boston year might be explained then as an effort to fend off the temptation to return to an original love for the mother so strong that it threatens her identity, her separate being, and also her feminine sexuality. One of the constants in Plath's tirades is that her mother and Hughes are rivals, foes in terms of what they want for her. She also portrays Hughes as a slap in the face to her mother's prudery: «He has a soul, he has sex strong as it comes. He isn't going to die so soon. So keep out» (434). Implicitly, he is not like Otto – he won't «die so soon», but will continue to claim Plath's body. But he is also, she says, «a substitute for my father», and «I identify him with my father at certain times, and these times take on great importance» (447). She fears that Aurelia «might appropriate Ted as hers and kill him, or

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*Journals of Sylvia Plath* (New York: Dial Press, 1982), Frances McCullough explains that «Because it is very early – in terms of the ages of Plath's survivors – to release such a document, there has been special concern for those who must live out their lives as characters in this drama. There are quite a few nasty bits missing – Plath had a very sharp tongue and tended to use it on nearly everybody, even people of whom she was inordinately fond.... So, some of the more devastating comments are missing... and there are a few other cuts – of intimacies – that have the effect of diminishing Plath's eroticism, which was quite strong» (ix-x). In Karen V. Kukil's Preface to the *Unabridged Journals*, she notes the unsealing by Hughes, shortly before his death, of journals recording Plath's «private therapy sessions with Ruth Beuscher» (ix), and these are the primary materials for this paper.

<sup>3</sup> In her Introduction to *Letters Home*, Aurelia Plath similarly claims, «Between Sylvia and me there existed – as between my own mother and me – a sort of psychic osmosis which, at times, was very wonderful and comforting; at other times an unwelcome invasion of privacy. Understanding this, I learned, as she grew older, not to refer to previous voluntary confidences on her part» (32).

kill him through me? In spirit or maleness is as bad as physically» (448). A moment later, she suddenly answers her question, «WHAT DO I FEEL GUILTY ABOUT? Having a man, being happy: she has lost both man and happiness and had to make do with Warren and me substituted for the man, and our happiness substituted for her own» (449). Aurelia «is a murderess of maleness», and Plath «want[s] as ever, to grab my life from out under her hot itchy hands. My life, my writing, my husband, my unconceived baby. She's a killer. Watch out. She's deadly as a cobra under that shiny greengold hood» (433).<sup>4</sup>

Plath did exact a promise from her mother that «she'd never marry» (433) after her father's death, which suggests that she meant to take her father's place, to make up for his loss. Plath may well feel unconscious guilt for renegeing on this promise and choosing Ted over Aurelia: «My mother had sacrificed her life for me. A sacrifice I didn't want» (433); and later, «I did what I felt the one thing and married the man I felt the only man I could love, and want to see do what he wanted in this world, and want to cook for and bear children for and write with. I did just what mother told me not to do...» (435). Perhaps this should read, in terms of unconscious ideas, «I did just what I forced my mother to promise she would not do», since there is no evidence that Aurelia ever tried to persuade her daughter not to marry Hughes.

When Plath reads Freud's essay on «Mourning and Melancholia», however, she does not apply its insights to her suicide attempt as linked to a childhood wish that her father be dead, so that she might have sole possession of the mother. If she had arrived at this understanding of Freud, it might bring to consciousness both a sense of guilt for Oedipal aggression against the father as a rival, and an understanding of her self-reproaches and Panic Bird as derived from a sense of inadequacy – i.e., she can never take the father's place, and must therefore give up the mother. Such a loss for the melancholic leads to a narcissistic identification with the lost love object – i.e., «if I cannot have my mother, I will be like my mother» – and, according to Freud, incessant «self-reproaches [like those we have seen by Plath] are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted on to the patient's own ego» (*MM* 169).

Plath has only a partial, or perhaps inverted, understanding of this process, since she derives her self-flagellation and self-criticism from an original hatred, not love, for the mother and never comes to see her attempted suicide as «deriving a sadistic gratification» from making her mother suffer, although this is assuredly what she does. What Freud provides for her is «an almost exact description of my feelings and reasons for suicide», but she believes them to be «a transferred murderous impulse from my mother onto myself: the 'vampire' metaphor Freud uses, 'draining the ego': that is exactly the feeling I have getting in the way of my writing: mother's clutch. I mask my

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<sup>4</sup> In her poem «Medusa», Plath similarly compares the presence of her mother to the paralyzing and hypnotic gaze of a cobra:

You steamed to me over the sea,  
Fat and red, a placenta  
  
Paralysing the kicking lovers.  
Cobra light  
Squeezing the breath from the blood bells  
Of the fuchsia. I could draw no breath,  
Dead and moneyless,  
  
Overexposed, like an X-ray. (*CP* 225)

Her mother was present at the breakup of her marriage to Hughes in the summer of 1962, and Plath feels «overexposed», unwilling to see her mother again until she has made a new life. Notice here that Aurelia threatens to take her daughter back into her womb, but also seems to impose a sexual paralysis on «kicking lovers» – i.e., to have a baleful effect on sexual expression. The sense of impoverishment is also present in both Plath's *Journals* and here.

self-abasement (a transferred hate of her) and weave it with my own real dissatisfactions in myself until it becomes very difficult to distinguish what is really bogus criticism from what is really a changeable liability» (447). Once again, the mother is deservedly to be hated and spited, and Plath sees the solution as an act of will: «How can I get rid of this depression: by refusing to believe she has any power over me, like the old witches for whom one sets out plates of milk and honey» (447).

What happens to our understanding of Plath's sense of guilt and the meaning of this dream and others that year if we believe she actually suffered from sexual abuse as a child? If we agree instead with Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (and Sandor Ferenczi) that «a real trauma can itself give rise to horrible fantasies – that these fantasies derive from a real event, they do not replace it»? Masson argues that «people fall ill from what happened to them, not from what they imagine happened to them» (186). Plath does indeed suffer from «horrible fantasies» in the Boston year – dreams that wake her nightly, «screaming: the horror of the deformed and dead, alive as we are, and I among them, in the filth and swarming corruption of the flesh» (459), and recurring «dreams of deformed and tortured people» which she suspects may be «my guilty visions» of him [her father] or fears of punishment for me», because «I really think I killed and castrated my father» (476). Similarly, in «Dream Life», Hughes remembers her nightmares:

Your sleep was a bloody shrine, it seemed.  
And the sacred relic of it  
Your father's gangrenous, cut-off leg.  
No wonder you feared sleep.  
No wonder you woke, saying: 'No dreams.' (BL 141)

If Plath had really been sexually abused as a child, then this symbol of his castrated member might well haunt her as an expression of her anger toward him, and yes, guilt for having wished him dead and having that wish fulfilled.

Before Freud repudiated his own belief in real events, real traumas, as initiating factors in neuroses, according to Masson, «he had recognized the aggressive acts of parents against their children – for seduction was an act of violence. Now Freud had a new insight, that children had aggressive impulses against their parents» (113). Therefore, in *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, Freud stresses their importance: «Hostile impulses against parents (a wish that they should die) are also an integral part of neuroses» (207). Masson responds,

Indeed, why should children not wish for vengeance for a crime committed against them? If the seductions had actually taken place, these 'aggressive impulses' would have been healthy signs of protest. But once Freud had decided that these seductions had never occurred, that the parents had not done anything to their children in reality, then these 'aggressive impulses' replace seduction in Freud's theories. An act was replaced by an impulse, a deed by a fantasy. This new 'reality' became so important for Freud that the impulses of parents against their children were forgotten, never to surface again in his writings. If it was not only the aggressive acts of a parent that were attributed to the fantasy life of a child; now aggressive impulses too were the products of a child's imagination. (113)

In this context, Ruth Beuscher's strategy of permitting Plath to hate her mother might be seen as sanctioning normally aggressive tendencies in her patient – i.e., «Of course you hate your mother. Of course you wished your father dead when you were a child. We all do». Plath's hatred, however, seems to exceed normal limits, and perhaps Beuscher should have looked for real events as the cause for such extreme emotions.

If we replace Freud's fantasies and impulses with real acts and deeds in the Plath's interpretation of and immersion in her mother's dream, the «everything» that surfaces for public exposure with

the father's dead body is the shame of father-daughter incest, the fact that Aurelia discovered it – «the sticky white filth of desire» – and then blamed her daughter rather than her husband for the seduction. She did everything possible to deny and suppress what had happened, intimidating her daughter with warnings, «[You're] not *my* daughter. Not my nice girl.» Such a silencing might explain Plath's blockage – that she is «unable to speak human speech, lost as I am in my inner wordless Sargasso» (401), or that she cannot speak, because her father's «tongue stuck in my jaw», his German «language obscene» – indecipherable «gobbledygoo» («Daddy», *CP* 223).<sup>5</sup> If she does tell all, there will be the father's wrath to face, and Plath remembers an obstinate Nazi: «He wouldn't go to a doctor, wouldn't believe in God and heiled Hitler in the privacy of his own home» (430). Plath describes Otto Plath as «an ogre. But I miss him. He was old, but she married an old man to be my father. It was her fault. Damn her eyes» (431). This final expostulation, though a common enough curse, makes Aurelia guilty for seeing something, watching perhaps jealously the interactions between father and daughter. At one point Plath suggests that Aurelia saw her daughter as, in fact, a rival for her husband, Otto Plath: «I am experiencing a grief reaction for something I have only recently begun to admit isn't there: a mother's love. Nothing I do (marrying, saying '*I have a husband so I really didn't want yours*') ... can change her way of being with me which I experience as a total absence of love» (446; my italics).

Transforming fantasy into reality might also explain Plath's excessive – abnormal? – hatred of her mother, which she blames for her first suicide attempt:

I lay in my bed when I thought my mind was going blank forever and thought what a luxury it would be to kill her, to strangle *her skinny veined throat which could never be big enough to protect me from the world*. But I was too nice for murder. I tried to murder myself: to keep from being an embarrassment to the ones I loved and from living myself in a mindless hell. How thoughtful: Do unto yourself as you would do to others. I'd kill her, so I killed myself. (433; my italics)

The accusation is that her mother could not protect her, and very strangely, because of «her skinny veined throat», which strangely isn't «big enough» to shield Plath from the world's dangers. Is it because her mother lacks a penis and has only a throat, a displacement for the inferior vagina? Or, does this mean that Aurelia did not protect her daughter verbally? That she was unable to speak out against «The Husband, brought alive in dream to relive the curse of his old angers»? Is there the accusation that Aurelia could not satisfy her husband sexually, and so he turned to his unprotected daughter? Elsewhere Plath describes Aurelia as hating sex: «She figured he was such a brute she couldn't, didn't love him. Stood in the shower forcing herself to enjoy the hot water on her body because she hated his guts» (429-30). This would explain Plath's own feeling that sex is naughty, dirty – what chorus girls and prostitutes do with men. Even with a husband, «why guilt: as if sex, even legally indulged in, should be 'paid for' by pain» (456). Clearly Plath never recovers any

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<sup>5</sup> Scholar Mary Kurtzman, who taught «Daddy» many times, wrote me in an e-mail: «The 'gobbledygoo' describes the way German sounds to her, but also sounds like (my students told me this) 'gobble the goo', as in forced oral sex.» She reads the entire poem as about childhood sexual abuse. In support of her reading, it should be noted that in the first draft of «Daddy», the original phrasing was «language obscene, incestuous». Plath crosses out «incestuous» and thereby shortens the phrase to «language obscene». Kurtzman also drew my attention to an earlier passage in the *Journals*. Plath is unhappy about Ted taking part in the reading of a new translation of *Oedipus Rex*, and describes her reaction: «There he [Ted] stood next to the corrupt, white snail-faced Van Voris whose voice luxuriated over the words: loin, incest, bed, foul. I felt as if I had stepped barefoot into a pit of sliming, crawling worms. I felt like hawking and spitting» (388). Kurtzman claims, «It sounds here like Plath and Hughes had already talked about this version of Oedipus and that she was terribly upset by the 'luxuriating' on incest, as if it were a threat to herself. Hers is a typical response for a victim of sexual abuse: anxiety, then anger». Plath is especially repelled by her colleague in the Smith English Department, Van Voris, because she has seen him behaving like a father-seducer with a Smith student.

memory of actual abuse in the *Journals* we have,<sup>6</sup> although one dream at Yaddo about her pregnancy is openly about incest with her father: «Dream, shards of which remain: my father come to life again. My mother having a little son: my confusion: this son of mine is a twin to her son. The uncle of an age with his nephew. My brother of an age with my child. O the tangles of that old bed» (520). There is, however, Plath's intuition throughout this year that if she could understand her past, she would find her story: «A great, stark, bloody play acting itself out over and over again behind the sunny façade of our daily rituals, birth, marriage, death, behind parents and schools and beds and tables of food: the dark, cruel, murderous shades, the demon-animals, the Hungers» (456). Instead of a coherent narrative, she remembers German words spoken by her mother that represent her blockage: «remembering the plaintive German song mother used to play & sing to us beginning 'Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedenten [sic]» (401), which translated, means, «I don't know what it's supposed to mean», and is the first line in a poem by Heinrich Heine, «The Lorelei», about the seductive Rhine maidens, luring sailors to death with their song.

For Ted Hughes, Plath's incestuous relation with her father, whether real or imagined, was what eventually hoodwinked her into suicide, and he blames her for choosing, binding herself to a victim narrative. Hughes's view of Plath is rather like Freud's colleague, Karl Abraham's unsympathetic attitude toward the child who behaves seductively: «If there is an underlying unconscious wish for it, the experiencing of a sexual trauma in childhood is a masochistic expression of the sexual impulse» (quoted in Masson, 132), and for Hughes, Plath was a masochist who solicited, wished for this seduction: «You cried out / Your love-sickness for that Ogre, / Your groaning appeal» («Fairy Tale», *BL* 160). When Plath imagined or 'found' incest or abuse in her childhood, it may have been meant to free her from her demons, but it also insured that the god she would come to worship in her poetry would be one who demanded constant sacrifice, a god who demanded that the same story be told obsessively, repeatedly, even if the roles were filled by people other than her mother and father, even if Hughes would be designated the role of the father and forced to repeat the father's brutality. When Plath's unconscious life, her «Sleep had opened. / Darkness poured from it, like perfume» (190), and Hughes

... woke upside down in your spirit-house  
 Moving limbs that were not my limbs,  
 And telling, in a voice not my voice,  
 A story of which I knew nothing. («The God», *BL* 190)

As he describes Plath's writer's block before this story is revealed, it is derived from a «panic of emptiness – a God»:

Your heart, mid-Sahara, raged  
 In its emptiness.  
 Your dreams were empty.  
 You bowed at your desk and you wept  
 Over the story that refused to exist. (*BL* 188)

Ruled by this «vacuum of God» (188), Plath's poems are also «little phials of the emptiness» and «oblations to an absence. / Little sacrifices» (189) to what Hughes regards as «a non-existent God. A dead God / With a terrible voice» (188) who insists on speaking through her. Out of this nonentity, this sterility, Plath conceives and gives birth to «a dead child», and Hughes nursed his invalid wife, «nursed you»,

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<sup>6</sup> After the Boston year, the *Journals* are incomplete. We have only fragments, and the later journals are either lost or destroyed by Ted Hughes.

Till the child stirred. Its mouth-hole stirred.  
Blood oozed at your nipple,  
A drip-feed of blood. Our happy moment! (189)

Hughes obviously has second thoughts about what psychoanalysis hath wrought, since the child is a vampire needing to be fed blood – «Two handfuls of blood, your own blood, / And in that blood gobbets of me» (189). Both of them are cannibalized by Plath's story of her childhood self with its insatiable «Hungers».

The line from Plath's dream, «Everybody knew everything», reappears in Hughes's «The God» in the context of Plath's religious worship before the fiery altar of her parents, who are the original progenitors of this dead child, this story of sacrifice and vampirism:

You fed the flames with the myrrh of your mother  
The frankincense of your father  
And your own amber and the tongues  
Of fire told their tale. And suddenly  
Everybody knew everything. (190)

The tale obliquely alluded to is that of Cinyras and Myrrha, one of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Hughes renders anew in his *Tales from Ovid*. It is impossible to read this tale and not be reminded of Plath and her father. The story casts the daughter Myrrha as the seducer, with the assistance of her old nurse, who fears Myrrha will kill herself if «the fiery gnawings throughout her body» (108) are not fed. The nurse catches Myrrha in the act of hanging herself (a perverse form of achieving orgasm) out of sexual frustration and agrees to help her plot a rendezvous with her father. While Myrrha's mother Cenchreis is a celebrant in a nine-day festival for Ceres and absent from Cinyras' bed, Myrrha comes to him at night with the nurse's help as a go-between. Not knowing this lovesick maid is his daughter, Cinyras is described as

Mistaking her whimpering struggle of lust and conscience  
For girlish panic.  
It could be  
To soothe her he called her 'my child'  
Or even 'my daughter'  
And maybe when she called him 'father'  
He supposed that made her first yielding  
Somehow easier for her –  
So the real crime, that the King thought no crime,  
Let nothing of its wickedness be omitted. (116)

Hughes represents the relationship between a father and daughter here as deceptively shaping sexual desire, with Cinyras' age and sexual experience fooled and flattered by Myrrha's «girlish panic». In truth, she longs to be «crammed... with his seed», «her womb satisfied» (116).

Hughes's final judgment on Plath's tale of father-daughter incest is that it destroyed everyone. «With blistering eyes», he could only watch

... everything go up  
In the flames of your sacrifice  
That finally caught you too till you  
Vanished, exploding  
Into the flames  
Of the story of your God  
Who embraced you  
And your Mummy and your Daddy – (191)

As for Hughes's view of psychoanalysis, it seems captured in his tale of Cinyras and Myrrha, which is a parable of sorts about the taboos against stories of father-daughter incest. He warns his reader that this tale is

... so horrible  
That fathers with daughters, wherever you are,  
Had better not listen to it -  
I beg you to stay clear.  
Or if you find my song irresistible  
Let your ear  
Now become incredulous.  
May you convince yourselves this never happened. (104)

For the psychoanalyst and the patient, this story is too «horrible» and best not listened to, but also powerful and «irresistible» in the desire it portrays. Therefore, the best strategy is Freud's – to deny its truth altogether. This never happened.

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# «It is nothing»: The grammar of negation in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

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Kate Chopin's classic novel, *The Awakening* (published in 1899), was initially regarded as a scandalous and decadent book («not a healthy book», as a reviewer for the *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat* objected in 1899<sup>1</sup>), because it portrays a young woman, Edna Pontellier, the wife of a prosperous New Orleans merchant and the mother of two children, who is driven by desires both sensual and metaphysical. She strays from her marriage vows, first through infatuation with a Creole man and later through adultery, prompted by desire but not love, with another Creole man. The novel traces the several stages of Edna's emotional, erotic, and spiritual awakening; it concludes with Edna's death as she swims out to sea – an act that may be interpreted as suicide but also in other ways. Chopin's contemporaries objected not only to the novel's sexual frankness but also to the fact that the author withheld moral judgment of her protagonist, leaving such interpretation to her readers. In fact, surprised but not intimidated by the critical venom expressed toward her novel, Chopin composed a mock «retraction», commenting:

Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was then too late. (*St. Louis Book News*, July 8, 1899).

In the century since *The Awakening* was published, it has evolved in critical regard from those early stern pronouncements regarding its objectionable subject matter to its status as an admired regional or «local color» narrative, to full literary canonization as a subversive – even transgressive

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<sup>1</sup> Author unknown, «Notes from Bookland». Review of *The Awakening*, *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 13 May 1899, p. 5. Excerpt reprinted in *The Awakening*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Margaret Culley. New York: Norton, 1976, 146.

– feminist classic.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, it has been advanced as a protomodernist text, with attention to Chopin's formal experimentation and her representations of non-rational psychological states of consciousness and interiority.<sup>3</sup> As one critic, Cynthia Griffin Wolff, summarizes Chopin's modernist affinities, «Critics admire ... the 'minimalism' of a narrative whose absences are at least as important as its action and whose narrator maintains strict emotional and moral neutrality» (Wolff 377).

Framing her own interpretive argument in terms of what is not said – what is «un-uttered» – Wolff regards *The Awakening* as «a tale about *not* speaking, about disjunction – about denials, oversights, prohibitions, exclusions, and absences. It is not merely about things that are never named, but ... about stories that cannot be told and things that can be neither thought nor spoken because they *do not have a name*» (377, emphasis in original). In Wolff's view, Chopin explores Edna's resistance to the social and moral conventions of her day, pushing against the limits of what could be spoken. Edna lacks a vernacular with which to name her feelings; through that fact, Chopin expresses «society's failure to allow its women a language of their own» (Wolff 388).

My purpose here is to argue from a rather different direction for the ways in which the specific language of *The Awakening* produces its meaning and alerts the reader, from the earliest moments of the narrative, to the ultimately negative resolution of Edna Pontellier's psychological and spiritual transformation. Chopin's text is marked by what I term a *grammar of negation*, a linguistic pattern of nullification and cancellation that virtually saturates the narrative.<sup>4</sup> This marked

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<sup>2</sup> Chopin objected to being labeled a local color writer. See Per Seyersted, *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography*, 80-83; and Peggy Skaggs, «*The Awakening's* Relationship with American Regionalism, Romanticism, Realism, and Naturalism», 80-85. For a critical history of the narrative, see Nancy A. Walker, «A Critical History of *The Awakening*», in Walker, ed., 169-85. For feminist readings of *The Awakening*, see Elaine Showalter, «Tradition and the Female Talent: The Awakening as a Solitary Book», in Walker, ed., 202-22; Patricia S. Yaeger, «'A Language Which Nobody Understood': Emancipatory Strategies in *The Awakening*», in Walker, ed., 311-36; Paula A. Treichler, «The Construction of Ambiguity in *The Awakening*: A Linguistic Analysis», in Walker, ed., 352-73; Cynthia Griffin Wolff, «Un-Utterable Longing: The Discourse of Feminine Sexuality in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*», in Walker, ed., 376-95; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, «The Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin's Fantasy of Desire», *The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, v.2: *Sexchanges*, 83-119; and Gerry Brightwell, «Charting the Nebula: Gender, Language and Power in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*», *Women and Language* 18.2 (1995): 37-41.

<sup>3</sup> According to Joseph Boone, who highlights the narrative's blurring between «realms of reality and thought via metaphor» (78), *The Awakening* offers numerous examples of the «textual projection of the unconscious»: subjective states, dreams, and desires. Chopin «destabilizes» point of view, rendering «the boundaries separating fictional text, authorial voice, character, viewpoint, and reader unusually fluid and permeable» (Boone 79). Marianne DeKoven emphasizes the suggestive «doubleness» or ambiguity of «Chopin's relation to her material» (*Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 142) and argues that the narrative's «stylized, heightened, repeated language» (140) – notably in the lyrical passages – anticipates the modernists' experimentation with language to convey subjective inner states. DeKoven adds that ambivalence is «so deeply embedded that to narrate this story, to move through it from one moment to the next, is to oscillate between positive and negative emotions as if there were no oscillation, no shift, as in a möbius strip» (142).

<sup>4</sup> Yaeger, Treichler, and Brightwell all focus on linguistic elements of *The Awakening* but none specifically examine the recurrent negative language. Yaeger observes that the repetitions of certain words and constructions echo the stages of Edna Pontellier's successive awakenings: «Chopin's novel pushes us from its beginning toward an area of speech which asks us to become aware of disjunctions between the disorder of words and the social order, between our usual perceptions and the world these perceptions are designed to organize» (333). Gerri Brightwell, following Saussure, argues that there are two different «registers» of language in the narrative, male and female, and that the latter is regarded by those in Edna Pontellier's milieu as an inconsequential, powerless one. Thus, «despite her attempts to go beyond the constrictions and distortions of language, Edna cannot voice her strongest desires and therefore cannot achieve them. They remain outside the range of her experience, unnamed and unorganized...» (40). Paula Treichler traces Chopin's use of «a network of images, words, verbal refrains, and grammatical textures, often through simple and quite artificial repetition, until the language we remember is continually energizing the language on the page» (365).

language functions like an oceanic undertow that undermines the apparent trajectory of self-affirmation, operating not only within Edna but on all levels of the text: the psychological realm, the social world, and the narrative voice itself. Emphatically affecting the tone of *The Awakening* and contributing to its polarized psychological issues of self-realization and self-denial, words and prefixes that signify the negative occur with regularity on nearly every page, like waves rhythmically lapping the shore of Grand Isle, Louisiana. However, the vocabulary and grammar of negation are themselves ambiguous. Like the waves that simultaneously advance and recede, this inflected grammar shapes both the advances and the withdrawals or regressions that characterize Edna Pontellier's awakening.

To begin with, virtually all of the characters in the narrative – even such symbolic figures as an unnamed woman in black and a pair of nameless lovers – are characterized at least partially in terms of what they are *not*. (For the purposes of this argument, I highlight key words in the text that illustrate the grammar of negation.) For example, Edna Pontellier is «*not* a woman given to confidences...»;<sup>5</sup> she is «*not* accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others» (17; she feels «*no* trace of passion» (18) for her husband; she is «*not* a supercilious or an over-dainty woman» (30). The narrator, introducing Robert Lebrun, informs us that «In coloring he was *not unlike* his companion [Edna]» (3). The pianist, Mademoiselle Reisz, is introduced as «*no longer* young, a homely woman with absolutely *no taste* in dress» (25). Of her antithesis, the consummately domestic Adèle Ratignolle, we are told that «there are *no words* to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was *nothing* subtle or hidden about her charms...» (8).

In distinct contrast to the madonna-like Adèle, Edna Pontellier is identified as «*not* a mother-woman» (8). Edna's attitude towards the maternal role itself is presented with reference to the negative: although she is «fond» of her two young sons, she admits that when they were away from her for part of the previous summer, she «*did not miss* them...» (18). When, early in the narrative, Edna's husband reproaches her for what he regards as her maternal carelessness, his displeasure is rendered as follows: «If it was *not* a mother's place to look after children, whose on earth was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He *could not be* in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that *no* harm befell them» (5).

Léonce Pontellier's disapproval is one of several fundamental expressions of negation that catalyze Edna's dawning awareness of domestic and spiritual oppression. In response to her husband's criticism of (what he regards as) her inappropriate behavior,

She said *nothing*, and refused to answer her husband when he questioned her...

The tears came so fast to Mrs. Pontellier's eyes that the damp sleeve of her peignoir *no longer* served to dry them.... Turning, she thrust her face, steaming and wet, into the bend of her arm, and she went on crying there, *not caring* any longer to dry her face, her eyes, her arms. She *could not have told* why she was crying. Such experiences as the foregoing were *not uncommon* in her married life. They seemed *never* before to have weighed much against the abundance of her husband's kindness and a uniform devotion which had come to be tacit and self-understood. (6)

Moreover, Edna Pontellier is not only «*not* a mother-woman» (8); she is «*not* thoroughly at home in the society of Creoles» (9). Her «otherness» is a key dimension of her social – and, ultimately, metaphysical – separation from others. Signaling her status as an outsider, Adèle Ratignolle cautions Robert Lebrun, «She is *not* one of us, she is *not* like us» (19). The social and cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*. 1899. Rpt. New York: Dover, 1993, p. 13. All subsequent references to the text, included in parentheses, are to this edition.

differences between Edna and her Creole husband and his milieu underlie her confusion regarding Robert's casual attentions. Thus, when (early in the narrative) Robert rests his head on her arm as she sketches Adèle at Grand Isle, Edna «*could not but believe* it to be thoughtlessness on his part; yet that was *no reason* she should submit to it. She *did not remonstrate*, except again to *repulse* him quietly but firmly. He offered *no* apology» (11).

Soon afterwards, the narrator identifies the contrary impulses that have begun to compete within Edna Pontellier: she «*could not have told* why, wishing to go the beach with Robert, she should in the first place have declined, and in the second place have followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which impelled her. A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her, – the light which, showing the way, forbids it» (13). Indeed, this potent (and, I believe, central) image of forbidden enlightenment – enlightenment that contains its own censor or cancellation – is characteristic of the negative semantics of Chopin's text as a whole. The grammar of negation paradoxically accentuates *both* affirmative and negative elements of Edna Pontellier's awakening – as something is offered, it is simultaneously withheld – and significantly contributes to both its linguistic ambiguity and psychological complexity.<sup>6</sup> Repeatedly, Chopin employs this grammar of negation to express both Edna Pontellier's growing self-affirmation and the forces both within and outside her that censor or nullify it.

On the crucial evening during which Edna finally masters swimming after having attempted unsuccessfully to do so all summer, her buoyant triumph in the sea is accompanied by a linguistic (and metaphysical) undertow that darkly anticipates her final swim at the narrative's end. Both affirmative and negative aspects of her awakening are expressed through the grammar of negation: «She wanted to swim far out, where *no* woman had swum before» (27). Pointedly, Edna's exultation is nullified even as it is occurring: «How easy it is! ... 'It is *nothing*', she said aloud; 'why did I *not discover* before that it was *nothing*'» (27). As she swims further, she «seem[s] to be reaching out for the *unlimited* in which to lose herself» (28). Then, as she glances back towards the shore, she realizes that

she *had not gone* any great distance – that is, what would have been a great distance for an experienced swimmer. But to her unaccustomed vision the stretch of water behind her assumed the aspect of a *barrier* which her *unaided* strength *would never be able* to overcome.

A quick vision of death smote her soul, and for a second of time appalled and enfeebled her senses. But by an effort she rallied her staggering faculties and managed to regain the land. (28)

When, afterwards, Edna speaks with Robert about her achievement, she makes «*no mention* of her encounter with death and her flash of terror» (28) and reproaches him for his nonchalant response to her accomplishment. The narrator elaborates, expressing through negative language the positive fact of Robert's sensitivity to Edna's mood: he «*could not explain*; he *could not tell* her that he had penetrated her mood and understood. He said *nothing*, except to offer her his arm.... She took [it], but she *did not lean* upon it» (29).

Later that evening, Edna emphatically resists her husband's command that she vacate the hammock on the porch and come inside for the night. Her growing assertion of independence is conveyed through a saturated negative grammar even as it underscores her newly-found freedom: she remarks to Léonce, «'I mean to stay out here. I *don't wish* to go in, and I *don't intend* to. *Don't speak* to me like that again; I *shall not answer* you'» (31). The following day, the emboldened

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<sup>6</sup> DeKoven regards this self-canceling rhythm as an essential dimension of the narrative's *sous-rature* (a dynamic that she defines as «self-cancellation, unresolved contradiction, unsynthesized dialectic», 22) and its modernism. Though our interpretations converge on this point, DeKoven does not link the pattern of «*sous-rature*» with the saturated negative grammar of the text.

Edna asks Robert to accompany her to Sunday Mass; the language emphasizes both her forwardness and her naïve ignorance of the unorthodoxy of her behavior. Her increasing self-assertion, even audacity, is expressed thus: «she **had never sent** for him before. She **had never asked** for him. She **had never seemed** to want him before. She **did not appear conscious** that she had done anything **unusual** in commanding his presence. He was apparently equally **unconscious** of anything extraordinary in the situation» (33).

When Edna deliberately breaches the convention of being «at home» on her customary social call day, Léonce Pontellier angrily deplores her inexcusable dereliction of proper social conduct. The narrator adds that Léonce has begun to wonder if «his wife **were not growing** a little unbalanced mentally» (57). The language precisely balances affirmation and negation as the narrator distinguishes between Léonce's shallow view and the deeper reality of what is happening to (and within) Edna: «he could see plainly that she **was not** herself. That is, he **could not see** that she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world» (57).

During Léonce's absence in the city and Robert's more emotionally significant absence in Mexico, Edna drifts into the company of the roué Alcée Arobin. As Arobin begins to call upon Edna frequently, the momentum towards intimacy is reported through an insistent grammar of negation: «And then there was scarcely a day which followed that she **did not see** him or **was not reminded** of him» (78). Feeling anxious and uncertain about herself in the light of Arobin's provocative attentions, Edna seeks out Mademoiselle Reisz, since «There was **nothing** which so quieted the turmoil of [her] senses as a visit to Mademoiselle Reisz» (78). She informs the older woman that she intends to move to a small dwelling around the corner because she is tired of the big Pontellier house, which «**never seemed** like [hers] anyway» (79). Mademoiselle Reisz responds, «'That is **not** your true reason, ma belle. There is **no use** in telling me lies. I **don't know** your reason, but you **have not told** me the truth'» (79). As the narrator elaborates, if Edna's reason is «**not yet clear**» (80) to Mademoiselle Reisz, «**neither** was it quite clear to Edna herself.... Instinct had prompted her to put away her husband's bounty in casting off her allegiance. She **did not know** how it would be when he returned ... but whatever came, she had resolved **never again** to belong to another than herself» (80).

As Edna is erotically awakened by Arobin, the language maintains the mixture of anticipation and negation – the pattern of self-canceling affirmation – that characterizes each phase of Edna's awakening: «among the conflicting sensations which assailed her, there was **neither** shame **nor** remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it **was not** the kiss of love which had inflamed her, because it **was not** love which had held this cup of life to her lips» (84). On another evening during which Edna succumbs to Arobin's insistent attentions, the presumed seduction – powerfully conveyed by what is only implied, not described – is expressed through negation: «'Good night', she murmured. He **did not answer**, except to continue to caress her. He **did not say** good night until she had become supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties» (93).

When, soon afterwards, Edna unexpectedly meets Robert at Mademoiselle Reisz's, their conversation, along with the narrator's interposed comments, are saturated with negative language; even this reunion that Edna has long wished for is conveyed negatively. Edna queries Robert, «'... if you **had not** met me here to-day you **wouldn't** – when – that is, **didn't** you mean to come and see me?'» (98) Robert will not say what Edna most wants to hear: that he has returned from Mexico because of his feelings for her. Nonetheless, elated by his return, Edna discounts his reticence and anticipates the imminent fulfillment of her romantic and sensual longings. She sees before her «**no denial** – only the promise of excessive joy.... She recapitulated the motives which **no doubt** explained Robert's reserve. They **were not insurmountable**; they **would not hold** if he really loved her; they **could not hold** against her own passion, which he must come to realize in time» (103).

Accordingly, as Edna waits expectantly for Robert to arrive, «each morning she awoke with hope, and each night she was prey to despondency» (104). Eventually, piqued by disappointment at

Robert's failure to call on her, Edna responds to Arobin's more immediate and pressing attentions. After he leaves her late one evening, the narrator observes – in language that precisely echoes and inverts the previous phrasing – that «there was **no** despondency when [Edna] fell asleep that night; **nor** was there hope when she awoke in the morning» (105). When Robert finally does call on her, he admits that he has avoided her because, despite the strength of his feelings, he regards her as *not* available. Edna, scolding him for a conventional assumption that she has since discarded, announces her absolute social and psychological independence: «'I am **no longer** one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to **dispose of or not**. I give myself where I choose'» (108).

The final stage of Edna's awakening is what I would term her rude awakening. The briefly achieved intimacy between Edna and Robert is interrupted when Edna is called to be present for the birth of Adèle Ratignolle's child, as she has promised she would be. Robert pleads with Edna – to no avail – «**Don't go; don't go!**» (109) In fact, when Edna arrives at Adèle's bedside and hears her friend's agonized moans during labor, she feels a «vague dread». Recalling the «ecstasy of pain» (110) associated with the births of her own two children, she «wished she **had not come**» to witness what she regards as a «scene of torture» (110). Dr. Mandalet, the doctor who presides at the childbirth, concurs, admonishing Edna, «That was **no place** for you.... You **shouldn't have gone**» (111). During the moments of shared maternity, Adèle had urged her to «think of the children» (112). Edna, returning to her house for what she expects is a blissful reunion with Robert, tells herself that she «meant to think of them; that determination had driven into her soul like a **death wound** – but **not to-night**» (112).

That «death wound» explicitly articulates the pull of death that has begun to override the exhilaration of awakening. When Edna reaches her house, fully expecting to find Robert waiting for her in the parlor, she is dismayed to discover that he is «**nowhere** at hand» (112). After reading the note he has left, in which he declares that he left because he loves her, she stretches herself out on the sofa, «**never uttering** a sound. She **did not sleep**. She **did not go** to bed.... She was still awake in the morning, when Celestine unlocked the kitchen door and came in to light the fire» (113).

By this point in the narrative, there is neither anticipation nor affirmation to counterbalance the deepening negation conveyed through both language and action. Although Edna is by now wide awake in every sense of the phrase, she is also irreversibly weighed down by despair. Through the vocabulary and grammar of negation, Chopin has gradually shifted the meaning of awakening from attentive awareness to what might be called spiritual insomnia, from hope to disillusionment, from relative to absolute (and irreversible) disengagement. The force of the metaphysical undertow that was always there finally rises fully to the surface to overtake – and nullify – Edna's awakening.

Despondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night, and **had never lifted**. There was **no one thing** in the world that she desired. There was **no** human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone.... (115)

Throughout *The Awakening*, the author's insistent grammar of negation thus conveys the irreducible psychological tension between assertion and denial: Chopin renders her protagonist's successive awakenings not only as unfoldings on a path of inner growth and self-discovery but also – simultaneously, and paradoxically – as stages along a darker path of disillusionment and nihilism. The powerful observation early in the narrative that fuses forward momentum with its opposing force, cancellation, establishes the rhythmic push-pull of the narrative: the light that dawns within Edna, «showing the way, forbids it» (13). In this sense, *The Awakening* most reveals its affinity with the modernist sensibility in its expression of disillusionment with outworn conventions, accompanied by the nullifying anxiety that there is nothing better with which to replace them.

The recurring pattern of self-assertion neutralized by negation forms the psychological dynamic of Edna Pontellier's being and the rhythmic tension of the narrative. Thus, Edna's final swim at

Grand Isle is the culminating expression of self-canceling, blocked forward progress. Fully disrobing at the water's edge – though, by this point, she has already cast aside not only the costumes of social convention but the psychological and spiritual vestments that once sustained her – Edna swims to her ambiguous destiny. Her final moments may be understood in terms of the polarized metaphysics that structure the entire narrative: birth and death, activity and passivity, doing and undoing, being and nothingness. She feels «how strange and *awful* it seemed to stand naked under the sky! ... She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it *had never known*» (115). «Enfolded» in the sea's sensuous embrace, she «remembered the night she swam far out, and recalled the terror that seized her at the fear of being unable to regain the shore. She *did not look back* now, but went on and on, thinking of the blue-grass meadow that she had traversed when a little child, believing that it had *no beginning* and *no end*» (115-6).

Paradoxically, the embracing sea is both beginning and end, functioning antithetically as the sign of affirmation and negation, womb and tomb. Edna Pontellier dies even as she is reborn – or is it that she is reborn even as she dies? Not only in her final swim but throughout the narrative – in fact, on virtually every page (I have necessarily been selective in offering examples) – Chopin indeed «utters» the «un-utterable» (Wolff 376) and articulates the «unsayable» (Yaeger 323). The end is in the beginning, not only for the narrative but for its protagonist: Chopin's powerful and cumulative grammar of negation serves both to affirm and deny, to offer and withdraw, the possibility of Edna Pontellier's awakening.

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# Stephen Crane's depictions of the enemy other

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Stephen Crane made forays into tough New York City slums, and he took journeys to the American west, Mexico, England, and Ireland, as well as to wars in Greece and Cuba. In his writings concerning these places, Crane often presents fictional characters whose identities are challenged by threatening others, and in his journalism he examines his own perceptions and sometimes defines the processes in his own developing understandings of his relationship to the other. Christopher Bollas and Julia Kristeva provide psychoanalytic perspectives which help to clarify Crane's personal and literary purposes and his achievements in exploring responses to the enemy other.

In *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Crane depicts the responses to the violence of the enemy in the consciousness of the central character, Henry Fleming. In one instance, for example Fleming expresses rage at the enemy as a tireless and yet human threat:

He had a wild hate for the relentless foe.... He was not going to be badgered of his life like a kitten chased by boys... It was not well to drive men into final corners; at those moments they could all develop teeth and claws (Bradley 79).

In comparing the Confederate soldiers to abusive boys, Fleming seems to identify their behavior as human and recognizable. Yet they are bearers of death, and he sees that he can be transformed by fear of them into a beast with «teeth and claws». They are the enemy, but he shares their violent otherness. This novel is a imaginative recreation of the American Civil War: a war between brothers or even a war within the self, but the novel does not include depictions of the enemy as a dehumanized other. Identity is not a stable certainty in the novel, however, and battle threatens to bring forth encounters with unfamiliar, violent otherness.

Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* is useful in examining Crane's journeys to dangerous environments and his fictional and journalistic depictions of encounters with the enemy other. Kristeva, a Bulgarian immigrant to Paris, draws upon her personal experience of the exile's estrangements and her knowledge of the fears of the native. She explores the philosophical and literary histories

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of such interrelated concepts as «foreigner», «enemy», «stranger», «orphan», and «exile», and she introduces the value of psychoanalytic insights concerning the uncanny strangeness of the self in considering these issues.

An important element in her definition of the stranger or the exile is that he or she has experienced the death or the separation from the parents and the world they defined. Kristeva states that such a loss of the parents forces the «orphan» to experience the world as a foreigner, to cross a border from a world of «we» which is discovered to be «a stirring mirage at the heart of disarray» (23).

In her recent biography of Stephen Crane, Linda Davis observes that the death of his father, Rev. Jonathan Crane, when Stephen was eight years old and «the months of rootlessness following it» may have contributed to Crane's sense of «being orphaned and adrift» (16-7). The family was forced to leave the parsonage at Port Jervis, New Jersey, and, ultimately, to settle in Asbury Park where Stephen was to «experience a chain of losses» (19). It seems likely that young Stephen tasted what Kristeva calls the «bitterness... of 'being of no account'» (21) to the Methodist church community after his father's death. Perhaps his bitter poems on religious subjects reflect his experience of rejection and exclusion by the communal «we» of the Methodist church.

In a New York City sketch entitled «A Desertion», Crane writes of the anguish of a young woman who returns home to discover the dead body of her father in their apartment. Upon hearing the girl's cry of grief, a neighbor exclaims, «He's drivin' 'er inteh th' street» (VIII, 81). The neighbor misunderstands the source of the young woman's outcry, but Crane himself may be recreating his own response to the death of his father: a loss which broke his connections to community and drove him, as it were, into the street as a wanderer or a foreigner.

When Crane was 20, the death of his mother may have completed or fulfilled his sense of exile, setting him free and making him a kind of wanderer seeking to understand the others who mirrored his estrangement. He went to New York City to work as a journalist, and his writings depict a variety of encounters with the strangers in the streets, the tenements and even in a millionaires' club. In his works from these environments, he examines what Kristeva calls the illusory «we» which holds families as well as larger communities and even nations together (23). In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, for example, the central character loses her father to an unexplained death, is driven from her home by her mother, rejected by her lover, becomes a prostitute on the street, and then, dies as an isolated wanderer. At the end, the reader cannot be certain whether she has been murdered or has committed suicide.

According to Kristeva's discussion, however, the «secret wound» of the exile is not only the grief and isolation caused by the death of the mother. That death, she says, merely completes the pattern of the stranger's separation from a mother who has been distant and unknown:

As far back as his memory can reach, it is delightfully bruised: misunderstood by a beloved and yet absent minded, discreet, or worried mother, the exile is a stranger to his mother (5).

This emotional pattern, a balancing of distraction and love, is quite suggestive of Crane's relationship to his mother, Mary Helen Crane. He was the last of her fourteen children. She seems to have been quite distant and preoccupied, particularly after the death of the Reverend Jonathan Crane when she became active as a leader in the Temperance movement and in writing journalism (Davis, 11 and 18). It seems possible that Crane's career long wanderings, his curiosity about experiences at the boundaries, and his depictions of perceptions of the other throughout his works express a desire to understand that kindred stranger, his mother, as well as to define himself in his exile from her. Stephen's sense of separation and loss was very likely intensified by the death of his sister, Agnes when he was 12 years old. Agnes had provided him with nearly maternal nurturance in his mother's preoccupied absence, and she had encouraged his literary interests with her own lively involvement with art and creative writing.

Crane's separations from a distracted mother seem to be reflected in his recurrent depictions of children who are separated from their mothers, experiencing banishments, conflicts, and transgressive desires. Such separations appear in «His New Mittens», «The Haircut», «The Monster», and in several Bowery tales in addition to *Maggie*, such as «An Ominous Baby», «The Great Mistake», and very provocatively in the story «A Dark Brown Dog» in which a child's relationship to a puppy he has found defines the value of an object substitute. Similarly, in the Greco-Turkish war story «Death and The Child» (V, 121-41), a child's play with pebbles and twigs provides what Winnicott calls «transitional experiences» (see: 6-7, 50) which occupy him after his mother has abandoned him in her flight from a battle.

D. W. Winnicott says that the transitional object is a «symbol of the union» of the child and the mother at «the initiation of their state of separateness» (114). Furthermore, he states that «there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences» (60). In Crane's story «An Ominous Baby», a «pretty child in fine clothes» who is accompanied by his nurse, refuses to play with a ragged baby who is «wandering in a strange country». Then the ragged child seizes the pretty child's toy fire truck, and the «small barbarian» flees down a side street (VIII, 47-50). The children's failure to play seems to be a crucial incident in the defining of the relationship to the other. The «ominous baby» portends conflicts between adults in encounters with strangers and foreigners. Such narratives about isolated children encountering fear and desire and depersonalization in and by the other seem to provide analogues to Crane's own wanderings to places providing encounters with the other. Kristeva observes that, in the child's experiences of the self as other, «uncanny strangeness is no longer an artistic or pathological product but a psychic law enabling us to confront the unknown and work it out in... the task of civilization (189). Crane's narratives depicting isolated children encountering otherness exemplify his carrying forward of his own experience of uncanny strangeness into such civilizing work.

In a journalistic essay «Not Much of a Hero» (May, 1892), Crane discusses Tom Quick who, according to legend, killed many Indians to avenge his father's death in the French and Indian War. The essay examines the problem of American violence toward the Indian other. Kristeva says that one aspect of rage at the other is that «you experience as murderous those natives» who awaken your painful awareness of your guilt and grief concerning your lost kin: and «their shadowy figure is integrated, like a corpse, at the source of [your] wandering» (22). Crane says that an «alleged biography» of Tom Quick serves as a guidebook «for youths going westward to massacre the devoted red man» (VI, 212). Violence against the Indian other by such wanderers may have been acceptable to a large number of Americans during the 1890's. In fact, the «Massacre at Wounded Knee» had occurred in December of 1890, and it was still being discussed in the press through 1892. Crane's phrase, «to massacre the devoted red man», may, in fact, be an allusion to the attack at Wounded Knee which occurred when U.S. troops were suppressing American Indian «devotion» to the Ghost Dance Ceremony. Perhaps because he lost his connections to his father's church, Crane expresses no horror of otherness in the devotions of the Indian.

In the concluding paragraph of the sketch, he proposes three possible explanations for Tom Quick's reputation for slaughtering Indians: «The deeds which are accredited him may be fiction.... Or the accounts may be true and he a monomaniac... or the accounts may be true and he a man whose hands were stained with unoffending blood, purely and simply a murderer» (VI, 214). The Indian other was not a dehumanized enemy to Crane. He notes that Tom Quick's killing of Indians has been seen as exemplifying frontier vengeance, but he examines the deaths of the Indians as a historical dilemma that raises questions concerning cultural memory, psychopathology, and legal guilt.

In Crane's essay «An Experiment in Misery», he reports upon his experience after dressing in rags and traveling to the foreign land of the Bowery slums. The sketch begins by depicting an encounter «with a reeling man in strange garments». The description of the stranger includes terms such as «guilty», «cruel», and even one of Crane's recurring terms for the threatening other,

«assassin». Unlike the fantasy assassin depicted in his poem «A youth in apparel that glittered», however, this demon of bushy hair and whiskers is then said to behave like «an affectionate puppy». This is another recurring image in Crane, perhaps reflecting the reassurances of the transitional object. When the «assassin» speaks to the correspondent, he describes himself as «a respec'ter'ble gentlem'n... down on his luck» who is in need of a few pennies (VIII, 285). According to this statement, the bum or hobo has become a stranger to himself in his poverty and disarray. His speech is not genteel, and he may be duplicitous and dangerous, but the enemy «assassin» becomes an ally of the narrator, taking his pennies, but also helping him to find a place to eat and a flop house in which to sleep.

In this sketch, the reader is immersed in a process of uncertain recognitions. Crane's shifting of images from the «assassin» to the «affectionate puppy» suggests, in the terms of Christopher Bollas, the value of «be[ing] in touch with the inevitable elusiveness of the other who cannot be known». Bollas suggests that such encounters provide «communications in the spirit of unconscious play», and the escape from certainty allows a glimpse of «the other's otherness» (190). «The foreigner's friends, Kristeva observes, «could only be those who feel foreign to themselves» (23).

Crane's short story «The Blue Hotel» depicts a stranger's encounter with others in a raw western town. The characters are labeled with culturally established titles: a Swede, a Cowboy, an Easterner, a Farmer, a Hotel owner (Scully) and his son, Johnny, and a Gambler. The Swede is the foreigner: «the one who does not belong» (Kristeva, 96). With the other characters, he enacts a violent and tragic comedy. At the opening of the story, the Swede expresses a fear of Western assassins: «I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room» (145-6). The Cowboy, the Easterner and the hotel keeper are scandalized. Each has his own reasons for denial of the issues of death and violence raised by the Swede's fear: the hotel man's economic interests, the cowboy's unreflective denial of his own «warlike desire» (V, 161), and the Easterner's desire to escape from «the monotony of unchangeable fighting that was an abomination» (V, 160).

Rather than showing a journalist «playing» with his perceptions of an assassin, this story shows a foreigner who uncovers the the duplicities and desires of the community and his own vulnerable lack of social identity. The Swede, the stranger, after betrayal by the Easterner, confronts a crooked card game, fights the young card sharp, and trudges through the ferocity of a prairie blizzard, but he does not fear the explosive otherness of his own rage, and he does not see violent otherness in the polite, well-dressed little «dude» who finally stabs him. Otherness is embodied in threats from outside of us and in our own murderous emotions, according to this narrative, and the most dangerous enemies are invisible to our arrogance.

In the conclusion of the story, the Easterner says to the cowboy, «the chap that killed the Swede got three years.... a light sentence» (V, 169). Kristeva observes that «jurisprudence is never absolutely independent of politics», and the uncertain legal status of the foreigner is a «symptom of the difficulty we have in living as an other with others» (102-3). Crane's story examines personal, social and legal boundaries to perceiving the other.

In a story from Mexico City, «The Five White Mice», Crane records an encounter on a dark street between three Americans, two of whom are quite drunk, and three Mexicans. After Benson, one of the drunken Americans, bumps into one of the Mexicans, he is too intoxicated to notice, and he fails to apologize. After a moment of silence, «one burning word came from the Mexican's lips». The story is about cultural signs and language at the border where one encounters the murderous other.

It is one of the Mexicans who finally speaks softly: «Does the señor want fight?» The second drunken American blurts out, «Yes». The New York Kid, the sober American, is terror stricken. To his eyes, the Mexican facing him was «A yellow mask smiling in eager cruelty, in satisfaction, and above all it was lit with sinister decision» (V, 47). This mask-like face is the demonic visage of the other. The New York Kid passes through a rush of fantasies linking terror at the anticipated flash of knives from the Mexicans' hips with memories of a barber «who had shaved him three times in Boston in 1888» (V, 47). The other is a site of familiarity and terror. At this point there are three

pages of reflections «flashing in and away from his thought», including an image of his father coming to observe this place of his son's death. Then, filled with terror, the New York Kid draws out his revolver.

The sudden expression of fear by the Mexicans bewilders him. The grandee with a face like a yellow mask who had most terrified him, leaps back as if he had seen a «poisonous snake» (V, 50). In this image of sudden retreat, the New York Kid becomes visible for an instant as the Mexican sees him: as the apotheosis of evil. The demonic image of the Mexican other collapses. The New York Kid discovers that «they were all human beings. They were unanimous in not wishing for too bloody combat. There was a sudden expression of the equality» (V, 50). «The equality» does not appear to be a political term. It seems to refer to a deep and essential recognition experienced by those who see the other and themselves as vulnerable, fearful, and dangerous human beings.

Then one of the Mexicans achieves a kind of civility, and he asks with «cynical bravado», «Well, señor, it is finished?»

The New York Kid replies with courtly gravity, «I am willing».

It is one of the Mexicans who completes the restoration of social decorum by saying, «Good night, señor» (V, 51).

There is little room for seeing the Mexican others in this story as contemptible or distinctly depraved and murderous. The intoxicated and risk taking Americans provoke the crisis, and the two groups seem to participate in making visible what Kristeva defines as «a mankind whose solidarity is founded on the consciousness of its unconscious – desiring, destructive, fearful, empty, impossible». We have need for the other, she adds, «not to integrate foreigners and even less so to hunt them down, but rather to welcome them to that uncanny strangeness which is as much theirs as it is ours» (192). I believe Crane's story depicts an occasion in which strangers come to recognize their shared, uncanny dimensions of rage, desire, and terror.

In writing about the Spanish American War, Crane at first sent brash, jingoistic dispatches to Pulitzer's *New York World*. In two reports which preceded the American landing at Ponce, for example, he debunks the Spanish as arrogant, imperialist others. In his first report, he observes the behavior of a captured merchant-ship captain who had been boastful and abusive toward the U.S. when he left New York City. When he is brought onto Key West by the American Navy and crosses a pile of palmetto logs to get to the shore, however, Crane observes that his knees seemed weak with fear (IX, 104). Later in his story, «This Majestic Lie», however, Crane was to note that correspondents in Key West were under pressure from their editors to provide dramatic reports, and these demands compelled the reporting of any event that «arrived as a mouse to be cabled north as an elephant» (VI, 204). The Spanish ship captain's wobbly knees seem to have been Crane's attempt to inflate a tiny mouse of news with the hot air of jingoistic exaggeration, expressing contempt for the Spanish other to please his editors.

The most brazen instances of jingoism appear in a report he submitted from the U.S. flagship, *The New York*, on April 30, 1898. After a troop of Spanish cavalry fires muskets at the ship, the sailors respond with canons set at 3700 yards. In a passage suggestive of a boy's military romance novel, Crane notes that «Captain Chadwick himself aimed the after starboard four inch gun» and sent a shell into the «middle» of the cavalry formation (IX, 106). At such a distance (3700 yards), the Spanish musket fire seems to indicate their incompetence or foolishness, but in showing the captain's salvo landing among the Spanish horsemen, Crane provides a image of a competent and glamorous American leader.

Furthermore, following the Captain's performance, Crane presents an entirely fictional description of the Spanish cavalry troops who have, apparently, survived the Captain's well directed salvo:

The Spaniards are probably gathered around some cognac bottles: «We fifty Spanish soldiers, we fought today a great battle. Yes, we fifty men – a little band of fifty men – we fought a great ship. More cognac. Just think how easily we can thrash these Americans when fifty men can fight the flagship» (IX, 107).

Slavoj Žižek has written that «enemy recognition is always a performative procedure which brings to light/constructs the enemy's "true face"... providing the concrete features which will make it into an appropriate target of hatred and struggle» (Žižek, 5-6). In his depiction of the Spanish cavalry's drunken self-aggrandisement, Crane seems to have abandoned journalistic integrity in order to provide Pulitzer's *New York World* with a complete dramatization of a jingoistic fantasy: an heroic commander in the foreground, and a cluster of degenerate enemies drinking and bragging in the background. Such a depiction of the Spanish other could sell newspapers, and it also could inspire jingoistic enthusiasm for imperialistic military adventure. Giorgio Mariani asserts that one of the most deleterious effects of war correspondence in the late 19th century was the «commodification of war» (105).

On the 15th of June, after the first Americans were killed in battle, Crane sent a report indicating that the Spanish had «horribly mutilated» the bodies of dead American soldiers. Two days later, however, he sent a correction. He wrote that an army surgeon «states positively» that the bullets of the Spanish caused large wounds which had been misinterpreted as mutilation of the corpses. As further evidence, Crane noted that the body of an American soldier which had been two days behind enemy lines had been «divested of rifle and accoutrements», but it had not been mutilated (IX, 131). This retraction appeared in *The Boston Globe* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, but it was not published by Pulitzer's *New York World*. Perhaps Crane's retraction would have undercut the demonizing of the enemy other sought by Pulitzer and his editors. Crane was later praised by Richard Harding Davis as the most effective correspondent to have covered the war in Cuba. Nevertheless, this retraction and some skeptical comments on Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders appear to have caused the Financial Manager of *New York World*, Don Seitz, to fire Crane from his job as correspondent in July, 1898. (Wertheim, 331) The Financial Manager may have interpreted Crane's reports as damaging to the market for the war as well as to the sale of Hearst's «yellow journalism» newspapers.

When Crane returned to the Caribbean to report on the war in Puerto Rico for Hearst's *New York Journal*, he showed military actions to be socially embedded, and he included greater attention to the behavior of civilians and their responses to the American soldiers. On one occasion, Crane and several other correspondents arrived ahead of the Army and «captured» the Puerto Rican town of Juana Diaz. The townspeople showed a truculent «straddling» between commitments to the Spanish imperialists and to their American liberators (IX, 178-82). According to the townspeople's responses, the Americans are not clearly preferable to the Spanish. Later, in his comments on the American war in the Philippines, Crane suggested that American generals were falling into the same self-deceptions as those of the Spanish generals who had blinded themselves to the goals and tactics of the Cuban insurgents fighting for independence (IX, 227-8). Americans were becoming the imperialist other.

After he returned to England, Crane published a reflection upon his experience in Cuba. «War Memories» includes vignettes defining his personal recognition of the humanity of the Spanish soldiers. In one instance, he recalls seeing a red-headed Spanish corpse. The enemy soldier comes to represent the victims of political force: «His strong, simple countenance was a malignant sneer at the system that was forever killing the credulous peasants in a sort of black night of politics» (VI, 249). The corpse of the red-headed soldier, «the red headed mystery», enables Crane to see the enemy other as an object of awe and as a human victim whose existence had value. A few pages later he describes a church which had become a surgery for the Spanish wounded. He describes a Spanish soldier wearing a breech clout as an embodiment of the «thin, pale figure... torn down from the cross»: an image of Christ in a Pieta (VI, 254). In these glimpses of their suffering, Crane could recognize the Spanish soldiers as bearers of human significance rather than seeing them as strangers deserving contempt and scorn. (For a fuller discussion of Crane's reports from the Spanish-American War, see Vanouse, 23-32.)

Throughout Stephen Crane's writings, then, there is a sustained examination of the issues involved in perceiving the human dimensions of the enemy other. As a central concern in his art,

these depictions of encounters with strangers seem to enable Crane to externalize his own grief and isolation, but they also give his writings a remarkable pertinence to the issues of otherness in current international conflicts and in encounters with refugees and immigrants.

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# «... mistrust everybody»: Surveillance, scopophilia, and projection in David Mamet's *The Spanish Prisoner*

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In his essay, «Memory» (1996), David Mamet observes that the recounting of actual experiences in life can do nothing more than elicit from the listener a response: «nod politely» («Memory», 194). If that same experience were to be «cast» in «dramatic form», the listener «relates not to our experience» but to the «experience of Art» (195). It is not possible, in other words, to empathize with memory. Mamet concludes that «our experience of art is never modified – neither increased nor decreased – by the tag ‘based on a true occurrence’» (195). Rather, he maintains that audiences identify with art by projecting their own associations into the ambiguous or unspecified regions. For this reason, he describes (in John Lahr's «Profile: Fortress Mamet») writing as a «con»: «the trick is leaving out everything except the essential. As Bettelheim says in *The Uses of Enchantment*, ‘the more you leave out, the more we see ourselves in the picture, the more we project our own thoughts onto it’» (79). But art, in Mamet's view, does not allow us to bridge the distance between esthetic representation and human identification; toward life, the human sensibility is detached: «Horror arises every day; and our removed sympathy for its victims is nothing other than a capacity to be amused» («Memory», 196). Human experience recalled in individual memory locks us into our own private fortresses: responding to John Lahr's inquiry about his unhappy childhood, Mamet's rejoinder is: «my childhood, like many people's, was not a bundle of laughs. So what?» (Lahr, 72).

It is not surprising that, in his own preface to the screenplay, Mamet dismisses his 1998 film, *The Spanish Prisoner*, as a «rather straightforward Light Thriller» in the style of Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*, *Young and Innocent*, and the «paradigm of the genre», *North by Northwest* – Mamet also includes Stanley Donen's *Charade* (*The Spanish Prisoner*, ix) on his list. Mamet stresses the formula-driven aspect of the genre: «the hero (in *Charade*, the heroine) is enmeshed in a situation not of his own making and beyond his understanding. He must, through trial and disappointment, discover that supposed foes are friends and vice-versa, and will, at the end, emerge shaken and stirred to re-examine the benefits of a previous state of innocence. Good fun.» (ix). Mamet's allusion to Ian Fleming's James Bond and his preference in martinis («shaken, [not] stirred»)

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reinforces Mamet's desire that we consider his film to be «light»: regardless of what takes place, it is all «good fun». But in an interview with Robert Denerstein about the film, Mamet places it as a «melodrama», in which we are able «to work out emotions, to undergo thrill without threat, to experience vicarious danger with security» (Denerstein, 227). It would appear that Mamet believes in catharsis for his film; in order to have catharsis, however, we must allow for identification and the possibility that human experiences influence our art and our understanding of that art.

When no one is looking, Mamet is able to identify with some of the characters in his work as expressing aspects of his memory of his earlier life; he tells John Lahr that he «was like the professor in *Oleanna*... who all his life had been told he was an idiot, so he behaved like one.... I just always assumed people assumed I was gonna come to a bad end» (73). As Mamet confides to Denerstein about the thriller-melodrama genre, «things are not what they seem» (227). Similarly, a closer look at *The Spanish Prisoner* reveals that Mamet has bridged his own gap between memory and art, that he has represented his own associations and emotions in this film of «good fun». Our ability to empathize and identify with human emotions expressed through art enables us to gain insight into Mamet's creative process and his artistic perceptions about our contemporary culture of surveillance and defensive anxiety.

Despite Mamet's suggestion that his main character in *The Spanish Prisoner* is a compatriot of Robert Donat in *The 39 Steps* and Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*, Mamet's Joe Ross is more of an anti-hero, since he takes precious little initiative to resolve his predicament; instead, he is emblematic of the victim, or mark. When we first encounter him, he has invented a mysterious «process» for the unnamed company headed by Mr. Klein. The Process will provide the company with «control of the Global Market» (SP, 6). Ross is on the Caribbean island of St. Estephe for a business junket. He is there at the company's expense, as a «perk», according to his boss, Mr. Klein (SP, 8), so that Ross might inform an elite group of company stockholders about the «windfall» they will receive as a result of his process being in the company's control for 3 to 5 years «before the Japanese» gain intelligence about its workings (SP, 6). Ross and the entire company are obsessed with secrecy and security: this obsession proceeds from the top on down the ranks. The company's board of directors are fearful that «the Japanese» (7) will steal the process; Mr. Klein claims to be «in the same position as [Ross]... they keep *me* in the dark, *too*» (8); Ross's friend, George Lang, an attorney for the company, asks Ross whether there is anything «sensitive» in his bags before he allows a company secretary, Susan Ricci, to touch them; Ross reminds Susan after he catches her speaking with a woman at the hotel bar that «it might be a good idea if you were to» remain silent – it's so secret he can't even *say* it (SP, 5, 13). But despite his shared concern with vigilance and control, Joe Ross is in a uniquely vulnerable position in the company: although he invented the process while in the company's employ, the exact status of his profit from the process is unclear. When he asks Mr. Klein to provide the «exact *terms*» of his financial benefit, Klein uses the phrase «bonus» (connoting a one-time only payment) and puts Ross off until the «Next Stockholders' Meeting», at which time, according to George Lang, «it'll be too late» (SP, 33, 7, 29).

Joe Ross wants the «consideration» he feels is due him; in response, Mr. Klein insults him by directing his patronizing comments precisely upon those aspects with which Ross's anxiety is concerned most clearly – his lack of social status and his class inferiority: «Y'need a couple of bucks for the rent...?» (8). In the film, Ross is told by his boss to «buy some new clothes»: Ross is so stung by this narcissistic rebuke that he rushes out and cashes in «a lot of money» in traveler's checks at a poor rate of exchange – in order to buy himself a lavish new tropical wardrobe; Klein calls him «lad» and «son» and insinuates that Ross might be inclined to commit a breach of security (10, 8, 33, 31). This strategy produces in Ross an outburst that phrases his situation in language that does not exclude an erotic interpretation: he confronts Klein with his «concern with Security» which «indicates that you think someone is going to Take Advantage of you, sir. I don't want to Take Advantage of you, and frankly, I don't want anyone to take Advantage of *Me*...» (32). Ross's dilemma is that he craves financial prosperity but doesn't want to appear gauche by admitting it; he dreams of being upper class but he lacks the acumen to hold onto the money he

has. Filled with an eroticized suspicion of the Japanese and other supposed interlopers, he has lost his ordinary erotic impulses. Freud describes this instance in his *Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*: «the paranoiac's altered relation to the world is to be explained entirely or in the main by the loss of his libidinal interest» (75). Ross is, for Mamet, a quintessential patsy: he thinks he knows what he wants, but he doesn't know who he is.

Mamet dramatizes Ross's class conflict by depicting him resisting the seductive wiles of the company secretary, Susan Ricci, a woman who embraces her working class status: she is «low down the Food Chain», with a «Secretary Mentality», who is «here to Fetch and Carry» (13). When Lang asks Ross whether Ross is responsive to Susan's advances, Ross replies: «perhaps I have my sights on different things» (29). Susan Ricci flatters Ross by calling him a «real gentleman» and telling him he should be «getting used to the Ways of the Rich» (20, 30). When he is in her presence, Ross feels wealthy by comparison. He allows her to call him «Mr. Ross» to her «Susan» and, when given a gift of cash by Lang, Ross claims he doesn't «want» the cash: instead, he donates it to «Charity» – by purchasing a first class ticket for Susan on the return flight (20, 21). Ross is terminally ambivalent: he repels Susan's advances and then creates the circumstances for her to continue to pursue (and compliment him) so that he might continue to repel her. As the pursuer, Susan Ricci enacts what Freud termed (in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*) the «active» or taxonomically «male» role; as the erotic object who resists her advances, Ross enacts the «passive» or classificatory «female» role – within a model of «psychological bisexuality» (188). The more aggressively Susan Ricci pursues Ross, the more persistently he avoids her – until eventually he has no more resources and he is compelled to seek her out.

Who is it that attracts Ross's attention, passion, and pursuit?: a mysterious wealthy man and his secluded beautiful sister. While on the island, Ross and Ricci notice a seaplane land in the water and then a boat proceed from the vicinity of the plane. Susan ensures that Ross will notice the plane; she then takes several photographs of Ross with the plane as a background. After Ross reciprocates by taking a photo of her with the two disembarking passengers from the boat in the background, she leaves the scene. Ross is then confronted by the mysterious man, who offers him «a thousand dollars for [his] camera». All of Ross's class sensitivity toward Mr. Klein and the company are discharged onto this man: sarcastically, Ross responds: «if it's *important* to you, take it... I don't need your *money*... take it» (12). Later that night, after Ross declines Susan's attentions and is alone, smoking a cigar, the man approaches him and apologizes: «I was wrong to offer you money... and I appreciate your gesture, and I am in your debt. Thank you.» The man introduces himself as Julian «Jimmy» Dell (15). Dell and Ross go off together for a drink. When we see them next, it is dawn: they have «spent the night together», so to speak, and Jimmy tells Ross that the woman he was with that Ross inadvertently photographed was a «'princess'... [although] you might say that the title means nothing, as the 'country' hardly exists anymore. But perhaps it means something....» Ross replies that «it means something» (16). Notice that the portable camera Ross has bestowed upon Jimmy is worth at best only a few dollars; nevertheless, he is convinced by Jimmy's flattery that he (Ross) has done Jimmy a tremendous service. Ross is blind to Jimmy's vagaries (how can a country «hardly exist»?) so eager is he to accept Jimmy's proffered friendship; instead, he responds in kind to Jimmy's reference to secrecy and deception: the «princess» – Mamet places her title in ironic quotation marks – «was, of course, never *here*, so we had to whisk her back to her Husband» (16). Jimmy shows Ross a photo of his «Young and Pretty» sister and asks for Ross's business card without reciprocating (18). In this way, Ross is «baited» with the exotic possible «princess», and then «switched» to the familiar American variety – Jimmy's sister.

The next day, Ross agrees to provide a «service» for Jimmy: he agrees to transport to New York and «drop off» a wrapped «parcel» for Jimmy's sister. This favor allows Ross to feel an imaginary class affinity with the man whom he imagines to be rich; in addition, the sister is described as being married, just like the «princess», so the Oedipal dynamic is preserved in the switch from the bait. As a reward for the «service», Jimmy invites Ross to dinner on Friday (20).

Despite Mamet's recurring use of shots of surveillance cameras and the film's opening shot of a sign that says «Did you pack your own bag? Are you carrying gifts or packages for anyone you do not know?» (3), Ross is so convinced of Jimmy's authenticity that he carries the parcel onto the plane. Once on the plane, Susan (who is interested in Ross erotically and whose advances he refuses by buying her a first class ticket so that she may flatter him throughout the flight) plants in Ross's mind the idea that Jimmy might not be all that Ross assumes: she tells him, «y'never know who *anybody* is. With the exception of me. I am what I look like» (23); Jimmy Dell, she suggests, never came off the seaplane; rather, he was in a boat that was in the vicinity of the plane. The pictures she took, she suggests, when developed, will reveal that Ross has constructed a fantasy of Jimmy's affluence. In the meantime, she insinuates that anyone carrying an unknown package might be a «mule», a courier of «*dope*» (24). Ross, in a paranoid frenzy, smells the package and then rushes to the lavatory just as the plane begins its final descent; agitated by the calls from the flight crew to return to his seat, Ross rips open the parcel and accidentally tears the binding of the book that is its contents. This book - a vintage tennis primer - contains a note for Jimmy's sister: Ross learns that Jimmy has designed for him to bring the book to his sister personally and that that Friday's dinner appointment will be an opportunity for the 3 of them (Jimmy, Ross, and Jimmy's sister) to dine, so that Ross and the sister may become familiar (26).

Horrified and guilty as a result of his own suspicions of Jimmy which proved unwarranted, Ross stops the company car so that he may enter a bookstore where antique books are sold and bound. He plays the role of the rich man by requesting that the book be rebound, saying, «the price is not an issue», but he is rebuffed by the bookbinder's response: as «I was going to say, it's a common book, common edition» (27). It never occurs to Ross to consider the implications of that statement. Instead, he purchases an exact duplicate of the book he damaged, wraps it in the original paper, replaces the note, and drops it at the apartment of Jimmy's sister. Since he knows that Jimmy had wanted Ross to meet his sister when Ross delivered the book, we may conclude by his choice to merely hand it to the doorman that either: his guilt at reading Jimmy's secret letter to his sister was so severe that Ross declined to meet the sister lest Jimmy believe that Ross might have opened the parcel and ferreted out Jimmy's intentions (which, paradoxically, were that Ross meet his sister); or, Ross was really not interested in Jimmy's sister (or about as interested in her as he was in Susan): Ross's primary interest is in Jimmy. Having delivered the parcel, Ross is so confident that he will be contacted by Jimmy for dinner that he dresses up in a «suit and tie» and waits by the phone. After a lengthy period of time, he takes off his jacket, opens a beer, and lights a cigar (33): he has been stood up.

The next morning, Ross, casually dressed, is returning from an errand at the market when he comes upon Jimmy and his limousine at an expensive shop. In the screenplay, this is a gun shop; but in the film, Mamet changes the encounter to a by-invitation-only luxury car dealership. When he enters the dealership, he finds Jimmy in a double-breasted suit, pricing cars: Ross is humiliated at the disdainful treatment he receives from the salesmen who are assisting Jimmy - he leaves with sarcasm: «I guess I'd better get out of your way» (35). Outside, on the street, however, his anger is boiling over: he confronts Jimmy: «We were supposed to have *dinner* last night... What happened? Aren't the Laws of Courtesy for the Rich...?» (36). Jimmy accuses Ross of a lapse of courtesy since he had phoned his sister who had waited «all afternoon» for Ross to arrive. Ross struggles to control his temper; clearly, he is enraged: «whatever the thing is with you, I don't appreciate getting accused of a lack of courtesy. Seriously.... And isn't it possible you misremembered... Don't look at me like I want something from you. I don't want anything from you. You asked me to dinner... is it possible *you* got it wrong?» (36-37). Jimmy admits that it could be possible; mollified, Ross thanks him and walks away. The process over which Ross has been working may soon be taken from him without any financial benefit whatsoever, and Ross is busy being ensnared in a battle over courtesy! Freud describes this situation in his *Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*: «paranoia is precisely a disorder in which a sexual aetiology is by no means obvious; on the contrary, the strikingly prominent features in the causation of paranoia, especially among males,

are social humiliations and slights... the really operative factor in these social injuries lies in the part played in them by the homosexual components of affective life» (60).

Back in his apartment, Ross is visited by Susan Ricci: she has dropped in with bagels and informs him that she lives above the Sunshine Bakery where they are made. Inside the apartment, Ross cuts the bagels with his Boy Scout knife and Mamet informs us that the «logo [reads] ‘Be Prepared’» (40, 38). Susan propositions Ross and, in the film, she asks him to remove his eyeglasses, duplicating a scene from Howard Hawks’ *The Big Sleep* in which Susan (playing the Humphrey Bogart role) is beseeching Ross (in the part of the comely-but-repressed female clerk) to «let his hair down» by taking off his spectacles and revealing his repressed eroticism. Just as he does so and displays himself for Susan as the object of her desire, the phone rings. It is Jimmy, once again apologizing. Ross is so captivated by Jimmy’s apology that he accepts an invitation for dinner that evening with Jimmy and his sister and tells Susan he’s «busy»; Jimmy’s apology is so gratifying to Ross’s vanity that he refuses an offer to have Susan cook him «dinner and breakfast» in order to again chase after the fantasy of Jimmy Dell (40).

By the time Ross meets Jimmy, he again feels guilt for the anger he had displayed previously: how could he have attacked him so fiercely? Ross apologizes to Jimmy and indicates that perhaps after all it was he who had «misremembered»; Jimmy insists that it was his error and explains: «My sister ‘n’I – since we were kids, all that we had was Each Other» (41). But Ross feels obliged to clarify one other point: «Before you throw me at your little *sister*», he needs to reveal to Jimmy his «Dark Secret»: he is «‘Just a Working Man.’» Mamet’s word choice for Ross reveals Ross’s belief that he was being procured for Jimmy’s sister – he sees himself in the feminine position, being used and exploited. Jimmy compliments him on his «Good Manners» and Ross is delighted. Jimmy, as a «lavish, awkward gesture», opens a Swiss Bank Account for Ross: he uses, as a code word, the name of Ross’s mother’s dog, «Paddy». Despite the fact that he opens it for «fifteen Swiss Francs», Ross is impressed; he never ponders the implications of the reciprocity: if he, Ross, can have a Swiss Bank Account and «*impress* anybody», but no one can know the balance because the «Swiss Laws prohibit» it, why can’t Jimmy set up a series of false fronts and appearances and dupe Ross into believing Jimmy is a millionaire (42)?

At dinner, the sister is again withdrawn. She’s ill; she’ll meet the 2 men «Tomorrow, for Tennis» (43); naturally, Ross is available. In another scene of class anxiety, Jimmy is refused entrance to his own club because he is with Ross, a nonmember; in a flourish of generosity, Jimmy takes out a membership in the club for Ross. On the application form, all Ross sees is the gold-embossed lettering; he signs without reading the text. He needs no text: his narcissistic fantasy is being catered to, lavishly. Freud describes this tendency in his study on paranoia: «paranoiacs are endowed with a *fixation at the stage of narcissism*, and we can assert that the amount of regression characteristic of paranoia is indicated by the length of *the step back from sublimated homosexuality to narcissism*» (72). Ross, in exchange for the gift of one disposable camera, is receiving friendship, membership in an elite club, and marriage into a wealthy family: best of all, he never has to see the woman – he can spend all his time with Jimmy! Why should this surprise him: he’s Ross! Women such as Susan throw themselves at him: he’s the inventor of the Process! What does he care for money? What does he care that his company may swindle him out of his rightful share? – he’s among the wealthy! Lost and adrift in this narcissistic fantasy, Ross never hears what Jimmy tells him: «do business as if each person you do business with is trying to screw you, because most likely they are» (45-46). Instead, Ross tells Jimmy about his father: he «worked like a dog, all his life»; when Jimmy asks if Ross «liked» his father, Ross corrects him: «I loved my father», but when Jimmy says that Ross’s father would be «proud» of him, Ross asks, «how can you say that?» (46). Ross’s dynamics are revealed through Mamet’s portrait: Ross’s father worked like a dog; Ross’s mother had a dog; Ross loved his father, but who can say whether his father would be proud of him? Certainly not Ross: he so eroticizes wealth that it is impossible for him to see his reality clearly. Freud, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, remarks that «the sense of guilt

(as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego ideal» (131). Ross's fixation on wealth and social class blinds him to the confidence game that is being played upon him. The «tension» between Ross's fantasy world and his reality is palpable: in one, women throw themselves at him and rich men beg his forgiveness and buy him membership in their private clubs; in the other, he has «worked like a dog» for a man his father's age only to find that «he's trying to screw you» out of your rightful share: the ego and the ego ideal are at such variance that Ross experiences a heightened sense of both «guilt» and «inferiority»; as Jimmy tells him: «if what you've done for them is valuable... if they are indebted to you morally, but not *legally*, then they will begin to act cruelly toward you, to assuage their guilt» (48-49).

At tennis the next day, Ross discovers that Jimmy's sister is «Down with the Flu», and that he is alone with Jimmy; Jimmy issues an invitation: «want to hit some balls?»(49). Does this mean play tennis? If so, then how had Ross imagined that 3 people would play tennis? Or is it a more erotic inducement? Ross hears Jimmy on the phone saying «get it in writing» and he tells Jimmy that perhaps he should have the company state their debt to him in writing. Jimmy advises Ross to consult an independent lawyer; Ross demurs, saying he does not want to «adopt an adversary position toward the Company» – Jimmy corrects him, noting: «but you are in an adversarial position» (49, 47, 48). The next day, at the office, Ross discovers the truth of Jimmy's observation: Ross is asked by a bunch of unctuous company attorneys to «revalidate» his agreement with the company (50). Ross is furious: he tells them he will show the new papers to his lawyer and «then respond». When the company lawyers object to Ross «adopt[ing] an attitude», Ross loses his composure entirely; to Mr. Klein he protests: «How dare you? How can you hire these people and hide behind their dirty skirts? How dare you, after what I've...?» (51, 52). Once again, Mamet depicts Ross as using gender-ambiguous language: the lawyers are all male, and yet Ross refers to them as wearing «skirts», and «dirty skirts», at that: his sense of being under attack results in his verbal assault wherein he labels his attackers as female and possessing soiled clothing. When Mr. Klein ordered Ross to get himself new clothing, might Ross have applied the same terms to his own garb? Ross is so distressed that he is unable to follow through with his plan of sending flowers to Jimmy's sister.

Instead, Ross phones Jimmy while standing in front of a company poster of World War II vintage depicting a drowning man with an ominous accusatory gesture and the caption, «Somebody Talked» (meaning, in effect, «Loose Lips sink... Ships»); he sets up an appointment with Jimmy's lawyer at «The Plaza» Hotel to review his relationship with the company (52, 31). Then he returns to the bookshop where he purchases an autographed photograph of a famous historical tennis player as a gift for Jimmy's sister. He writes her a note: «Looking forward to making your acquaintance» (53). But how eager is he to meet her? At her apartment, he again drops off the package with the doorman. Certainly, he might not wish to «intrude» (36) on her in her illness: but he had not wished to «intrude» on her when he knew Jimmy wanted him to and he thought she was healthy! To Ross's utter astonishment, the doorman gives the package to its recipient, a frail, elderly woman! In a state of confusion, Ross returns to work.

At the office, Susan has developed her photos from the trip; she shows him her photo album which contains photos and souvenirs: Ross sees the card of the female FBI agent with whom Susan spoke on the island – but he also sees that Jimmy's boat was not proceeding from the seaplane. Even worse, Ross views 2 photos taken by Susan: 1 of him with Lang shortly after they arrived as Lang purchased a Cuban cigar; the other of Ross by the water as Jimmy and the «princess» depart from the boat – Ross sees that the woman who sold Lang the Cuban cigar and the «princess» are the same woman (by way of a distinctive, characterizing facial «mole»[55]). Ross realizes that he has been hustled by Jimmy! At this point, Jimmy phones and confirms their appointment: he reminds Ross to bring along a copy of the «thing that you've done for the company» (56). This affront is so audacious that even Ross catches on, or does he? There is only one copy of the process; it is kept in a safe at the company offices and only Ross and Mr. Klein possess keys (50, 7): Ross wears his on a chain around his neck that he conceals beneath his shirt – much as a Victorian woman would conceal an intimate locket within her bodice.

Ross sneaks into Susan's office and removes the card of the FBI agent. He phones her and then meets her while she appears to be working on a surveillance project. Ross is impressed by the security displayed by Agent McCune: she asks him for his date of birth, mother's maiden name, and his maternal grandmother's maiden name; she shows him a photostat of his driver's license. Ross figures: with this much security, how could anything go wrong? McCune never asks anything of him; she asks that he *not* tell her about the process. She commiserates with him about Jimmy: «hurt your feelings, did he?» (62). Mamet chooses language that allows for both an insult to social status and an erotic rebuff. Ross agrees with her that he does feel hurt. McCune predicts that Jimmy will change the time and place. Incredibly, Jimmy calls the next morning to change the time to midmorning and the location to Central Park; he asks Ross specifically to «bring the Process» (63) even though Ross has never used that term to describe his invention to Jimmy. When the FBI phones him (Ross never questions how they've tapped his phone so quickly), a male agent tells Ross to «do what [Jimmy] says» (64) but meet them a half hour before at another Central Park location. Ross, so recently escaped from the close-call of bringing the process to Jimmy, now thinks nothing of stealing the process from his security-obsessed company office.

The meeting occurs inside the public men's room at Central Park – a notorious locale for homoerotic assignations. Agent McCune is there, along with many other agents and their apparent boss, Agent Kelly. Kelly tells Ross all about how Jimmy has played him: «the oldest confidence game on the books. The Spanish Prisoner.... Fellow says, him and his sister, wealthy refugees, left a fortune... he got out, girl and the money stuck in Spain. Here is her most beautiful portrait.... Oldest con in the world. Intelligent people – play on their vanity and greed... interesting twist» (65). The «twist», as Mamet represents it, is that Ross, the mark, was less interested in the sister, or the «princess», and more interested in the «fellow». As Freud comments in *Psychoanalytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*: «the person he longed for now became his persecutor, and the content of his wish-phantasy became the content of his persecution» (47). Otherwise, Ross, plagued by insecurity, narcissistic grandiosity, and having a gender crisis of object relations, is perfect as an «intelligent» man duped by the «oldest con in the world». While Ross is being fitted with a wired transmitter in order to tape Jimmy, he hands Kelly his copy of the process. Why did he bring it along – especially since Kelly tells him that Ross is to «refuse to give [Jimmy] the material»? Ross explains that «your man told me to bring it... He told me to do everything that...» (65-66). Ross has never even seen the man who telephoned him with instructions. Nor has he asked to see the credentials of any of the FBI agents. He is willing to follow their orders without thought because they tilt him against Jimmy who hurt his feelings. We see Kelly look at the process and place it on the window sill. We see Ross look away as he is being maneuvered to fit the harness. Is «this the Real Thing?» asks Kelly (66). When Ross affirms its authenticity, Kelly returns it to him. Ross leaves the men's room for the meeting with Jimmy, confident in his «security», never suspecting that the thing he most fears – the violation of his «process» – has already taken place!

In the film, Mamet shows us Ross venturing onto the Central Park carousel, and as we watch Ross riding the carousel and staring at the horses moving up and down on their poles with the organ music playing we are reminded of the culmination of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* with its distinctive evocation of homosexual «crisscrossing»: Mamet's direction not only alludes to the films he views as prototypes, but his shots emphasize themes and impressions from the prototypes that are central to his conception. (Incidentally, the organ music for the carousel, «I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now», is a wry commentary on the absent woman – the prisoner, sister, «princess», wife, mother – so essential to the confidence game and Ross's paranoid ideation.) Only after an undue amount of time passes does Ross become suspicious. He telephones Agent McCune at the FBI and is told that the number he dialed does not exist. Ross finds that the only public telephone directory in Manhattan is connected to his pay phone! He looks up the FBI, dials the number, and asks for Agent McCune: a man answers the line. The «twist» has occurred, both circumstantially and psychologically – the attraction that Ross believed to be a woman was all along a man!

Suddenly, Ross feels compelled to check the process: he finds that its pages are totally blank – the switch has been perpetrated: advantage has been taken of him!

Later that day, Ross reports the theft to the police and he takes them to Jimmy's apartment and the club where he and Jimmy dined together: both no longer exist – the apartment is deserted and the club is a restaurant. He finds that the police are suspicious that he purchased with cash a first class ticket for Susan: Ross's answer is that he was «showing off for the girl» (72). They also don't understand why Ross exchanged his traveler's checks for a poor rate at the hotel when he could have cashed them in at the store where he purchased the clothing. Why did he spend so much on the clothes? Ross tells them he «wanted to indulge [himself]» (73). Ross is confronted with the fact that precisely the affectations he had contrived as exceptions to his «working stiff» persona in order to appear to be wealthy and upper class now present for the police a convincing representation of someone who has come in to some money and is consuming it conspicuously. They ask him about any concealed sources of income; when he insists he is «just a salaried employee», they confront him with his Swiss Bank Account (74). Asked whether he has plans to go to Venezuela, Ross answers no, and is confronted with his signed «request for asylum» to Venezuela, a nation with «no extradition treaty» with the United States: Ross sees that what he had signed without reading – the club membership form – was, in reality, an application for asylum. «Now, Mr. Ross», the police officer asks him, «if I told *you* this story, would you believe it?» Only then does Ross see that his narcissistic fantasies, projected onto the world resulting in impaired skills at integration and reality-testing, have set him up (with the help of the confidence artists, of course!) as the patsy: «I want a lawyer», he tells the police (76).

Ross is bailed out of prison by the company lawyer, but it is worth asking: why does he allow himself to be represented by the company? Mr. Klein begs Ross to return the process: «Bring it back to me» (77); in the film, he calls out: «Don't let it go to the Japanese!» Ross is so confused by the betrayal of Jimmy (who had raised Ross's suspicions against the company) that he reverts back to his company loyalty – until he finds that the company is convinced of his guilt. He calls George Lang, who, like Jimmy's sister, has the Flu. He lets himself into Lang's apartment by finding the extra key that he knows Lang keeps concealed above the door frame. (Is this an allusion to Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder*?) Inside, he finds Lang stabbed to death... with Ross's own Boy Scout knife! What is interesting is how pliable Ross is; in this horrifying event, he «cooperates», in a sense, with his frame-up by committing all the «common» clichés of the genre: he touches his knife, leaving his fingerprints; he gets blood all over his clothing; he forgets his eyeglasses at Lang's apartment – clearly, he is amenable to being typecast as the culprit. During a harrowing ride on the subway where he attempts with little success to wash off the blood, he spies a subway sign that presents him – like Schreber in Freud's case study on paranoia – with the image of the rays of the sun: this reminds him of Susan, who lives above the Sunshine Bakery.

Susan's apartment possesses a televised security system: she sees Ross before he enters and Ross is disturbed by the images he views on her screen of people coming up the stairs to neighboring apartments. We see him wash his hands as Susan puts on some clothing. Ross tells her: «I think... the only way to make sense of it is... is perhaps that I *have* done it» (82). Ross is now sufficiently disoriented so as to take responsibility and blame for the appearance of guilt. Or does he actually feel guilt as a result of the «tension» to which Freud refers, between ego and ego-ideal? When Susan goes to the telephone, Ross is beside himself: «What are you *doing*... who are you *calling*...?» Susan assures him that she is calling in sick: she has the «flu» (like Jimmy's sister; like Lang) but it is not clear that Ross perceives this resemblance (82). Susan tries to make sense of his predicament: «That's why they picked you.... You're the Boy Scout.... You're the *innocent*. You're the victim» (82-3). Ross's reply to her is: «They used me because I was weak» (83) – indicating that, in depth psychology terms, he was cast in the «weak», «passive» role, the «female» role. Susan, in the active, «male» role, prompts Ross to remember that there was a security camera at the island hotel: they would have images of Jimmy for the police to use to track him down. All Ross has to do is fly to the island and get the videotapes!

As Susan drives Ross to the airport, they are stopped by a police roadblock: evidently, Lang's murder has been discovered. The police are moving from car to car, examining identification. For the first time, Ross takes the initiative; he takes the lead, and does so in a way that typifies his sense of inherent guilt and self-loathing: he tells Susan: «Scream at me» (86). This strategy is an effective one (it distracts the authorities) but it also provides Ross with the fulfillment of his emotional needs. Susan improvises, calls Ross a «stupid Mick» and Mamet's screenplay directions tell us that Ross «turns his face away in shame» (86): acting the part, yes, but he is ashamed, ashamed at his blindness, humiliated at his gullibility, and amazed that he did not even have a clue as to what was happening to him. As a result of Ross's idea, Susan is able to drive away from the police; then she gets an idea: they will drive to Boston's Logan Airport – «St. Paddy's Day in Boston? They aren't gonna be looking too hard for much of anything» (87). This Irish stereotype is as hackneyed as the one Ross and Mr. Klein embrace about the trade incursions of the Japanese or about their enthusiasm for photography; but it is important because it provides for us a link in the chain that Mamet has constructed: Ross is Irish, he celebrates «St. Paddy's Day», his mother had a dog named Paddy, his father worked like a dog, he doesn't like, he loves, his father: all of the elements are in place for what Freud called, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, an «inverted» Oedipus complex, where the «father is taken as the object of a feminine attitude, an object from which the directly sexual instincts look for satisfaction; in that event the identification with the father has become the precursor of an object-tie with the father» (106). Ross bemoans to Susan: «they played me for such a fool», yet he still does not know who *they* are (88). Susan tries to improve his mood in a manner that reveals Mamet's characterization of Ross: «You advertise yourself as someone with a Low Self-Opinion... You're going to Draw Flies» (88): this equation – that Ross's self-hatred is tantamount to his being in a state of decay, equivalent to fecal material – is a severe reading of Ross. But Mamet indicates that it is justified with a wrenching irony: once again, he has Ross wonder: «what if I'm guilty» (88)! Even now, Ross has profound internalized guilt, consistent with his latent homosexuality and his narcissistic self-loathing: his desire to escape and clear his name is battling with his desire to turn himself in and be punished for a crime he did not commit but for which he is convinced he is to blame.

At the airport, Susan provides Ross with a camera and the return portion of the first class ticket Ross bought for her: Ross is so grateful that – only seconds after meditating on his own guilt – he does the unthinkable: he kisses her «impulsively» (89). Susan «draws back» from the kiss and utters, «crikey», an antiquated euphemism for Christ that serves as a mild oath. Mamet's word choice calls our attention to this reaction: Susan is surprised at Ross's heterosexual libido – clearly, she had not expected it! Also, Mamet wants us to perceive what Ross has not: that Susan too is among Ross's conspirators. Susan pretends to forget the ticket in the car. We find out shortly that she has switched her return ticket to St. Estephe with a first class ticket to Venezuela. In addition, within the camera case, Susan has concealed a gun! As Ross waits at the security checkpoint, we realize that Mamet is employing the compulsion to repeat: we are at the same moment when the film began and also when Ross carried the parcel from Jimmy without knowing what it contained – how many times does he need to be duped, how many times does he need to project his fantasies onto reality with disastrous results before he is able to see his reality with conscious awareness? Mamet prolongs deliberately the security x-ray check, using the comic device of a mother reprimanding a child for tearing a book. Only after multiple repetitions of this same refrain does Ross realize that Jimmy's fingerprints are contained on the copy of the tennis book Ross damaged inadvertently while he struggled to unwrap it the last time he was in this culpable situation. All at once it hits him: he must go back to New York and get the tennis book with the torn cover!

Mamet's use of this delaying tactic serves to focus for us how pathologically slow Ross's perceptive mechanisms are; in addition, we see that Ross's self-image corresponds to that of a naughty child – so preoccupied is he with his guilt for opening Jimmy's package and tearing the book that he has inadequate ability to assess and analyze his own circumstances. He rushes out of

the airport and as he does, the camera reveals the x-ray image of the gun Susan planted in her camera case! The plan is now fully revealed: Ross was meant to be arrested at an airport with a ticket to a country that does not extradite – those circumstances plus the missing process mark him for the murder of Lang. But as we perceive this, Ross does not: he rushes out to Susan! Mamet now shows us Susan with her fellow conspirator, the phony (female) FBI agent, McCune. She hurries to Ross. A siren has been tripped: she wants to know what happened in there, how did their plan go awry? But Ross is barely aware of any alarm; he has no idea there was a gun in his bag or that the ticket in his pocket is to Venezuela or that Susan is among the conspirators – so intently is he focused on the eroticized workings of his own mind that he is resistant to the intrusion of any reality. He is so excited by his delayed realization that Jimmy would leave fingerprints on the book that it overwhelms everything else. Ross's emotional state epitomizes Otto Kernberg's description of pathological narcissism in his «A Contemporary Reading of 'On Narcissism: An Introduction'»: «a pathological, grandiose self condenses real self-representations, ideal self-representations, and ideal object-representations, whereas devalued or aggressively determined self and object representations are split off or dissociated, repressed, or projected.... These patients typically project their own pathological grandiose self onto their temporary love objects, so that they are either idealizing others who unconsciously represent themselves or expecting admiration from others while identifying themselves with their own grandiose self-structure» (146).

Together, Ross and Susan rush to her car – only to find it being ticketed by a police officer. To evade him, they abandon her car and board a transit bus bound for the Water Shuttle to Boston along with a group of Japanese tourists. McCune and another conspirator, meanwhile, chase after them. At the dock of the shuttle, Susan tells Ross she is going to call Mr. Klein for help. Then we see her talking instead with McCune and the cohort. As he boards the shuttle, Ross, still in a perceptual fog, hands the ticket taker his airplane ticket by mistake. The official is amused and asks Ross why he wants to go to Venezuela: at long last, the lights go on for Ross – «because they have no extradition treaty» (99). Susan joins him and they board at the last minute, leaving McCune and the other conspirator in the lurch. With Boston's skyline in the backdrop, Susan sees from Ross's expression that he is – finally – on to her. She asks what he will do with her and he admits that he has no idea. We see now that Susan is – *still* – acting: on this occasion, acting the part of the stereotypically «weak» woman because she knows that Jimmy is already onboard (alerted, no doubt, by cell phone). Jimmy's entrance expresses the extent to which Ross's entire ordeal – from the trip to the island to the phony FBI swap to the murder of Lang and the frame-up of Ross – has been planned by the conspirators: «and so we come to the End of a Perfect Day» (99). Ross discovers what Susan and Jimmy intend for him: he «kidnapped» Susan; «You killed, you did it all for money, and now, trapped, overcome with remorse, you took your own life. What could be more appropriate?» (99). The plan is indeed appropriate because it resonates powerfully with Ross's deepest desires: to achieve phenomenal wealth and social standing, on the one hand; and, on the other, to respond to his own internalized guilt with the supreme gesture of violent self-loathing. Instead of resisting, Ross asks what would occur if he declined to «cooperate»; Jimmy produces a pistol and tells him: «I'm afraid you have no choice.» Ross questions his fate: why? «Cause Money Makes the Mare Go», Susan tells him. «Nobody lives forever. The important thing is to *enjoy* yourself.» She commands Jimmy: «Kill him» (99).

Ross moves away from Susan and Jimmy (it is important to note that, when Jimmy appears after Ross has finally realized Jimmy's duplicity, Mamet changes his screenplay notation custom and refers to Jimmy by his last name, Dell – as if to acknowledge that Ross now sees Jimmy Dell as an adversary; or does he?) while the two conspirators confer. We now see that Jimmy's mysterious secluded «sister» has been transformed into Susan Ricci (whose initials, SR, embody her gender role as «sir»). Ross wanders nervously around the boat, «looking about for an avenue of escape». All at once he is approached by a Japanese man; since Ross and the others maintain the projective stereotype of the Japanese as encroachers upon the American way of life, this is a surprising encounter. In English with no trace of an accent, the man asks Ross: «didn't your mother have a dog

named Paddy?» Ross is astonished. The man attaches a portable microphone to Ross's lapel and continues: «see if you can get him to tell you where the Process is. You're doing fine» (100). Jimmy catches up to Ross and tells him his time has come. Ross, characteristically, is concerned with his physical appearance: «they'll find bullet holes in me» (101). Ross makes a «last request» that Jimmy tell him what they did with the process but, in Mamet's irony, a ferry whistle drowns out the particulars of Jimmy's answer. As Jimmy raises the pistol to kill Ross, we see a Japanese woman in the cabin: she discards a large souvenir cardboard tube from the art museum and produces an unusual rifle; as she cocks it, Jimmy looks toward her and she shoots him. The Japanese man joins the Japanese woman. Even though the two of them have saved his life, Ross is still mired in his paranoid ideation. He projects onto the man and woman a rage that is converted from his self-loathing at his own vulnerability and passivity: «And now, I suppose, you'll take the Process to Japan» (102). Here we see Ross's fear of incursion by the Japanese on his invention (the existence of which is in some doubt at the moment) take over what ought to be his relief at being alive. Freud describes this tendency in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*: «Mankind never lives entirely in the present. The past, the tradition of the race and of the people, lives on in the ideologies of the super-ego, and yields only slowly to the influences of the present and to new changes» (67).

But Mamet has one more ironic reversal in mind. The Japanese man produces a badge (the first badge that Ross has ever seen in the film) and identifies himself: «United States Marshal Service, actually» (102). Ross should realize now that the process is safe and that the basis of his paranoid fear of racial incursion is unjustified. Instead, his psychic state in turmoil, he looks down at the body of Jimmy, the man who played him, manipulated him, duped him, betrayed him, set him up, and, just recently, came perilously close to murdering him. In an emotional voice, he yells at the marshal: «'D you have to kill 'im...?» (102). Even revealed as his enemy, Jimmy remains for Ross an enduring erotic object. Freud's comments in «On Narcissism: An Introduction» are applicable: «Idealization is a process that concerns the *object*; by it that object, without any alteration in its nature, is aggrandized and exalted in the subject's mind. Idealization is possible in the sphere of ego-libido as well as in that of object-libido. For example, the sexual overvaluation of an object is an idealization of it» (94). In response to Ross's incredible protest (we assume that most individuals, facing a choice between their own murder and the life of their murderer, would agree that the death of the murderer would be justified), the marshal explains to Ross that Jimmy was shot with a «Stun gun» that only tranquilized him. Ross ping-pongs back to the opposite extreme: «*Stun* gun... what if you'd *missed*...?» (102). Once he realizes that his beloved Jimmy is not dead, Ross now imagines a new scenario: if the (in his mind) «Japanese» markswoman had missed Jimmy, Ross would have been dead from Jimmy's bullet! Or: Ross might have himself been hit by the dart of the tranquilizer gun – penetrated by its metal point: *crikey!* But Mamet reveals the exaggerated pathology of Ross's reactions by having the woman marshal reply to Ross (again with no discernible accent) that if she would have missed, «Then it'd be Back to the Range for Me...!» (102).

Ross has been blind to his reality as a result, in part, of the large influence on his perceptions cast by his paranoid projections, his narcissistic grandiosity, and his crisis of object relations. Now, at long last, Mamet has the marshal reveal the nature of the conspiracy which Mamet only permitted us to view from a skewed perspective, as it were, from the distorted point of view of a Ross – in the background, on the periphery, but never overtly: «The whole thing was set up by your boss, Mr. Klein. To steal the Process. Easy to steal it, hard to get away with the crime. 'F there's only two keys to the safe, 'n' *he* didn't want to take it... then, *you* had to. And then run away» (102). Playing upon his grandiose overestimation of his own worth (and his accompanying self-loathing), manipulating his bisexual object relations crisis, taking advantage of his innate projective suspicion and hostility toward others, exploiting his need to be guilty and receive punishment, Mr. Klein maneuvered Ross to steal his own process, hand it over to complete strangers, and leave a trail of psychologically-telling signifiers that framed Ross as the culprit. Ross belatedly realizes that, in order for the marshal to know that Ross's mother had a dog named Paddy, the U. S. government had to have been itself

conducting surveillance on Mr. Klein's elaborate scheme to steal the process: «you were watching me the entire time...?» he asks, incredulously. «Your tax dollars at work», the marshal tells him (103). But if the government was listening in on Jimmy's dinner with Ross, they must have suspected that Mr. Klein would attempt to steal the process. The unspecified process, providing «control of the Global Market» (6) is something the government wanted to preserve for us - not for those *out there*. The NYPD officer who had interrogated Ross and who had filled him with fear and dread now steps up to Ross and explains a small part of the government's own defensive strategy of deception and concealment in order to preserve the process for itself: «Nobody looks at a Japanese tourist» (103). So the projective mechanisms of racial suspiciousness and hostile bigotry were appropriated by the government and used as strategies against the criminal incursion of what is innately *ours*. Knowing the nature of anxiety about «strangers» (24) and our obsession for secrecy, the government employed these cultural symptoms as defensive weapons against a perceived threat of process theft.

How would it occur to our government to devise such a plan? It would have to be aware of (and participate in) these projective pathologies within collective society. Freud provides us with some clarification in «On Narcissism»: «The ego ideal opens up an important avenue for the understanding of group psychology. In addition to its individual side, this ideal has a social side; it is also the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation. It binds not only a person's narcissistic libido, but also a considerable amount of his homosexual libido, which is in this way turned back into the ego» (101). Mamet's artistry enables us to understand the significance and power of what Freud describes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: «It can be asserted that the community, too, evolves a super-ego under whose influence cultural development proceeds... the two processes, that of the cultural development of the group and that of the cultural development of the individual, are, as it were, always interlocked. For that reason some of the manifestations and properties of the super-ego can be more easily detected in its behavior in the cultural community than in the separate individual» (141-42). Freud confronts us with the pervasive implications of Mamet's cautionary tale: «If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization – possibly the whole of mankind – have become 'neurotic'?» (144).

But Mamet has not ended his film. As she is led off, in handcuffs, by the marshals, Susan (perhaps because of her psychological insight into Ross, perhaps because she witnessed his grief when he thought Jimmy had been killed) makes yet another attempt to enact a constructed role: she appeals to Ross as a damsel-in-distress: «can you help me... Joe? You're the Boy Scout... can I be your Good Deed?» (103). She wants Ross to view her as an erotic object, to look on her as he looked at the seemingly dead Jimmy, and put aside his new conscious awareness by acting out of pathological impulse one more time: she wants him to tell the police to let her go; but just this once, Ross realizes what he desires most for himself – that infantile, childlike urge to be punished and reprimanded – and he projects it onto Susan: «I'm afraid you're going to have to spend some time in your room» (103). And just before the door to the police van is shut on the manacled Susan, Mamet's screenplay reveals that she «looks back at Ross and smiles» (104). Is this a sheepish admission that she has attempted – once too often – to take advantage of Ross? Or is it Mamet's ironic suggestion that, for the Rosses of the world, and for all of us, we are not yet «cured», not yet ready to be «terminated», analytically or otherwise, that there will be more crises of projection, of aggressive representation, of paranoid and narcissistic fantasy intruding upon our human relations? Freud tells us in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that «the two urges, the one towards personal happiness and the other towards union with other human beings, must struggle with each other in every individual» (141).

Mamet describes for us, in his essay, «WFMT», that «culture is just that which we do» (58). It is capable of the greatest artistic achievements: achievements that Mamet admires and to which he aspires as a writer. But, as he also discloses in his essay, «Demagoguery», in that same culture «a group can be transformed into an army, legislature, et cetera, and a group can be transformed into a mob.... The demagogue arises in times of uncertainty and allays the uncertainty with a lie: It is not

that the world is a difficult place, but rather that *some group* is conspiring against you – destroy them, and all will be well» (159-60). If we keep in mind Steven Marcus's insight from «Psychoanalytic Theory and Cultural Change»: «the primal cultural scene is the disclosure made to each of us that culture is inexpugnably parental», we recognize that *The Spanish Prisoner* represents Ross's pathological dynamic of suspicion but it applies to all of us... even to David Mamet. And by representing himself in his film, Mamet bridges his own abyss that forbids human empathy and identification with memory.

If we recall the significance of the Boy Scout knife and its motto of «be prepared» in the film, we realize that it epitomizes Ross, his unconscious aggression toward himself and others, his eternal obsession with vigilance. John Lahr's «Profile: Fortress Mamet» opens with: «When I met David Mamet this summer [1997], he made me the gift of a Boy Scout knife. On one side of the knife was the Scout motto: 'Be Prepared'. The words, which invoke both prowess and paranoia, seemed to sum up the twin themes of Mamet's work, and of his guarded life» (70). Lahr identifies Mamet's fondness for a quotation from the great blues singer, Huddie Ledbetter (Leadbelly): «you take a knife, you use it to cut the bread, so you'll have the strength to work; you use it to shave, so you'll look nice for your lover; on discovering her with another, you use it to cut out her lying heart» (72). Does Mamet find expressed in this favorite quote aspects of narcissistic aggression and paranoia? When visiting Mamet's office in Cambridge, Lahr identifies «a large second World War poster... which read 'Loose Talk Can Cost Lives! Keep It Under Your Stetson!」» (70). Did Mamet insert this poster into his film in order to dramatize his impulse toward secrecy and defensive vigilance? Or is it precisely because Mamet places so much of his personal memory into *The Spanish Prisoner* that he hastens to trivialize it by labeling it a «Light Thriller»?

It may be objected that Lahr's essay on Mamet does not reflect a balanced or measured viewpoint of Mamet's psychology. But Mamet, in a public interview with Barbara Shulgasser in San Francisco immediately after Lahr's piece appeared, admits: «the terrible thing about the article is I thought it was very perceptive» (210). Following upon this recognition, it is appropriate to examine the cover of Mamet's collection of essays, *Make-Believe Town*, published before the release of *The Spanish Prisoner*. Mamet is photographed in the office of his cabin in Vermont, leaning against the table of his manual typewriter and turning away from the camera. He is wearing a long-billed sporting cap, precisely the cap worn by Jimmy Dell (Steve Martin) when we first encounter him in the film. The cap is not mentioned in the screenplay but it would appear that Mamet felt the need to invest Jimmy with an aspect of his personality.

Similarly, when we see Ross (Campbell Scott) in the film the morning after he has been stood-up by Jimmy, he is dressed (with the exception of the cap) exactly as Mamet appears on the cover: jeans, T-shirt, hooded sweatshirt, and short bomber-style jacket. He is also wearing prescription sunglasses of the type worn by Mamet. There is a meaningful representation of Mamet's own appearance projected onto the surface of his fictional invention. This is the scene (we may recall) in which Ross confronts Jimmy at the luxury car dealership. But in the screenplay, Ross confronts Jimmy not in a car dealership but in a «very posh gun store» (34). As Mamet told Lahr about his unhappy childhood, «so what?» If we consider Mamet's account (related to Brian Case) of how he met a «British guy... an Air Vice Marshal» in Las Vegas at a «*Soldier of Fortune* convention» and how the guy had «been talking about his investments in the Cayman Isles» and how the two of them had examined guns at a «table of firearms», we notice certain intriguing parallels: when Mamet was told – later – that the man was a «con man», he was asked by his informant: «did you lend him any money?» Mamet's reaction was this: «all of a sudden, all these things that were inexplicable at the time flashed back to me.» Does this sound anything like Ross? Summarizing his close call with the confidence artist, Mamet concludes: «Nothing's worse than [being deceived]»; he also expresses an oath: «Jesus Christ!» – the more conventional form of «crikey» (103). But if Mamet decided to expurgate his own scene at the gun store, could it have been because the inclusion of the gun store scene would remind him of an actual time when *he* was duped? And was this the *only* time? In «The

Shooting Auction», another autobiographical essay, Mamet describes how the auctioneer to whom he had entrusted an antique gun worth over a thousand dollars had «stole it [for his personal use] for two hundred fifty dollars» (107). With what does Mamet replace the expurgated gun store scene? We know that, in the film, Ross confronts Jimmy in a luxury car dealership. One reason Mamet may have inserted a car dealership is that he had wanted, in the screenplay, to have a scene with cars in the company garage – in order to show that Ross drives a «five-year old, battered Toyota» in opposition to the «top-of-the-line Mercedeses, a Jaguar, a Ferrari» that others in the company drive – to reveal, in other words, his sense of deficiency and to alert us, later on, that it is suspicious that Susan, unlike Ross, would drive a «clean, new car» (33, 83). Mamet eliminates the garage scene in order to reveal for the first time the company World War II-vintage poster about secrecy that is a close relation to the one he keeps hanging in his Cambridge office.

But the theme of the luxury cars warrants further investigation. In his autobiographical essay, «The Watch», Mamet describes how he «had been told... from my earliest youth, that, on my graduation from college, I'd be given a convertible» (32). When, in his last year of college, he is summoned home by his father just before his birthday so that his father might give him something, Mamet is convinced that his father is giving him an automobile. He announces the fact to his college friends. On his way up to his father's apartment, he spies a Volkswagen convertible, brand new, with a dealer's sticker in the window. Like Ross who by opening the parcel feels as if he has seen something he ought not to have seen, Mamet feels «moved» by the car: it was a «magnificent gift... his effort to understand me» (35). Then, like Ross in his concern with whether or not he ought to admit that he opened the parcel, Mamet ponders whether he ought to admit he has already seen the car. When his father presents him with a watch at dinner, Mamet's knowledge of the car outside enables him to «feign, no, not to feign, to *feel* true gratitude»: now the watch, too, is «magnificent» (37). Mamet confides his fantasy that his father has planned a two-part gift, first the watch, then the car. At the first opportunity, he searches the watch case for a concealed car key (not unlike Ross's secret search to reveal the contents of the parcel: only a book) but finds none. In the end, he realizes that his father has betrayed his promise and given him a watch instead of a convertible. Mamet reveals that he «pawned the watch many times... and once sold it outright» but the pawnbroker, who knew Mamet's father, declined to sell the watch; Mamet purchases it back. Looking back, Mamet declares that «most of the time, it stayed in a box in my desk» (38). But Mamet converts the actual watch into a fantasy that his father meant the watch as a «token in code» and that «*after his death*», it would be revealed that the «watch was merely a test» – able to be redeemed for a «fitting legacy» (39). But the death of his father puts an end to that fantasy. Mamet concludes that he «still [has] the watch, which I still don't like; and several years ago I bought myself a convertible, which, I think, I never drive without enjoyment» (39). The enduring sense of the essay is the shame that was part of the powerful bond between the «emotionally involved» David Mamet and his father (38). There is a sense that his father betrayed the promise of the car by giving him the watch – hence the fantasy of the test. And while the watch (his father's actual gift) has never pleased him, his gift to himself of the convertible (the gift he fantasized his father ought to have given him) provides him with ceaseless «enjoyment». Is it any wonder that, when seeking to dramatize a confrontation in his film over a perceived betrayal and perceived shame between a man such as Ross and the man Jimmy represents to him, Mamet would discard his own screenplay and, as the director, substitute a scene evocative of an event from his own memory? Lahr quotes Mamet's friend and director, Gregory Mosher, about Mamet's father: «Bernie Mamet was clearly the intense relationship of David's life, and there seems to be no aspect of the relationship of father to son that they did not explore to hell» (74).

But let us explore Mamet's decision to depict Ross as being inclined to suffer, in Freud's words, «the strikingly prominent features... of paranoia... among males..., social humiliations and slights». In «Memories of Chelsea», another autobiographical essay, Mamet describes the extents to which he would proceed in order, like Ross, to avoid being «accused of a lack of courtesy» (SP, 36). A young woman travels to New York in order to spend a weekend of love with the bachelor

Mamet. He has tickets for them to see his play. Despite his desire for intimacy before the play, she delays so that they «could both have something to look forward to after the theatre» (20). After the play, Mamet is approached by «an older actor» and his wife. Although this actor was merely an «acquaintance», Mamet recalls that he had invited them to be his guest at his play that evening. They invite him to share a cab with them back to their apartment for supper. Mamet considers: «My mind raced. I had to allow him to reciprocate my gift of the tickets, and I could not, I thought (having reasoned it out as closely as I could), be so discourteous as to stand him and his wife up» (21). They agree to go, but for «just a snack» (21). Then there are drinks and more drinks; finally, the host announces that he will cook, just as Mamet is getting highly impatient to begin his night of lovemaking. The dish being served is «matzoh brei... stupefyingly filling... the last thing one wants to eat at 11 p.m. before a scheduled night of love» (22). But Mamet eats the dish because his host was a Jewish Patriarch (like Mr. Klein?) and «it was an honor»; indeed, like Ross regarding Jimmy's estimation of Ross's father, Mamet reveals that this patriarch «was proud of me»: «So I had to eat it» (22). Then he has to «praise it to the skies» which results in his having seconds and thirds. Then he feels obliged to compliment the food again. In response, the patriarch's wife sets into the kitchen to prepare her family's version of the dish. Mamet is «stupified... I tried to leave» but he is told they «could not budge» (22). Then Mamet has to «eat as many plates of [the new] matzoh brei as I had before, and make the ceremonial declaration of the excellence of each recipe» (23). Mamet's point is that the obligations of social courtesy overwhelmed his personal desires and inclinations, but he has also constructed a persuasive representation of himself as Ross – obsessed with etiquette, courtesy, and social graces.

Finally, regarding the representation of both Jimmy and Ross with items of Mamet's clothing, and regarding Ross's decision to «indulge» himself with lavish new clothes, Mamet confesses, in his personal essay, «Homespun Fop», to a «vanity» that is satisfied by buying used clothes and having them tailored elaborately: «I was, and remain, a fop» (41, 43, 42). And after he resolves to give up his «affectation», he «proceeded to take the old clothes I had left to various expensive New York tailors and instruct them how I wished those old clothes copied» (45-6). Despite Mamet's self-irony, there is a good deal of the Mamet fop in Ross, whose sense of shame at the insult to his clothing from the patriarch, Mr. Klein, results in Ross's extravagant trip to outfit his wardrobe and his pleasure at being complimented on his appearance by the conspirators. Nevertheless, there is perhaps yet another reason: Lahr tells us that after Mamet's parents divorced in 1958, Mamet's mother married «Bernie's law associate – a close family friend, also named Bernie» (74). Thus, we have two Bernies: father and step (and should it surprise us that Mamet discards from his screenplay his own idea that there should be a «double» for Ross in the Central Park public men's room? [64-67]); we also have a verbally abusive father, Bernie, who worked hard all his life, the «most intense relationship of David's life», and the physically abusive stepfather, Bernie, whom Mamet hates and about whom he will not speak with the exception of his personal essay, «The Rake», the facts of which Lahr confirmed with Mamet's only sibling, his sister Lynn. (The lines Jimmy speaks in the film, about his imaginary sister – «since we were kids, all that we had was Each Other» [42] – ring true for Mamet's comments about Lynn Mamet to Lahr, to interviewers, and in his essay. But the resonant aspect of «The Rake» is that, despite young Mamet's anger and rage at the way his stepfather abuses his sister (including the fact that «he had cracked her vertebrae»), one day Mamet «threw the rake at her and it hit her in the face... and cut her badly»; Mamet is «sick with guilt» at his own outburst (9-10). Thus we are able to see Mamet's ambivalent identification with both the victim and the abuser, with both the guilty and the innocent. He represents himself as Ross, victim of the con, but he assigns a small measure of himself to Jimmy, its perpetrator. If we are able to establish that, in *The Spanish Prisoner*, Mamet was working with personal memory and creating a film that is more than a mere «Light Thriller», then it is possible to conclude that Mamet's need to separate art from human identification is based on human psychological conflict: like Jimmy, if he could, he might admit that «it's possible» (37) for him to be mistaken on this one point – that

catharsis and human empathy *can* allow for individual memory to move us through art. In that case, Mamet's deepest irony (and perhaps the joke that is on him at which he may never laugh) is that there is truth to Ross's statement: «You can't go through life mistrusting everybody» (24).

From Mamet, from Ross, from Susan, from Mr. Klein, from ourselves as readers and members of the audience, we piece together a group, and then multiple groups, and, mindful of Freud's statement, in *The Future of an Illusion*, that he «scorn[s] to distinguish between culture and civilization» (6), we call that collective: culture. The power of art is its ability to tell us the truth about ourselves – both as individuals and members of cultural groups. As Steven Marcus so eloquently phrases it: «We are all of noble birth, we have all lost our royal parents, we all go through an internal personal drama of grandiose sexual and aggressive ambitions and catastrophic retribution for these illicit, immitigable aspirations. These exemplary and recurrent themes of experience belong for Freud to the species as much as they do to each of us. The inflection of that experience in each separate individual, Freud often remarks, generally recapitulates the processes undergone by larger cultural entities» (166-67). If we are ever going to overcome our vehement «mistrust [for] everybody», we are, as Freud expressed it in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, going to have to confront «the sense of guilt... [that is] the most important problem in the development of civilization... the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt.... 'Thus conscience does make cowards of us all'» (134).

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# The music «Beneath the Surface» of Dorian Gray

MARCIA GREEN (\*)

One of Freud's earliest pupils and the lay analyst responsible for Freud's authoring *The Question of Lay Analysis*, Theodor Reik, in his own writings, «insisted on the necessity of 'hearing oneself' in psychoanalytic work... [thus using] one's unconscious as a receiving apparatus». In his works Reik focuses his «attention to the auxiliary sense of perception experienced in the emergence of musical themes, with the purpose of adding to the known [psychoanalytic] methods a neglected means of tapping the wires of unconscious life». He hypothesized that «[t]he intangible that is invisible as well as untouchable can still be audible. It can announce its presence and effect in tunes, faintly heard inside you» [12].

The 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde and the 1945 film version based on the novel both use music as a metaphor for the emotions, the drives, and the psychic reality of the characters. We hear about Dorian Gray before we meet him. From the beginning our ears are flooded with adjectives describing his extraordinarily youthful good looks and the powerful influence of Dorian's personality. We hear from Basil Hallward, the artist who paints the picture, that his first encounter with Dorian was so overwhelming that, «I felt that I was growing pale.... I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself» [Wilde 10]. We also hear Lord Henry Wotton, the aristocrat fawning over the face in the picture – characterizing its subject as a «young Adonis... a Narcissus» – and who later fawns over Dorian himself: his uncanny «low musical voice» seduces Dorian into forfeiting his soul for eternal youth [7]. By hearing these descriptions a crescendo of expectation rises and the anticipation of Dorian's appearance builds – but when Dorian finally arrives he makes his presence known through music. In the novel, Dorian is seated at the piano, with his back to us. He is turning the pages of the music to Schumann's «Forest Scenes». We hear his voice. He expresses his desire to learn these «perfectly charming pieces». We next hear him voice his impatience at having to sit for a portrait that he doesn't even want painted. Then, finally, we see him. Dorian appears, «Swinging round on the music-stool, in a willful, petulant manner», and we see the «faint blush colored cheeks» of his face [20].

In the film version, directed by Albert Lewin, which is the focus of this essay, Dorian is also seated at the piano and it is the sound of Dorian's piano playing that lures us out of the garden where Basil and Lord Henry have been chatting about him and back into Basil's studio. Dorian's back is to

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us and the music he is performing is an alluring waltz-like piece. He expresses his desire to learn these pieces and asks Basil to lend them to him. The melody consists of a short motif built around the sound of a major chord, which gets repeated three times – each time at a higher pitch. The motif yields to a chromatic flourish that in turn leads to a temporary respite before compelling the music to start over again. Dorian never gets to complete this piece because Basil and Lord Henry enter and interrupt him. Nevertheless this unfinished musical material now becomes associated throughout the movie with the innocent, impressionable, youthful, handsome, virtuous side of Dorian Gray. We never learn the name of this piece whose melody is composed in a manner that forces it to consistently elude a resolution and perpetually repeat itself. (The composer of the film score, Herbert Stothart, wrote it specifically for the movie.) But the significance of it lies in the fact that it remains incomplete, unfinished, undeveloped, unresolved – a perfect compliment to Dorian’s eternal youth as well as to his impressionable and unresolved personality – qualities Lord Henry, no doubt, had already perceived because while Basil’s paintbrush puts the finishing touches on Dorian’s picture, Lord Henry’s vibrant words are starting to excite Dorian’s imagination and are awakening in him his repressed desires.

As Lord Henry entices Dorian to indulge in all sensual delights while he is still young and handsome, we hear in the background a new short three note musical motif – a descending minor chord. The music’s minor sonority creeps into Dorian’s unconscious, aiding and abetting his contemplation about the possibility of exploring the darker side of his personality while the overall tempestuous temperament of the music challenges him to indulge these libidinous passions. The «event of the present is always an isolated tonal element, looking neither backwards nor forwards. It only has meaning once it becomes part of the past; in other words, paradoxically, perception of a tune... involves memory. The all-important emotional response to music occurs as a consequence of events of the past, even though these may lead us to anticipate events of the future» [Davies 62]. During this scene when we hear Dorian’s music emerge it does so without a specific sound source – no one is playing the piano or any other instrument. Like an emotion, the subliminal music simply materializes – linking the moment with the music. However, this second musical theme which will become associated with Dorian does have a name. It is Frederick Chopin’s «Prelude» (Op. 28. No. 24 in D minor). Its sound will be consumed by Dorian and subsumed into his unconscious, compelling him towards his desires and as Reik writes «[w]hatever secret message it carries the incidental music accompanying our conscious thinking is never accidental» [10]. Both of Dorian’s musical motifs are similar in that they embrace the sound of a chord-paradoxically, one major, one minor. Remember, however, Dorian never completes playing his first musical theme, the waltz-like piano piece. It remains open and unresolved – like Dorian, himself.

«In the development of a [musical] composition, the latent possibilities of a theme are unfolded by means of melodic, harmonic, or contrapuntal variations. Development is also called working out which is identical with the Freudian term (*Durcharbeiten*) used for a certain phase of the analytic process. [In music an analogy might be made when] the musical idea was not heard to its end by the [performer] inside, was not... experienced to its last and decisive consequences. It remained in its first phases, in its early form» [Reik 12].

It is this curiously unresolved quality, this need to work through the character neurosis of both Dorian and the music that enables him to absorb «Prince Paradox’s» «Prelude» into his newly libidinal personality dynamics, integrate it into his psyche and embrace a darker refrain. His first victim is Sibyl Vane.

Dorian’s newly discovered hedonistic liberation leads him to the Two Turtles Tavern. A watchful eye, painted as an advertising logo promoting the optometric services of Dr. Look, follows him as he enters. The rattling sounds of a xylophone greet Dorian and as the door closes, we view the painted eye peering through the round glass window of the closed door. The cacophony spontaneously halts as the proprietor welcomes Dorian, then immediately resumes as he takes a seat near the front of the stage. Sibyl Vane is introduced as the next act. The curtains open revealing a beautiful young woman. Sibyl begins singing her song. Dorian appears smitten. During the second verse Sibyl leaves

the stage and mingles with the «mere mortals» in the audience who spontaneously join her in singing a reprise of the chorus. Sibyl's eyes meet Dorian's and she temporarily stops singing. Recovering from the momentary lapse created by the strike of «Cupid's arrow», she resumes singing and with her eyes now fixed on Dorian, she takes her bows. Dorian is offered the chance to meet with her but declines. However two weeks later, after visiting the Two Turtles every night, he changes his mind and goes backstage requesting whether Sibyl would perform her song once again – this time only for him. He desires to hear her song again because he desires to finally meet Sibyl. But if he was listening to the words she sang the lyrics should have discouraged him. The song tells a story about a handsome, privileged yellow bird who lives in a gilded cage. This bird falls in love with a common sparrow that flew through the window of his home during a winter storm. He offers the sparrow all that she might desire if only she would remain with him. The sparrow replies, «her liberty, for gold could not be sold». Though she loves the little yellow bird, she also loves her freedom and chooses it rather than the imprisonment of the yellow bird's gilded cage. If Dorian did hear the words he may not have been listening to them let alone comprehending and interpreting the metaphor. The appearance of Sibyl alone may have overwhelmed him – his eyes took in her beauty while his ears yielded to the siren's song. Further, his «Adonis'» personality would prohibit the words from either directly or indirectly applying to him and even if they could apply to him this 'yellow bird's' narcissism would compel him to be unable to accept the sparrow's decision to leave him. He would do whatever would be necessary to get the sparrow to stay. On the other hand, perhaps it is her melody that entices him. «Almost any piece of music can... become associated with any emotional event regardless, to a great extent, of the nature of the event or the tune» [Davies 70]. Sibyl and her quaint tune have captivated Dorian – luring him back to her every night and in return Dorian will demonstrate to Sibyl exactly how «particular types of music are appropriate to particular types of event[s]» [Davies 70].

One part of Sibyl's tune in particular may have struck a chord with Dorian. The melody, accompanying the words «yellow bird», sounds familiar. Its descending three-note pattern uncannily recalls the notes of Dorian's demonic descending motif. Though the notes are not identical, there are enough emotional undertones to affect an emotional identification between them. Dorian in effect may be «hearing himself» in Sibyl's tune. Though her tune is simple, it is nevertheless a haunting one.

When Sibyl agrees to sing privately for Dorian, his musical dexterity enables him to accompany her on the piano. After she finishes singing, there is silence. Dorian breaks this silence with his own music. It is passionate music. It is the same music that accompanied his initiation into the secret world of the libidinous desires he repressed. The music says it all. The minor sounds stir the emotions of its listener. «It is sonorously tragic, troubled by fevered visions, and capricious, irregular, yet massive in design... like the vast reverberation of monster waves on the implacable coast of a remote world... Despite its fatalistic ring it is not dispiriting... for a moment a point of repose is achieved; but the rest is elusive. The theme comes back in octaves, and the tension is greater. Then the accumulated passion dissolves in a fierce gust of double chromatic thirds and octaves and breathless arpeggios... The three tones at the close seem like the final clangor of overthrown reason... It is a veritable *Appassionata*...» [Huneker vi].

Sibyl is transfixed by the sounds. The final three notes resonate with definitive purposefulness, sealing the fate of Dorian and Sibyl. When the last remnants of sound evaporate Sibyl breaks the silence with words. «It's wonderful! Did you write it?» Dorian responds, «Frederick Chopin. For a woman he loved. Her name was George Sand. Someday I'll tell you about it». She then replies, «I would like that». Dorian, perhaps at a loss for words, plays the first three notes of the Chopin «Prelude» – a descending D minor chord. After a short silence, he asks, «What did the music mean to you?» «I don't know. It is full of emotion. But it is not happy.» «No. It's not happy.» «Why was he unhappy?» Dorian once again plays the descending D minor chord then says, «Perhaps because he felt his youth slipping away from him». Sibyl finds this an odd response since Dorian is so young. So is she, he remarks. She asks him what the music is called and whether it has a name. «A kind of name. It is called 'Prelude'.» Dorian and Sibyl passionately embrace and experience the cathexis of a kiss. The

background music swells and echoes the desire in their hearts, recapitulates their individual melodic identities, and weaves them and their music together into Wagnerian ecstasy. Chopin's music was used as a subliminal suggestion during Dorian's demonic awakening and having successfully incorporated it into his psychic repertoire, he now uses the same music to conjure libidinous desires in Sibyl.

«The power to make an impression, and to touch the hearts of listeners, is attributed directly to the musical creation itself; whilst this might be true in a particular set of circumstances, it is not true as a generality. In the first place, the emotion felt has very little to do with the music itself but becomes attached to the music through a learning process. The feelings are not intrinsic in the music, but come, as it were, from outside. The second point is that there is nothing natural or inevitable about the emotional response. It, also, comes about as a result of learning. These conclusions run contrary to what many people believe.» [Davies 70] Dorian, then, reveals the title and historical significance of this music and uses both the words and music to reinforce and to indelibly mark an irrevocable association (memory trace?) between them.

Since «[l]anguage is at its poorest when it wishes to grasp and communicate nuances and shades of feelings – in that very area in which music is most efficient and expressive, [it stands to reason that Sibyl's] musical associations ... [would not necessarily be] connected with well-formed thoughts, but with ideas *in statu nascendi*, with thought embryos or vague images» [Reik 9 and 91]. Therefore when she is asked to verbalize what the music means to her she responds, «I really don't know. It is full of emotion. But it is not happy». Why does she say this? It is true that historically minor sounds have been associated with sadness. It is true that the music's «tragic, troubled, fevered, capricious, irregular, massive, fatalistic, breathless» sounds can be termed «full of emotion». But Dorian asks her this question after she exclaims that the music is wonderful and after she hears the story about Chopin and George Sand. Dorian has prompted her response by associating for her the music's historical and romantic significance.

«There is a widespread notion that feelings, emotions, or moods, lie inside the music, that is, they are thought of as properties of the music, and what the listener is doing is merely reflecting something that is in the music. Such a view is sometimes accompanied by the belief that there is something inevitable or natural about the experience of particular feelings as a result of listening to a particular tune. As a consequence, the inability of a particular individual person to be able to see (i.e. experience) those things which are thought to be in the music is often put down to factors such as deliberate perversity, refusal [and] reluctance to admit [it], stupidity, or genetic defect on the part of a person who fails to get the message» [Davies 70]. Not wanting to be mistaken for possessing an inability to communicate emotionally with Dorian or to perhaps be mistaken for possessing perversity, reluctance, stupidity or genetic defects by her admission that she doesn't know the music's meaning, she provides the necessary thought embryos and the vague *in statu nascendi* reply, «full of emotion». It is now Dorian's turn to make a move. He responds by prefacing his own verbal replies with musical replies – playing the descending three note minor melodic motif that begins the «Prel-ude». He reinforces for Sibyl the musical sounds that pave the way to their embrace. Should Sibyl forget the words he spoke about the Prelude's fairytale-like history in bringing two lovers together, she will not forget the Prelude's magical three note motif – a sound that in her memory, will now always be associated with her amorous feelings towards Dorian. The appropriate situational memory has been associated to the appropriate musical memory, resulting in the appropriately implied emotional and physical expectation.

There is another perspective, however, that provides insight into what has been happening during this intimate after-hours performance. The entire scene is being witnessed by Sibyl's mother and by her brother James who has entered the tavern through a back door. He hears his sister's voice and is puzzled. Why is she singing at this late hour? He looks towards his mother and she motions for him to be silent. Sibyl is on stage and Jim watches from the wings. Seated at the piano he sees the back of the well-dressed man who is accompanying her. Jim remains hidden from their sight but is still able to listen. Though his sister professes not to know what the music means, Jim also heard the «Prelude», the fairytale story that accompanied it, and the resultant cathartic kiss.

However Jim interprets the meaning of the music differently. His facial expression decodes the music's subliminal message and for Jim the music can only mean heartbreak and sorrow for his sister. Jim senses that the music could potentially lead to disaster. He also identifies with the music's seductive potential and because of his sister's innocent and trusting nature, he believes that the music's power could have a negative influence upon her better judgment. It could work against the defense mechanisms that enabled her to resist previous potential suitors who were most likely from the same socioeconomic status as she and her family.

When Dorian leaves, Jim confronts Sibyl about his concerns. He points out that she doesn't know who this man is and that he hasn't told Sibyl his name. But that doesn't matter to Sibyl because she knows his name: in fact she names him. «It is Sir Tristan», she says – the same name that is written above the chivalrous knight whose picture hangs in her dressing room. She reminds Jim that during their childhood they read fairytales about the knight who vowed to «battle against all evil doers, to defend the right to protect all women, to be true in friendship and true in love». No doubt these fantasies of swashbuckling heroics have been unleashed by Dorian's bravura outburst at the piano – the intuitively felt transference, the fantasized reciprocity of emotions all still resonating in Sibyl's mind, as she projects onto Dorian the name Sir Tristan and with it all of the secret desires she shares with the mythological knight in the picture. How could she be wrong? In her mind Sir Tristan is a good person incapable of evil, and so is Dorian. He could not have played the piano so passionately and persuasively. He could not have been so convincingly captivating had he not been sincere about his intentions towards her. She embraced the knight of her dreams on the night of her dreams. It was all there in the music and music doesn't lie. But just what are Dorian's intentions?

Dorian, having just recently been indoctrinated into the world of psychic seduction (compliments of Lord Henry), doubts his ego's abilities of perception, insight and technique. He buys a caged yellow bird and has it sent to Sibyl (lest she fear that her music did not make an impression on him) and he invites Lord Henry and Basil (his id and superego) to accompany him to the Two Turtles Tavern to meet Sibyl and hear her sing. On the way, Dorian confides in them his desire to marry Sibyl (a repressed wish) but he neglects to express this desire directly to Sibyl (his ambivalence). Apparently they both have trouble communicating to each other in words. Basil's observation of Sibyl is that «She is charming, and innocent, transparently so». Lord Henry, having sensed Dorian's resistance towards a commitment to Sibyl, offers his expert observation: «She loves you so much that you have no need to marry her.»

Lord Henry, his back to the stage, keeps turning around to glance at the act that follows Sibyl. The trained seal performing a stimulus-response routine proves inspirational. «Prince Paradox» proposes a Pavlovian experiment: Dorian should invite Sibyl to his home to see the portrait that Basil painted. What a splendid idea for Lord Henry to use a Rorschach test to analyze Sibyl's true feelings! She should do well. She loves projecting her feelings onto pictures as much as she loves associating her emotions to music. Using this as a pretense, he should entice her to spend the night. If she refuses, he should berate her conventional reaction, then ask her to see herself out since he can't bear sad farewells. Lord Henry hypothesizes, «If she is as good as she is beautiful, run after her. Beg her forgiveness and marry her.»

The experiment takes place in Dorian's drawing room. Sibyl must be ecstatic. Dorian's portrait hovers over them. Dorian plays the «Prelude» and Sibyl sits beside him. She walks around the room etching into her memory all the details of this evening – reveling in her happiness. The chiming of the clock interrupts her reverie and announces the lateness of the hour. She prepares to leave. She grabs her hat and looking in the mirror she begins to fasten it on her head. She sees a reflection of the Egyptian cat statue that sits on the table behind her. She becomes startled. «It's that cat!» she cries. «I believe I saw its eyes move.» This is the same notorious cat whose painted image appears with Dorian in the portrait; who witnessed his wish for eternal youth; and who now occupies a prominent place on his drawing room table. Dorian agrees that the cat may indeed possess mysterious powers and seeks to reinforce this idea by reading from a book which he keeps next to the cat on the table. The passage alludes to the ending of Oscar Wilde's poem, «The Sphinx». As he reads he accents the

words «bestial urges» and slows down the rhythm of the words when he recites, «You wake foul dreams of sensual life». When he finishes reading, he looks up at Sibyl and she comments on the strange look that has overcome his face. He speaks, «What would you do, Sibyl, if I should say to you, ‘Don’t leave me now. Don’t go home?’» She lowers her eyes. «What would you do, Sibyl?» She raises her eyes to look at him. After a long silence, she sheds a tear. His poetic recitative does not seduce Sibyl to stay with him; neither does his beseeching nor his rebukes. She then turns away and slowly walks towards the door as the melody to the «Yellow Bird» is heard in the background. Dorian begins reciting Lord Henry’s instructions. He berates Sibyl’s conventional behavior and requests that she show herself out since he cannot bear sad farewells. Sibyl continues walking away. She and her melody are leaving. Dorian turns in the opposite direction and walks back to his piano. Sibyl reaches the front door and is stopped by the sounds of the «Prelude». A flood of emotions must have been conjured up by these sounds because Dorian and we see her shadow begin to slowly appear at the entrance to the drawing room. His piano performance becomes louder and more forceful. The music is luring her back. Sibyl, as if in a trance, is pulled towards the music and Dorian. Where his melodramatic prowess failed, his musical prowess succeeds. The last three notes have sounded – simultaneously ending the «Prelude», and the experiment.

Why does Sibyl come back? «One feature about the knowledge that a person brings to bear when listening to a particular piece of music is that it leads [one] to expect certain kinds of things to happen, and to expect that certain other things will not. Subsequently, [one’s] expectations may be confirmed or they may not. It is this process of confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies which is at the center of musical experience» [Davies 68]. Sibyl lets her defenses down and gives in to her feelings because «[e]vents of the past are the basic ingredients from which expectancies are formed, and this is why the past is of such importance. With no carry over from past events, a person could have no expectations» [Davies 68]. This takes us back to the other side of the expectations coin. If Sibyl proves to have no expectation or carry over from the past then once again she may be classified as «perverse, reluctant, stupid, or genetically defective».

Intellectually, she should have known better. Every night she sang the story of the yellow bird and the sparrow. Did Sibyl not understand the metaphorical meaning of the words of her own song? Of course she did. But she was acting. She was playing a character and the more convincing she was in her part of the sparrow the more likely she was to keep her job. The «real» Sibyl was nothing like the lowly sparrow. She was the love object of the knight, Sir Tristan, and he was her obsession. As long as Sir Tristan remained a picture hanging on the wall of her dressing room she could freely and safely indulge her fantasies and transfer her desires onto him. But emotionally she empowered Dorian with Sir Tristan’s name and he in turn animates, through musical conjuration, an atmosphere of expectations that brought forth her repressed desires, denied wishes, and secret longings. In fact, he created an «affinity towards the music as an expression of [their] unconscious, [a] kinship of this art with the dreamlike and intangible element of their existence, with the night aspect of [their] emotional life [verbally] un-definable and inexpressible» [Reik 7].

«In fleeting tunes whose wings have fluttered away into the unknown as in a melody that has a hold on you and will not release you... that life, concealed from yourself has sent messages to the mental surface. In this inward singing, the voice of an unknown self conveys not only passing moods and impulses, but sometimes a disavowed or denied wish, a longing and a drive we do not like to admit to ourselves. The theme that is stirring deep inside you imposes itself on you, interferes with rational thoughts and obscures the swift, straight line of logic» [Reik 10].

But the next day Dorian sends Sibyl an envelope containing money and a letter. The picture of Sir Tristan is behind her as she reads his words. «You used to stir my imagination. Now you are nothing to me. I will never see you again. I will never mention your name. I will never think of you. I’ve been living in a land of illusion. I will make an end to my dream.» Sir Tristan would have never written these words. Sir Tristan speaks to her with his music. Was the letter signed? If so, what did the signature say? We don’t find out. But what was once associated with ecstasy and bliss has now become associated with decay and destruction. Her dream extinguished, Sibyl in turn

extinguishes her life. She has faced the released libidinal desires she had previously repressed – that reflection of herself she found contemptible and overwhelming – she was filled with guilt in consequence. She has met Dorian Gray.

However, her brother Jim also hears the «Prelude» on that fateful first night and its sound becomes indelibly imprinted into his psyche. From the start for him the music meant trouble and now it proved fatal for his sister. He must now keep his words and avenge her honor by hunting down the man responsible.

But how will he be able to do this? He doesn't know who this man is. He doesn't know his name. And yet, eighteen years later Jim hears the sound of familiar music being played on a piano. It is emanating from the inside of a building. He listens carefully and like his sister is drawn by the music. The sound leads to a brothel. Jim now enters and walks towards the piano. On the way, he reaches for a lantern and shines the light on the pianist's face. The face belongs to an older man. But it is not the face of Sir Tristan. Jim asks, «What's that you're playing? It has a name hasn't it?» The pianist replies, «A kind of name. It's called 'Prelude'.» Jim places money on the piano and requests that he play something else. The pianist begins playing Beethoven's «Moonlight Sonata» in the background. The undulating low tones of the sonata provide a more contemplative, calming atmosphere for Jim to think. Why is the «Prelude» being played in this brothel? It is certainly passionate music but it is also sophisticated musically not to mention extremely difficult to play. So, why doesn't Jim ask for more information? Was it a request or just an impulsive idea by the pianist who is himself in the midst of seducing a woman? Had Jim asked more questions about the music he might have found out that there is a specific reason for the music being played. A reason we already know because immediately after Sibyl's death, we see Dorian enter this brothel. He walks to the bar, pays for a drink and places it on the piano. The pianist automatically begins playing the «Prelude» as Dorian is led up the stairs to a private room.

As Jim tries to both forget the past memories conjured up by the music's sound and remember that this music is the only means of his recognizing «Sir Tristan», a woman walks over to Jim and escorts him to a table. She wonders why he doesn't like the other music. He mentions that he «heard someone play that piece before – eighteen years ago». «A woman?» She asks – making an assumption that a female pianist may have been playing the piece to seduce Jim. He shakes his head no and continues. «Every time I get back to London I look for him. Sir Tristan my sister called him because he was like a knight. If he was in Rangoon or Valparaiso I'd find him. In London it's like looking for a needle in a haystack. I don't know his real name. I don't even know what he looks like.» «When you find him, what will you do? Maybe he's dead already? Did you think of that?»

At this moment we see Dorian in the background coming down the stairs from the upper floor and proceeding towards a couple sitting at a table near the door. The man introduces Dorian. «This is Sir Tristan, Kate darling.» «I've asked you not to call me that, Adrian.» «I heard Lord Henry call you Sir Tristan. At the time I thought it fit.» Dorian watches while Adrian draws another picture of Dorian Gray – in chalk on the wooden tabletop. This picture is more of a caricature of Dorian's face wearing a top hat, and a monocle. But Adrian feels that there is something missing from his portrait and begins to draw what looks like a frame around the face – in actuality he draws a «gallows tree». This affront prompts Dorian to snarl a good-bye and Adrian retorts with a rhyme: «And green or dry, the man must die. But before it bears its fruit.» He then forcefully punctuates his farewell with a loud, «Good-bye, Sir Tristan!» Jim, thunderstruck by the sound of the name, runs out the door after Dorian, corners him under a streetlight, looks at his face and becomes puzzled. This man is too young to be Sir Tristan and so Jim releases Dorian. But almost immediately Jim encounters Adrian who reveals to Jim that Sir Tristan is Dorian Gray of Mayfair/Selby. Keeping the oath he made to his sister, Jim trails Dorian to his Selby home where Dorian is entertaining guests during a hunting holiday. Jim does not need the music to guide him: he knows who Dorian is, how he looks, and where he lives. During the hunt Jim is accidentally shot and killed. Unfortunately for him like his sister before, the music lured him towards Sir Tristan and uncovered the deadly consequences connected with meeting the real Dorian Gray.

What Jim and Sibyl never realize is that there is yet another portrait, painted by Basil, that also haunts Dorian as much as the one that bears his own image. In Dorian's letter to Sibyl he had threatened – never to see her, never to mention her name, and never to think of her. However he continued to be haunted by her memory and her melody. The next day following Sibyl's death Basil visits Dorian at home. As he waits in the drawing room, he notices music on the piano. The title reads, «The Little Yellow Bird». Next to it is a drawing of a young woman extending her arm outwards towards a small bird. Basil begins to pick out the notes of the melody on the piano. Dorian descends the staircase and stops briefly when he recognizes Sibyl's tune. Willfully he begins whistling the melody to «*La ci darem la mano*» – the duet from Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, where the Don seduces the peasant girl Zerlina. He had attended this opera last night at the invitation of Lord Henry. In fact it was Lord Henry who beseeched Dorian not to be late so that he wouldn't miss that particular duet. In a setting reminiscent of the lavish dinner scene that ends the opera, Dorian sits at a grandly decorated table, zestfully consuming his bountiful breakfast. Basil, having already eaten, sits far off to the side sketching. When they finish Dorian notices that Basil has drawn a sketch of Sibyl's face on top of the notes of the sheet music. «It's charming. May I have it?» Basil agrees to let Dorian keep the remembrance of Sibyl. But on his way out he asks to see Dorian's portrait – he wants to exhibit it. It hides behind a screen and when Basil tries to move the screen Dorian threatens never to speak to him again. Basil draws back. As soon as Basil leaves Dorian walks towards the portrait, places the music with Sibyl's picture on the piano and decides to banish his own picture from the drawing room and hide it upstairs. The previous night Sibyl herself was in this room engraving the happy moment into her memory. Now her picture and her melody will remain together in his drawing room «*in statu nascendi*» until they are found years later by Gladys.

The character of Gladys, Basil's niece, is solely an addition to the film version and not a character found in Oscar Wilde's novel. Early in the film when Basil was painting Dorian's portrait, Gladys was just a little girl who would make daily visits to the studio to see Dorian and check on the progress of the portrait. She, too, was enamored of Dorian. She was even allowed to sign his portrait with her initial – her imprimatur of Dorian's innocence and virtue? When we next see Gladys many years have passed and she has grown into a beautiful young woman. She and Dorian continue to be particularly fond of each other. One day as Dorian sits in his bedroom admiring Gladys's photograph, «the echo of someone else's music» interrupts him [Wilde 23]. Mystified by the uncanny moment Dorian comes downstairs and sees Gladys at his piano. She is singing and playing Sibyl's song. He stands and listens to her. When she finishes, Gladys reveals that she found the «old song» inside his piano bench. She admires the charming face that is drawn over the music because she recognizes it as her uncle's unique artistic style. She wants to know who the woman is and whether this woman sang the song. Dorian tells her that the woman died many years ago when Gladys was only a little girl. Gladys then asks, «Did you love her very much, Dorian?» «Yes!» he answers. Tears well up in her eyes and she hurries out of the room mumbling about Dorian's party later that evening. Her quick departure indicates that she is very distressed.

Why does Gladys presume that Dorian loved the woman or even knew her? After all, the music could be hidden away inside the piano bench because the woman and her song mean nothing to Dorian. On the other hand, the music could be hidden away inside the piano bench because the woman and her song mean everything to Dorian. Gladys needs to know: which is it?

Gladys was drawn to Dorian from the time she was a little girl. Questioned by Lord Henry whether she prefers Dorian or his picture, little Gladys chooses Dorian. When Lord Henry remarks that in time she may wish she had chosen the picture since it will always remain the same, little Gladys runs into Dorian's arms and proclaims, «Dorian won't change. Dorian will stay just as he is till I'm grown. Won't you Dorian?» Now years later her wish has come true. Dorian's face hasn't changed. But he hasn't exactly stayed the same either. He has lost his innocence not because of the picture he has hidden in the attic but because of the picture he has hidden in the piano. Like Dorian before her Gladys was drawn to the song because of the young woman's charming face, which remains young, and lives through her uncle's art. Gladys's curiosity compels her to hear how the

music sounds. Perhaps she can know more about this woman by hearing her song? The music is simple enough for Gladys to be able to sing the melody and accompany herself on the piano – quite unlike the intimate emotional moment when Sibyl and Dorian shared this music together – she singing and he accompanying her. That very moment triggered for Dorian «a specific emotional response to a specific tune simply because [he] heard it at a time when some other pleasurable business was taking place, at the same time in the past. Now the tune itself makes [him] feel good simply because [he] associates it with the previous pleasant experiences...» [Davies 69]. Gladys knows that by playing the tune she is responsible for resurrecting Dorian's latent feelings for this woman and Gladys wonders how to rectify this situation. «[T]he words of the tune are... such of a nature as to make the associations even more explicit» [Davies 69]. Gladys recognizes the metaphor. The «little sparrow» was the love object of the «yellow bird» and still remains his obsession even though she has «flown away». Gladys understands that the words refer to Dorian and the young woman but she has no idea about the circumstances of the relationship or why it seems to have had such an impact on Dorian. What Gladys believes to be an old souvenir turns out, to her dismay, to be an old romance – one that evokes from Dorian the strange sensation of having seen and heard a ghost. Gladys runs away from the fact that she was responsible, through her curiosity, for uncovering and unleashing memories of what she perceives may have been Dorian's idyllic past with the mysterious woman and her melody. How can Gladys compete?

We next see Gladys in Basil's studio all dressed up for Dorian's party. She poses for her uncle as he sketches her. She is obsessed by her inadvertent discovery of the music and the picture. Will she ask her uncle about the history of his drawing? The music? The significance? Will she ask Basil the name of her rival? No. Instead Gladys asks her uncle a curious question about her own portrait. «I'm not really as lovely as that picture am I, darling?» «Of course not.» He replies. Her strange question receives an even stranger answer. They may think that they were engaging in witty repartee with their innocent bantering and teasing of each other. However, their words provide insight into their own perception of themselves. Gladys desires to be more attractive to Dorian than Sibyl was but Gladys has no idea how Sibyl really looked. Basil, on the other hand, must have known how Sibyl looked since he drew a sketch of her. Gladys compares the two sketches – the one of herself and the one of Sibyl. What she desires is confirmation from her uncle that he can create miracles with his art. Basil's response therefore reinforces Gladys's perception of him and his talents as well as acknowledging his own belief in the gift of his mystical artistic skills. In order for her to compete with Dorian's former love interest, Gladys must be convinced, in her mind's eye, that the charming, young, mysterious, woman was not as beautiful as her picture but was created beautiful through her uncle's unique talents as an artist! Gladys is now motivated into action. She informs Basil of her breakthrough. «I think I've discovered why Dorian hasn't proposed to me and I've decided what to do about it. I'm going to ask him to marry me!»

Even though David, Gladys's suitor and her escort to Dorian's party (another character added to the screenplay) recognizes the other side of Dorian and voices his objections about Dorian's evil nature in front of both Gladys and Basil, Gladys, nevertheless, is determined not to be dissuaded from her goal of marrying Dorian. At the party she indulges in flirtations with Dorian during the seductive performance of an exotic dancer. When we next see them Gladys and Dorian are alone. She has already proposed and his answer is silence. Dorian seems distant, contemplative, and calculating. Gladys inquires, «What's wrong, Dorian? Why don't you answer me?» Their conversation continues and she refuses to believe that there is anything evil in Dorian even after he suggests that in fact, she may be in denial. He walks to a cabinet and removes a necklace from a case, fastens it on Gladys and says, «If I were to marry you it would be an incredible wickedness». She lowers her head and speaks in a volatile voice, «Is that a way of saying you don't love me?» «If you like» is his reply. Gladys walks towards a mirror, admires her reflection and the necklace. «It's very beautiful, Dorian. Thank you.» She asks Dorian to find David for her. She is ready to leave. At this moment she looks down at an illustration in an open book on the table. It is Aubrey Beardsley's drawing entitled «How Sir Tristram Drank of the Love Drink», from *La Morte D'Arthur* by Thomas Malory.

Gladys has no magic potion to offer to Dorian in order to change his mind and agree to marry her. Her disappointment is obvious. As she speaks the words, «I must go now», she gently closes the book – putting an end to the chapter with her fantasy knight without ever realizing how similar her situation is to Sibyl's. Whereas Sibyl's wish for Sir Tristan materialized in the form of Dorian and destroyed her, Gladys's wish to marry Dorian would take the magic potion used by Sir Tristram and would have destroyed her.

David, in the meantime, has been prowling around Dorian's house and when Dorian sees him he is trying to gain access into the room that contains the painting. Dorian suggests that the room's content consists of «skeletons of inquisitive guests», David becomes puzzled as he looks towards Gladys because she wants to leave. Ever the perceptive young man, David takes his cue and escorts Gladys down the stairs and out of the house. Dorian watches; then he walks back through the room, past the closed book to the window. He draws the curtain back and sees them leave.

Gladys chooses to interpret Dorian's statement that «marrying her would be an incredible wickedness» as a rejection of her instead of a compliment acknowledging his insatiable desires towards her. When she asks whether she has correctly interpreted the meaning of his words, Dorian echoes her own interpretation back to her – if you want it to mean I don't love you then that's what it will mean. She told Dorian that she doesn't believe any of the wicked, evil stories about him and that if he has any troubles she would gladly share them. David has no illusions about Dorian. He is certain that Dorian is evil and wicked and it would be over his dead body that Gladys would marry Dorian. Perhaps Gladys is the one who needs the magic potion to help her see Dorian for what he is and not what she wants him to be. Her dilemma is exactly Sibyl's but Gladys decodes the lesson in the drawing: Sir Tristan is not the knight of her dreams. David is. When she closes the book she ends what she unwittingly had started earlier that day when she uncovered for Dorian the memory and the music of Sibyl Vane. Or has she? It is Dorian who left the book open to that exact page. He seems to be surrounding himself with memories of Sibyl. Though Dorian tries not to harm Gladys his «incredible wickedness» becomes apparent at a dinner party attended by Lord Henry and the adoring couple, David and Gladys. The hostess laments the fact that Dorian has never married and that she will take it upon herself to find Dorian a suitable wife. Dorian responds that he already has a prospective bride in mind if she'll have him. He looks across the table and asks Gladys to marry him. She agrees. What makes this doubly wicked is the fact that Dorian has just murdered Basil.

Dorian's proposal of marriage undoubtedly has brought back the memory of his relationship with Sibyl – only this time Dorian speaks his intentions directly to his intended. Gladys recreated Sibyl's music and in doing so she recreates the emotions and feelings Dorian had experienced once before in his life. There is even an experiment of sorts that simulates the test he put to Sibyl. After an evening out, Dorian escorts Gladys to her home. He takes her key, opens her front door and steps aside to let her enter. Gladys begins to enter when she suddenly turns around and tells Dorian she wants to get married within a fortnight – nothing fancy, a few friends, etc. Why does she suddenly desire an immediate wedding? The answer lies in what she saw as she entered her uncle's house. Across the foyer an open door reveals a bedroom. We see the bed, a nude sculpture situated on the headboard, and a suggestive Beardsleyesque picture hanging over the bed. Gladys reaches towards Dorian and embraces him. There is no cathectic kiss. In fact the moment seems awkward. Gladys hurries into the house and closes the door while Dorian heads for his carriage and orders the driver to take him to «Blue Gate Fields». The surprised look on the driver's face betrays his disapproval and we next find Dorian on the «road to forgetfulness» in the brothel. But he will not be able to forget because Sibyl continues to haunt him since it is here that Jim Vane enters back into Dorian's life – drawn into the brothel by the «Prelude».

Even after Jim's accidental death during the pheasant hunt at the Selby estate, Dorian begins to fear that his intentions towards Gladys may have a deadly consequence for her. He decides to leave her. When he tells her «Goodbye», the music of Sibyl's song is heard in the background. For Dorian the moment brings back the feelings he had in the past. He realizes that if he stays with Gladys she will be harmed and he must not make of her a «prisoner in a cage of gold». Gladys does not under-

stand that Dorian is saying his final goodbye to her until she, like Sibyl before her, receives a letter from Dorian.

«Once I said that if I were to marry you it would be an incredible wickedness. You thought that it was a way of saying I didn't love you. You must know that I love you more than anything in the world but I can only bring disaster on those who love me. If you knew how I have already wronged you, you would turn from me in horror. You will never see me again. Try to remember me, dear Gladys – without bitterness. This is the only good thing I have ever done.» Gladys reads the letter privately, to herself, but the music that accompanies her reading is a now melancholy-sounding fragmented version of the formerly passionate «Prelude».

Back in the locked room which contains the monstrous portrait, Dorian is curious to see whether his one good deed of sparing Gladys is reflected in the painting. The narrator informs us that, «It was there. Almost imperceptible, but it was there – in the eyes. There was hope.» As he walks towards the portrait he stumbles over the childhood toy he had knocked over on the day he first entered this room in order to hide the picture – the knight on his horse. Dorian now bends over and picks up the knight and places the figure on the table. As he does this we hear the familiar strains of Dorian's good and virtuous music. Dorian desperately tries to decide how to right the wrongs of his life and when he decides to destroy the picture by plunging the same knife he used to murder Basil through the heart of the portrait, the music to the «Prelude» accompanies his thoughts and actions. Dorian dies to the minor strains of the «Prelude» that had haunted him from his first desire to remain young and never change. But as Dorian dies the portrait begins to morph back to its original form. As all of these changes take place the strains of the «Prelude», and the melody to Sibyl's song, «Goodbye, Little Yellow Bird» are conjuring up past memories. Lord Henry, David and Gladys enter the room and find the decayed remains of Dorian on the floor in front of the portrait. Dorian's portrait is restored, his virtuous melody returns, the satisfaction of the musical cadence – longed for from the first moment it accompanied Dorian's appearance at the piano and in a way emulating the sustained harmonic tension of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* – finally reaches its long awaited resolution.

This essay began with Freud's pupil Theodor Reik and his contribution to psychoanalytic methods – that is, listening to musical references as a means to interpret and shed insight into one's unconscious. But this essay will end with Freud himself and the defenses he built up in order to «harden himself against the emotional appeal of music. He became more and more convinced that he had to keep his reason unclouded and his emotions in abeyance. He developed an increasing reluctance to surrendering to the dark power of music» [Reik 4]. Freud «fought against the effects of music because a rationalistic, or perhaps an analytic, trait in him could not tolerate not knowing why he was affected. The most important part of his statement is the admission that he is or was affected by music. One assumes that he turned away from the emotional impressions of music and that the explanation of this attitude, the pointing to a rationalistic or analytic trait, is a secondary one – we would say, itself a kind of rationalization. It is likely that this turning away, this diversion was the result of an act of will in the interest of self-defense and that it was the more energetic and violent, the more emotional effects of music appeared undesirable to him» [Reik 4]. What was desirable to him was his attaining professorship at the University of Vienna. And it is here that a work of art, a painting, came to his rescue.

From 1897 to 1900 Freud tried repeatedly to be awarded this coveted position that he said, «elevates the physician in our society into a demigod for his patients». «The convoluted story of Freud's academic advancement throws a lurid light on the paths to preferment – at once labyrinthine and cozy. Originality was not necessarily an impediment, merit not necessarily a prerequisite. Only connections, known as *Protektion*, could guarantee professional progress. Freud had been a *Privatdozent*. In 1897 the seven-man committee appointed to nominate him supported him unanimously. The medical faculty endorsed the recommendation by a vote of 22 to 10. The Ministry of Education did nothing. Watching silently, Freud witnessed the parade of promotion pass him by year after year» [Gay 136].

«Then, late in 1901, Freud veered about. Expressing disgust and recording conscious feelings of guilt, he moved from passivity to activity. The results were rapid and spectacular: on February 22, 1902, the emperor signed the decree giving Freud the title Professor Extraordinarius» [Gay 137].

What «propelled him onto the slippery slope of seeking *Protektion*? ‘I decided to break with strict virtue and take appropriate steps, just like other mortals’» [Gay 137]. He enlisted the assistance of a friend and patient—the baroness Marie Ferstel. «She maneuvered to be introduced to the minister of education and persuaded him to promise a professorship to ‘the physician who had given her back her health.’ The bribe, Freud reported, was a ‘modern painting’ by Emil Orlik for the gallery the minister was planning to establish. If, Freud commented sardonically, ‘a certain Bocklin’ (presumably more desirable than a mere Orlik) had been in Marie Ferstel’s possession rather than in her aunt’s, ‘I would have been appointed three months earlier... If I had taken these few steps three years ago, I would have been appointed three years ago, and spared myself quite a bit’» [Gay 138]. Freud «had at last secured the professorship he had coveted and deserved for years. From then on, Freud would never again be without social stature, public resonance, ardent followers, and closet controversies» [Gay 136].

The Bocklin that Freud wanted to be used for the bribe is «*Die Burgruine*», «The Ruined Castle». Instead an Emil Orlik painting had been exchanged. In my research to this date I have not been able to locate which Orlik painting was traded for Freud. I have not given up on my quest to uncover the painting. Though Orlik drew many pictures of famous people, (Mahler’s portrait is one of his most famous along with Schopenhauer, Michelangelo and even a few self portraits), I have uncovered one curiously interesting Orlik picture—however, it remains closeted in Vienna in the *Bildarchiv der Oesterreichischen Nationalbibliothek*. «Small wonder, too, [since] Vienna is often described as the city in which psychoanalysis needed to be invented. Not that Freud and his followers met with much gratitude from the Viennese themselves who, in so far as they took notice of his theories at all, regarded the great analyst’s views on subjects such as infantile sexuality and the origins of neurosis with a mixture of incredulity and horror» [Vergo 15].

Orlik’s drawing is «A Picture of Freud Reading». It captures the intense spirit of how Freud threw himself into his work – «the denied and rejected tendencies against whose influence Freud built up such strong defenses did not disappear, but left traces in him, and found different and distant expressions. Some of them, for instance, speculative inclinations and interests in early history worked their way, in his old age, from the depth into which they were banished to the surface» [Reik 6].

«Freud’s confession that he did not often respond to music does not mean that he was insensitive to its message, but that he fought against his own sensitiveness to its lure and language, and this voluntary sacrifice benefited his fine ability to hear the unconscious process, helped him to develop the sense for the rhythm of subterranean movements of the mind»... and its music [Reik 6].

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# Masculinity and its origins: Men are from Mars – Not exactly

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A recent book in the popular press suggested that males and females arose on ‘different planets’ – that men are from Mars and women from Venus (Gray, 1992), a notion theoretically different from current formulations of gender development.

Gender identity involves an individual’s relationship to gender as a social category (Sherif, 1982) with the internalization of gender relations believed to be a building block of personality (Kaufman, 1994). However, the stereotypic dichotomization of traits as «male» or «female», once thought to reflect a «real» distinction, is now believed to be perceived through a cultural lens (Bem, 1993). Theorists have suggested that multiple cultural configurations about gender are possible (Geertz, 1973). These configurations are linked to divergent construals of the self (Markus & Ketayama, 1991) arising during development as part of identity formation and linked to the process of identification.

Identification is defined as an acquired cognitive response within the psyche, with the content of the response containing some of the attributes, motives, characteristics, and affective states of a model. These responses may not be conscious or easily verbalized (Kagan, 1958). The concept originated in the psychoanalytic notion that males come to identify with their fathers and females with their mothers – the parents being assumed to be the earliest and most important identificands. According to Kaufman (1994), the family gives a personalized stamp to the categories, values, ideals and beliefs of a society in which one’s sex is a fundamental aspect of self-definition.

There is a long-standing controversy concerning the process by which gender identification emerges. According to Freud (1959), who presumed that the primary cause of gender identification was biological development, the early love of both sexes for the mother evolves into the Oedipus Complex, a triangular situation with the father. Overcoming the Oedipus Complex is the prerequisite for a normal adulthood in which males identify with their fathers and females with their mothers. In Freudian Theory, irregular female development produces a masculinity complex in which a woman behaves as though she were a man (Freud, 1959) or manifests envy of males in symbolic displacement. This theory has been both enlarged upon and challenged.

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In some recent formulations (e.g., Chodorow, 1989), female socialization is described as less conflicted and more continuous than the socialization of males, emerging with a concept of self as 'connected' rather than separate. Boys, like girls, are surrounded in early childhood by females but boys, unlike girls, must come to identify with men. Thus, boys must reject any semblance of femininity, distrust anything female and adhere instead to a rigid notion of masculinity; a reaction formation that is not necessary for girls to identify with women (Hartley, 1959).

In research in the 1940's, Roper (1946) obtained some results that seemed to support the psychoanalytic description of gender development and female envy of men. Roper asked his subjects «If you could be born over again, would you rather be a man or a woman?» In a national representative sample, 25% of females said that they would rather be born a man, whereas only 3% of males said that they would rather be born a woman, implying that there was greater male satisfaction with being male than female satisfaction with being female. On the other hand, women who wished to be men did not perceive men as superior, but rather tended to hold men in lower esteem than other women did; these women felt that men got all the 'breaks' and had all the 'fun'. Roper concluded that, to some extent, it was still a man's world, even in women's minds.

More recent studies have consistently demonstrated an increase in satisfaction with female gender identity (Solomon, Minton, Calano, Raber, & Rapoport-Taylor, 1985; Minton, Solomon, Stokes, Charash, & Kendzior, 1999). In these studies, fewer females reported a wish to be reborn male and females perceived their sex as incorporating the positive aspects of varied dimensions of personality, reflecting a perception of women consistent with an androgynous ideal.

At the same time, traditional norms for the male role which have emphasized competition, status, aggression, and emotional inhibition have been questioned (Pleck, 1981). Traditional masculinity is now treated with suspicion and even hostility in some of our cultural discourse. Much of what is associated with masculinity hinges on a man's capacity to exercise power and control, although the individual lives of men often speak of a different reality. Many of the forms of privilege also cause men to suffer pain, isolation, and alienation. In addition, although most men cannot possibly measure up to the dominant ideals of manhood, these maintain a powerful and often unconscious presence in men's lives (Kaufman, 1994).

Gender stereotypes summarize and organize what the individual believes about the personal attributes of women and men (Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1993); however stereotypes may related more to ideals than to the experience of self and the self-construct. Recent studies (Solomon et al., 1985; Minton, Solomon, Stokes, Charash, & Kendzior, 1999) have measured the sex that participants 'wished to be if reborn'. This may be a measure more inclusive of the positive aspects of the individual experience and of the self. The present study questioned whether male identity had undergone a change over time in this context. And if so, how did male/female identity relate to parental identification (in other words, identification relating to imitation of another person's behavior, mannerisms, beliefs and values with the presumed motivation being to experience desired goal states of the model, Kagan, 1958). In the present study, identification was operationally defined as the internal representation of parental-child perceived similarity.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

An ethnically diverse group of 180 females and 129 males participated in the study. Female and male participants had an average age of 27.5 and 30 years respectively and were drawn from a public coeducational university and various businesses and corporations in New York City.

## *Procedure*

Each participant was given a printed booklet. In each booklet, the participant was first asked questions about demographic characteristics. The participant was then asked if he/she would prefer to be reborn as a 'male' or as a 'female'. The participant was told to turn to a designated page according to his/her preference (to be reborn as a male/ or female) and then to check as many reasons for his/her rebirth preference as he/she wished from a given list (one for male-preference participants and the other for female-preference participants). The list included: 1) biological-anatomical characteristics (e.g., men/women do not/do menstruate), 2) social-conventional beliefs (e.g., men/women get away with a lot more), and 3) personality/behavior trait adjectives drawn from an instrument of items differentiating men and women (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968). In each case, the items were phrased in terms of the 'desirable' pole of the dimension (e.g., men/women are self-confident). The male-preference and female-preference lists contained the same items (with the exception of the following: do not/do menstruate; do not/do bear children; masculine/feminine). The total number of descriptors on each list was 50. On the final page of the questionnaire, the participant was asked to respond to the Eysenck Personality Inventory, a self report measure containing 3 subscales (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968): Neuroticism, Extroversion, and Lie (social desirability).

In addition, each participant was given an instrument containing a series of items which could represent success in our society (e.g., 'having a happy family life') suggested by Roper (1993) and then asked to rank order the items in 3 ways: first, according to his/her own belief of personal success, and then how he/she believed his/her father and his/her mother (with parental order counterbalanced) would each rank order these items.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nearly all the male participants (96%) wished to be reborn male. In contrast, 81% of the female participants wished to be reborn female. It appears that women still experience some dissatisfaction (although less than in the 1940's) with being female in American society. Men, on the other hand, still remain satisfied with their sex.

Major qualities chosen by men as reasons to be reborn male (Table 3) were biological: men have physical strength, do not menstruate, and do not bear children. Consistent with the revisions of Chodorow and others of psychoanalytic theory, this seemed to reflect more a wish not to be reborn female, than an admiration of the stereotypical or idealized male instrumental qualities, such as independence, aggression, and emotional strength. Overall, ironically, few men choosing to be reborn male attributed their choice to such supposedly desirable 'Martian' qualities (Gray, 1992) as self-sufficient, not dependent, not easily influenced, or able to make decisions easily.

The comparable group of females selected an instrumental and expressive androgynous mix of characteristics as reasons for wanting to be female (Tables 1 & 2). The responses included, as reasons for wanting to be female, such expressive characteristics as: women express feelings, and are aware of feelings, but also such instrumental characteristics as: women are ambitious and independent.

The analysis of identification (Tables 3 - 6) revealed the following: women who wanted to be reborn male, presumably suffering from Freud's concept of 'penis envy', actually seemed to have values similar to their own mothers' values. Contrary to Freud's formulation, their values were not close to those of their fathers. In addition, their mothers' and fathers' values were perceived as dissimilar. This was startlingly different from what one would predict from the Freudian theory of identification based on penis envy. Unfortunately, the male counterparts of this group, men who wanted to be reborn female, could not be included in the analysis since their numbers were so small (reflecting male satisfaction with their sex, as noted above).

There was no difference in Neuroticism, Extroversion, or in Social Desirability between any of the groups.

Both groups of participants who wanted to be reborn as they were, women who wanted to be reborn female and men who wanted to be reborn male, seemed to have values similar to those of both parents. Males satisfied with their sex, in particular, saw their parents' values as consistent with one another. The pattern of results was not exactly that predicted by Freudian theory or by the modern reinterpretation of Chodorow and others. Instead, it seemed that both male and female participants who were satisfied with their sex reflected an inter-generational transmission of values.

Finally, summarizing the results on both measures, the males who wanted to be males rejected the basic physical nature of femaleness for themselves, yet still identified with the basic values of the first females in their lives, their mothers.

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TABLE 1

*Qualities Chosen as a Reason for Sex Preference by 50% or More of Females Who Wanted to be Reborn Female*

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**Biological Qualities**

Bear children (63%)

**Instrumental Qualities**

Logical (62%)

Adaptable (61%)

Self Sufficient (60%)

Independent (56%)

Emotional Strength (55 %)

Ambitious (54%)

**Expressive Qualities**

Aware of feelings (84%)

Gentle (69%)

Feminine (68%)

Express feelings (63%)

**Social-Conventional**

None

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TABLE 2

*Qualities Chosen as a Reason for Sex Preference by 50% or More of Females Who Wanted to be Reborn Male*

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**Biological Qualities**

Do not menstruate (77%)

Do not bear children (57%)

**Instrumental Qualities**

None

**Expressive Qualities**

None

**Social-Conventional**

Reach high positions in business (74%)

Get away with a lot more (66%)

Not be sexually harassed (60%)

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TABLE 3  
*Qualities Chosen as a Reason for Sex Preference by 50% or More of Males Who Wanted to be Reborn Male*

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|                               |
|-------------------------------|
| <b>Biological Qualities</b>   |
| Physical Strength (65%)       |
| Do not menstruate (60%)       |
| Do not bear children (54%)    |
| <b>Instrumental Qualities</b> |
| None                          |
| <b>Expressive Qualities</b>   |
| None                          |
| <b>Social-Conventional</b>    |
| None                          |

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TABLE 4  
*Females Wishing to be Female: Spearman's Rank-Order Correlations Between Ranked Values of Self and Mother's and Father's Perceived Ranking of Values*

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| Value              | Self-Mother Rho | Self-Father Rho | Mother-Father Rho |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Happy Family Life  | .408**          | .409**          | .295**            |
| Control            | .324**          | .200*           | .306**            |
| Rich               | .414**          | .381**          | .463**            |
| Good Relationships | .384**          | .298**          | .351**            |
| Achievement        | .384**          | .324**          | .406**            |
| Good Job           | .377**          | .296**          | .197*             |
| Good Friends       | .298**          | .305**          | n.s.              |
| High-ranking Job   | .444**          | .228*           | .198*             |
| Intellectual ach   | .303**          | .470**          | .257**            |

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Note: 1. For ease of perusal, only significant correlations are listed with numerical values.  
 2. Significance levels are as follows: n.s. not significant; \* p<.05; \*\*p<.01

TABLE 5  
*Females Wishing to be Male: Spearman's Rank-Order Correlations Between Ranked Values of Self and Mother's and Father's Perceived Ranking of Values*

| Value              | Self-Mother Rho | Self-Father Rho | Mother-Father Rho |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Happy Family Life  | .427*           | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| Control            | .360*           | n.s.            | .443*             |
| Rich               | .426*           | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| Good Relationships | .720**          | n.s.            | .406*             |
| Achievement        | .607**          | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| Good Job           | .566**          | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| Good Friends       | .650**          | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| High-ranking Job   | .461*           | n.s.            | n.s.              |
| Intellectual ach   | n.s.            | n.s.            | n.s.              |

Note: 1. For ease of perusal, only significant correlations are listed with numerical values.  
 2. Significance levels are as follows: n.s. not significant; \* p<.05; \*\*p<.01  
 3. N=32 (with small differences for specific analyses)

TABLE 6  
*Males Wishing to be Male: Spearman's Rank-Order Correlations Between Ranked Values of Self and Mother's and Father's Perceived Ranking of Values*

| Value              | Self-Mother Rho | Self-Father Rho | Mother-Father Rho |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Happy Family Life  | .380**          | .439**          | .430**            |
| Control            | .356**          | .416**          | .431**            |
| Rich               | .321**          | .391**          | .401**            |
| Good Relationships | .393**          | .356**          | .548**            |
| Achievement        | .401**          | .421**          | .466**            |
| Good Job           | .480**          | .377**          | .386**            |
| Good Friends       | .330**          | n.s.            | .342**            |
| High-ranking Job   | .520**          | .454**          | .426**            |
| Intellectual ach   | .581**          | .594**          | .526**            |

Note: 1. For ease of perusal, only significant correlations are listed with numerical values.  
 2. Significance levels are as follows: n.s. not significant; \* p<.05; \*\*p<.01  
 3. N=116 (with small differences for specific analyses)

# George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891): A version of Ernest Jones's «Gaseous Fertilization Complex»?

ANNE HALL (\*)

In an essay entitled «The Madonna's Conception through the Ear: A Contribution to the Relation between Aesthetics and Religion» that was first published in 1914, the British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones reads the legend of the immaculate conception as a manifestation of an infantile theory of procreation that he calls the «gaseous fertilization complex», in which «we have a Father incestuously impregnating his daughter [...] by expelling intestinal gas, with the help of the genital organ, into her lower alimentary orifice, one through which her child is then born»:

In the legend, the site of exit is completely omitted, and that of ingress is denoted by the receptive organ of music, an orifice with fewer sensual implications than any other in the whole body, than the navel, the mouth, or even the eye. What more innocent symbol exists than that gentle messenger of hope and love, the dove? And in the tender breath of the dove, reinforced by the solemn words of the Archangel, who would recognize the repulsive material thus symbolized, with its odour replaced by the fragrance of lilies, its moisture and warmth replaced by the aureole of light and fire, and its sound by the gentle cooing [...].<sup>1</sup>

For Jones «the infantile complex concerned with gaseous fertilization is integrally related to the castration thoughts»:

The total complex is a characteristically ambivalent one, corresponding with the child's ambivalent attitude towards his father, and its manifestations express at once a denial of his power and an affirmation of his supreme might; his impotency and his omnipotence. Through the conception of the male organ as a flatus-emitting agency these two opposite components become fused into a perfect unity. (p. 353)

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Jones, «The Madonna's Conception through the Ear: A Contribution to the Relation between Aesthetics and Religion», *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth, 1951) 266-357. Subsequent references to this edition are in the text.

This attitude towards the Father has «numerous feminine, anal, masochistic and homosexual implications» (p. 355). Jones illustrates his article with a reproduction of Martini's «Annunciation», but I have chosen a reproduction of Lorenzo Lotto's «Annunciation» (Figure 1), because it shows the dove/father approaching the Madonna from behind.

My paper will focus on *Peter Ibbetson*, a semi-autobiographical first novel published in 1891 by the fifty-six year old half-English, half-French *Punch* cartoonist George du Maurier, which amounts to a case of the gaseous fertilization complex *avant la lettre*, since it pre-dates Jones's coining of the term by twenty-three years. The novel, less popular today than du Maurier's second novel, *Trilby*, is usually read as a suitably chaste Victorian love story between Peter and the female protagonist Mary, Duchess of Towers. However a short summary should suffice to show that *Peter Ibbetson* is in no sense a love story between two separate beings, but instead a rather «transparent» case of gender trouble.

In the opening scene Peter returns with his parents from «a dingy house in the heart of London»<sup>2</sup> to the house in Passy outside Paris where he had been born five years earlier, and the next day experiences «the happiest day in all my outer life!» (p. 14) when he discovers «a small French wheelbarrow» (p. 16) in the garden. His mother plays the harp and piano and on evenings when his father is home, his father's singing inspires a recurring dream. In the company of his neighbor and best friend Mimsey Seraskier, whose father is also musical and also «very much away from his family» (p. 29), Peter spends seven «too-happy» years in Passy (p. 57) until his father and mother die in quick succession, and he is taken back to England and adopted by his Uncle Ibbetson.

In his adult life as an architect's assistant in Pentonville, Peter slips into a near-suicidal melancholy, until the day he sees the Duchess of Towers during a musical performance at a society gathering; he states that «at the sight of that lady a new interest came into my life» (p. 142). Returning to Passy on holiday, Peter discovers that everything has changed, though he glimpses the Duchess of Towers passing by in a carriage and that night, sees her again in his first «true dream» in which everything in Passy is as it was; indeed she instructs him on the art of «'dreaming true'» that she learned from her father. When he returns to London «'dreaming true'» becomes «the real business» of Peter's life, and he soon becomes «a professed expert – a master» (p. 187).

He eventually meets the duchess again in his «outer life», and learns that Mary, Duchess of Towers is none other than the grown-up Mimsey Seraskier of his childhood; they discover they have been having the same «'double dream, common to us both!'» (p. 204), however Mary refuses to appear as an adult in Peter's dreams until after he has killed his adoptive father Colonel Ibbetson, who claims to be his real father. Once Peter has been convicted of the murder and is sentenced to the death penalty the adult duchess appears in his true dream to inform him that the sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment, and for the next twenty-eight years, the pair meet in their joint true dream each night in «Magna sed Apta», «for so we had called the new home and palace of art [Mary] had added on to 'Parva sed Apta', the home of her childhood» (p. 255).

Thanks to a tune Mary hums one evening, which is as familiar to Peter as «God save the Queen», the pair eventually find «what we wanted to find» (p. 286) – that on the side of their musical fathers they are distant cousins. Indeed Peter even concedes that «each was, in a way, but a seeming illusion of the other's brain» (p. 275), and the last page of the novel refers to «these voluminous and hastily-penned reminiscences of *Mary's* [emphasis added] all of them written in the cipher we invented together in our dream – a very transparent cipher when once you have got the key» (p. 344).

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<sup>2</sup> George du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson* (New York: Heritage, 1963) 12. Subsequent references to this edition are in the text.

The cipher Peter and Mary invent together in their dream must be put in the context of the «language» that Gogo and Mimsey, as Peter and Mary used to be called, spoke as children. For Mimsey, «who was full of resource, invented a new language, or rather two, which we called Frankingle and Inglefrank, respectively. They consisted in anglicizing French nouns and verbs and then conjugating and pronouncing them Englishly, or *vice versa*» (p. 34):

For instance, it was very cold, and the school-room window was open, so she would say in Frankingle –

«Dispeach yourself to ferm the feneeter, Gogo. It geals to pier-fend! we shall be inrhumed!» or else, if I failed to immediately understand – «Gogo, il frise a splitter les stones – maque aste et chute le vindeau; mais chute-le donc vite! Je snize déjà!» which was Inglefrank. (p. 35)

The example Peter gives is based on the French expression «il gèle à pierre fender» – «it is cold enough to split a stone», which refers to symbolic castration insofar as horse imagery is prevalent in this novel, and one meaning of «stones» is «horse testicles». The fact that Peter's name at birth was «Pierre Pasquier» – «Pasquier» is phonetically equivalent to «not what is», and «Pierre» means both «Peter» and «stone» – suggests his vital interest in the castration thoughts.

In my opinion the very transparent cipher that Peter and Mary invent together in their dream, and in which Mary's reminiscences are written, consists in the use of literary pastiche on the one hand, and on the other the use of Frankingle and Inglefrank, the two languages Mary invented, that is to say the distortion of French by English and vice versa. My paper will decipher a few key passages of these reminiscences in order to show how du Maurier's novel is constructed, and to demonstrate the presence of the gaseous fertilization complex. Jones's remark that «Of all infantile theories of procreation that persist in the Unconscious there is perhaps not one more repellent than that described above» (p. 355) suggests why it should be especially liable to find expression in a ciphered form.

As mentioned above, on the morning he returns to Passy with his parents, Peter experiences the happiest day in all his outer life. He finds a small toy-wheelbarrow in an old shed at the end of the garden, and spends enchanted hours wheeling brickbats from the stable to the fowl-house and back again, under the approving eyes of genial French workmen (Figure 2). Peter looks forward «with happy confidence to an endless succession of such hours in the future»; however the next day he makes a discovery that he relates in a pastiche of poems by Browning, Wordsworth, and William Morris:

But next morning, though the weather was as fine, and the wheelbarrow and the brickbats and the genial workmen were there, and all the scents and sights and sounds were the same, the first fine careless rapture was not to be caught again, and the glory and the freshness had departed.

Thus did I, on the very dawning of life, reach at a single tide the high-water-mark of my earthly bliss – never to be reached again by me on this side of the ivory gate – and discover that to make the perfection of human happiness endure there must be something more than a sweet French garden, a small French wheelbarrow, and a nice little English boy who spoke French and had the love of approbation – a fourth dimension is required.

I found it in due time. (p. 16)

A brief look at the texts that are being pastiched is essential to decipher this passage.

«The glory and the freshness» echoes the opening stanza of Wordsworth's famous «Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood». Peter's use of the phrase «reach [...] the high-water-mark» constitutes a second reference to this ode, insofar as the expression comes from Emerson's *English Traits*. Meanwhile du Maurier has borrowed the phrase «the first fine careless rapture» from the second stanza of Browning's «Home-Thoughts, from Abroad». Yet

Wordsworth is also curiously present in Browning's «Home-Thoughts», if we read the poem the way Daniel Karlin suggests.<sup>3</sup>

For the phrase «The first fine careless rapture», which du Maurier borrows from Browning and joins to Wordsworth's «the glory and the freshness», describes the wise thrush who sings each song twice over, and this poem, as Karlin points out, «explicitly invokes Wordsworth's 'Hark! 'tis the Thrush.'» Indeed Karlin goes on to state his guess that Browning knew both «Hark! 'tis the Thrush» and Wordsworth's «Prelude» to his *Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years*, which opens with the same image of the thrush, and thus «might really have thought of [Wordsworth] as singing his song twice over». Finally, the expressions «due time» and «ivory gate» echo the fourth stanza of the «Apology» to William Morris's *Earthly Paradise*.

In order to appreciate these pastiches, and to perceive the relevance of the gaseous fertilization complex, a second element of du Maurier's cipher must now be addressed: the distortion of English by French and vice versa. For a «French wheelbarrow» is a «brouette» – a word that refers to a feminine erotic position in slang.<sup>4</sup> On the happiest day of all his outer life, then, and thanks to genial French workmen, the young Peter Ibbetson discovers a feminine sexual position.

The ciphered anal erotic nature of the wheelbarrow scene inevitably seeps over into the lyric poetry that it pastiches. Starting with Browning's assimilation of the lyric poet, perhaps Wordsworth in particular, to a «wise thrush» perched at the edge of the bent spray of a blossomed pear-tree that leans and scatters blossoms and dewdrops on the clover, it must be noted that the Latin word for «thrush» is «turmus musicus» and thus the poem can be read, in this context, as presenting an image of defecation. Rereading the opening stanza of Wordsworth's ode, which ends with the line «The things which I have seen I now can see no more», with this image in mind, one notes that «common» means not only «familiar; usual; met with frequently» but also «not refined; vulgar; low; coarse», and also that in the French slang expression «amateur de terre jaune», which refers to a homosexual, «terre jaune» or «yellow earth» means «sodomy».<sup>5</sup>

The pastiche of Emerson suggests that although Peter reaches the high-water-mark of his earthly bliss in the wheelbarrow scene, intellectual high-water-marks can still be attained: it suffices «the singer of an empty day» that his «murmuring rhyme/Beats with light wing against the ivory gate»; similarly Browning's «wise thrush [...] sings each song twice over», confident that he can «recapture/The first fine careless rapture!», for «though the fields look rough with hoary dew/All will be gay when noontide wakes anew/The buttercups, the little children's dower». «Twice over» is phonetically equivalent to «twice of air» when pronounced «Frenchly»; the pun implicitly equates song or «murmuring rhyme» with flatulence (in this same vein the «wise thrush's» «ode» evokes «odor», and du Maurier borrows from the section «An Apology» to *The Earthly Paradise*).

If the literary pastiches embedded in the wheelbarrow scene tend to identify the young Peter with Browning's «wise thrush», a few pages further on in the novel, Peter explicitly likens his «gay and jovial father» (p. 24) to a nightingale:

[...] [As] he waited «for his ship to come home», he sang only to amuse his wife, as they say the nightingale does; and to ease himself of superfluous energy, and to charm the servants, [...] and all and everybody who cared to listen, and last and least (and most!) myself. (p. 25; Figure 3)

Borrowing lines from Alexander Pope's «Universal Prayer», Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, and Wordsworth's «O Nightingale! thou surely art», Peter goes on to apostrophize the nightingale in the following terms:

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Karlin, introduction, *The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse* (London: Penguin, 1997) lxx-lxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> «Brouette [...] 2. Brouette (de Zanzibar, chinoise, etc.), position érotique dans laquelle la femme, s'appuyant au sol sur les mains, joue le rôle de la brouette, l'homme la tenant par les jambes tout en pratiquant le coït», Jean-Paul Colin and Jean-Pierre Mével, *Dictionnaire de l'argot* (Paris: Larousse, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> «Terre jaune. 1. Sodomie. Amateur de terre jaune, homosexuel», *Dictionnaire de l'argot*.

Oh, Nightingale! whether thou singest thyself, or, better still, if thy voice be not in thy throat, but in thy fiery heart and subtle brain, and thou makest songs for the singing of many others, blessed be thy name! The very sound of it is sweet in every clime and tongue: Nightingale, Rossignol, Usignuolo, Bulbul! (p. 27; Figure 4)

My handout reproduces the relevant passages from Pope's «Prayer» and Browne's *Religio Medici*, which introduces the bird metaphor in the context of religion. Finally, like Pope in his «Prayer», Wordsworth uses the «thou» form to apostrophize a nightingale, and so du Maurier's pastiche conflates the three texts, replacing «Father of all! [...] Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!» by «Nightingale, Rossignol, Usignuolo, Bulbul!»<sup>6</sup>

Just as Peter's feminine identification hinges on the ciphered meaning of «French wheelbarrow» or «brouette», «rossignol», the French word for «nightingale», functions as a point of exchange between the father's actual role in procreation, and the role that the fantasy of gaseous fertilization assigns to him. For where «rossignol» refers to the male member in nineteenth-century erotic slang, in the context of farriery, or veterinary medicine, it designates a hole pierced between the tail and the lower alimentary orifice of a broken-winded horse, in the erroneous belief that it facilitates respiration.<sup>7</sup>

These parental serenades inspire «a transcendent dream of some interest and importance to mankind», «But», Peter continues, «many years of my life passed away before I was able to explain and account for it»:

I had but to turn my face to the wall, and soon I found myself in company with a lady who had white hair and a young face – a very beautiful young face.

Sometimes I walked with her, hand in hand – I being quite a small child – and together we fed innumerable pigeons who lived in a tower by a winding stream that ended in a water-mill. It was too lovely, and I would wake.

Sometimes we went into a dark place, where there was a fiery furnace with many holes, and many people working and moving about – among them a man with white hair and a young face, like the lady, and beautiful red heels to his shoes. And under his guidance I would contrive to make in the furnace a charming little cocked hat of colored glass – a treasure! And the sheer joy thereof would wake me.

Sometimes the white-haired lady and I would sit together at a square box from which she made lovely music, and she would sing my favorite song – a song that I adored. But I always woke before this song came to an end, on account of the too insupportably intense bliss I felt on hearing it; and all I could remember when awake were the words «triste – comment – sale».

The air, which I knew so well in my dream, I could not recall. (p. 27-28)

It is only after committing parricide – killing his adoptive father Uncle Ibbetson, and receiving the death sentence commuted to life imprisonment – that Peter manages to see the adult Mary in their joint «true dream», and to recall the air that haunts him.

Indeed one evening Mary tries to «lull [Peter] awake» with her «favorite tune»:

As I listened with rapt ears and closed eyes, wonderful scenes passed before my mental vision: the beautiful white-haired lady of my childish dreams, leading a small female

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<sup>6</sup> «Fiery heart», the expression du Maurier borrows from Wordsworth, elides to «fart» and indeed Wordsworth puts the words in quotation marks because he actually borrowed them himself from a passage in *King Henry the Sixth, Part 3* where Queen Margaret says «What, hath thy fiery heart so parch'd thine entrails/That not a tear can fall for Rutland's death?»; «entrails» are «bowels», considered as the seat of sympathetic emotion.

<sup>7</sup> «Rossignol [...] 10. Terme de maréchal. Nom donné à un trou percé entre l'anus et l'origine de la queue du cheval poussif par des maréchaux ignorants, dans la fausse idée de faciliter la respiration» in Paul-Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Monte-Carlo: Cap, 1971).

child by the hand, and that child was myself; the pigeons and their tower, the stream and the water-mill; the white-haired young man with red heels to his shoes; a very fine lady, very tall, stout, and middle-aged, magnificently dressed in brocaded silk; a park with lawns and alleys and trees cut into trim formal shapes; a turreted castle – all kind of charming scenes and people of another age and country. (p. 282)

My interpretation of the wheelbarrow scene is confirmed by the fact that Peter is indeed «a small *female* child» in the transcendent dream of his childhood.

The «very fine lady, very tall, stout, and middle-aged» is Peter and Mary's common great-great-grandmother Gatienne, also nicknamed «*la belle Verrière*» or «the fair glassmaker» because she manages her husband's glass factory after his death from a wolf-bite while she is pregnant with the twin-daughters from whom Peter and Mary descend. It was she who composed the air that haunts Peter; its actual title is not «triste – comment – sale» but «Le Chant du Triste Commensal», which is, I argue elsewhere, a ciphered reference to Rossini's «Willow Song» and beyond that to Gautier's poem «Contralto», inspired by the twin themes of the contralto voice of his current mistress, and a statue of a sleeping hermaphrodite.

And who was Gatienne but «the tallest and handsomest woman in Anjou, of an imperious will and very masculine character, [...] a typical, managing, business-like French woman» (p. 291) who «played her fiddle with its body downward, [...] as though it had been an undersized 'cello'» (p. 289) – a fairly clear-cut figure, I would argue, of the phallic mother or phallic «mare» if we adopt the bilingual horse pun that is used throughout the novel. Where the name «Gatienne» evokes «gas», her second nickname «*la reine de Hongrie*» evokes castration insofar as the French word «hongre» refers to horse, animal, and by extension human castration.<sup>8</sup> (The twin from whom Mary descends also marries an officer in the Hungarian army.)

After Peter and Mary discover their kinship, Mary leaves in the flesh for the part of France where Peter's ancestors lived; in their true dream that night Gatienne's glass factory entertains them, and the words «sound» and «gas» actually appear in its description:

We sat by the magic window, and had for our entertainment, now the Verrerie de Verny le Moustier in its present state, all full of modern life, color, and sound, steam and gas, as she had seen it a few hours before; now the old château as it was a hundred years ago; dim and indistinct, as though seen by near-sighted eyes at the close of a gray, misty afternoon in late autumn through a blurred window-pane, with busy but silent shadows moving about – silent, because at first we could not hear their speech; it was too thin for our mortal ears, even in this dream within our dream! Only Gatienne, the authoritative and commanding Gatienne, was faintly audible. (p. 291-292)

The «magic window» is a feature of «Magna sed Apta» to which, pastiching two (more) bird poems – Coleridge's «Rime of the Ancient Mariner» and Keats's famous ode –, Mary introduces Peter as follows:

«Out of *this* window, from this divan, we can sit and gaze on whatever we like. What shall it be? Just now, you perceive, there is a wild and turbulent sea, with not a ship in sight. Do you hear the waves tumbling and splashing, and see the albatross? I had been reading Keats's 'Ode to the Nightingale', and was so fascinated by the idea of a lattice opening on the foam

'Of *perilous seas by faery lands forlorn*'

that I thought it would be nice to have a lattice like that myself.» (p. 249)

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<sup>8</sup> «Hongre. En parlant d'un cheval, châtré par l'enlèvement ou la destruction des testicules. [...] Par extension, homme châtré» in Littré.

Thus in *Peter Ibbetson*, literature provides windows through which Gatienne, the original glassblower and composer of the haunting air, can be seen and heard. A posthumous painting of Keats listening to a nightingale on Hampstead Heath made by the poet's friend Joseph Severn is in all points comparable to the annunciation scene (Figure 5), and would seem to lend visual support to Jones's contribution to the relation between aesthetics and religion.

As mentioned above Peter ultimately learns he was a small female child, in specific his own paternal grandmother, in his exquisite childhood dream; it was her father who taught her glassblowing and who played the tunes Peter fondly imagined he had composed himself:

The child who went about hand in hand with the white-haired lady (whose hair was only powdered) and fed the pigeons was my grandmother, Jeanne de Boismorinel (who married François Pasquier de la Marière). It was her father who wore red heels to his shoes, and made her believe she could manufacture little cocked-hats in colored glass; she had lived again in me whenever, as a child, I had dreamed that exquisite dream.

I could now evoke her at will; and, with her, many buried memories were called out of nothingness into life.

Among other wonderful things, I heard the red-heeled gentleman, M. de Boismorinel (my great-grandfather), sing beautiful old songs by Lulli and others to the spinet, which he played charmingly – a rare accomplishment in those days. And lo! these tunes were tunes that had risen oft and unbidden in my consciousness, and I had fondly imagined that I had composed them myself – little impromptus of my own. And lo, again! His voice, thin, high, nasal, but very sympathetic and musical, was that never still small voice that has been singing unremittingly for more than half a century in the unswept, ungarnished corner of my brain where all the cobwebs are. (p. 294; Figure 6)

Mary is present in *Peter Ibbetson* not only through Peter's female alter ego, but the girl who lives in Peter in his exquisite dream chooses to marry a man bearing the surname Pasquier de la Marière, decipherable as «not what is of the mare/mother – air», and an obvious variant of the author's names: Palmella du Maurier.

Du Maurier's paternal grandfather was a French glassblower who emigrated to London during the French revolution to escape debtor's prison, passed himself off as an aristocrat, married and fathered six children, was imprisoned for theft, and then passed himself off for dead and began another life in France. Du Maurier's biographer Léonée Ormond states unequivocally that «That this whole family history was complete fiction George Du Maurier never knew».<sup>9</sup> My sense that *Peter Ibbetson*, ciphered with bilingual and inter-textual references as it is, manifests the characteristically ambivalent gaseous fertilization complex, makes the biographer's assertion dubious at best.

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<sup>9</sup> Léonée Ormond, *George Du Maurier* (Pittsburg: Pittsburg, 1969) 2.

FIGURE 1



L'ANNONCIATION

FIGURE 2



LE P'TIT ANGLAIS

FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4



«O NIGHTINGALE !»

FIGURE 5



*Keats listening to the Nightingale on Hampstead Heath*, by Joseph Severn, c. 1845

FIGURE 6



THAT NEVER-STILL SMALL VOICE

# Reading Freud's readers: Peter Brook's «Freud's Masterplot» and D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*

EARL G. INGERSOLL (\*)

The intent of this brief engagement with Sigmund Freud, Peter Brooks, and D. M. Thomas is to construct a strategy of triangulation to explore readings by Brooks and Thomas of Freud's seminal essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In her foundational reading of Henry James, «Turning the Screw of Interpretation», Shoshana Felman provides a helpful paradigm for readings of literature and psychoanalysis when she argues that this binary – like most other binaries – must end by privileging psychoanalysis over literature. Felman argues for a reading of psychoanalytic texts *with* literature, foregrounding the textuality of Freud's writings, instead of their value as mines of extractable truths. As a gesture toward resisting the binary implicated in «application», the trio of Freud, Brooks, and Thomas, as readers and writers, usefully complicates the seductive coupling of literature and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, once the binary of applying psychoanalytic insights to the reading of a literary text is expanded the resulting «trio», as denoted by this essay's title, has the potential to become a quartet, here drawing in the shadowy presence of yet another reader of Freud - Jacques Lacan.

Although his book *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* appeared in 1984, Peter Brooks had already published the centerpiece of that longer study – «Freud's Masterplot» – in 1977. (It might even be argued that «Freud's Masterplot» offers a clearer and more provocative reading of Freud than the book it generated, in part because in the original essay Brooks seemed more willing to credit Lacan as Freud's most perceptive reader in the last century.) For Brooks narrative begins paradoxically with its ending, since plot presumes an action which has already completed itself. Narration is, therefore, generally a repetition of a contiguously arranged series of events, along a chain of metonymies – this-then-this-then-this. Ending, or death, is the *sine qua non* of narrative, the «flame» at which we warm ourselves, says Walter Benjamin, for it is only at death that the meaning of life is «transmissible» (Brooks 22). Similarly, when Jean-Paul Sartre sought direction for his life as a young man, he imagined the text of his death notice as the program for his life, asserting: «I became my own obituary» (qtd. in Brooks 95).

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The terms «death», «desire», and «repetition» lead Brooks back to «Freud's masterplot» for narrative – *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud's essay is unusual in several ways: unlike so much of his earlier work which drew on his analysis of upper-middle-class women, the *Beyond* grew out of Freud's struggle to understand the nightmares of shell-shocked World War I veterans whose unconscious seemed to be compulsively screening reruns of pain, rather than working in the service of the pleasure principle as an outlet for forbidden desires. Furthermore, the *Beyond* seems to be centered in the observation of an actual *child*, rather than exploring childhood through the memories of the adult analysand. In fact, although Freud the scientist suppresses the family relationship, the toddler was his own grandson, casting away and retrieving the famous spool on a string to the accompaniment of what Freud read as *fort* and *da*, or «gone» and «back».<sup>1</sup> Like the unconscious of the soldiers compulsively repeating painful nightmares, the child has constructed a scenario in which, Freud theorizes, the painfulness of the mother's withdrawal is mastered by the child who represents that abandonment as a correlative to her inevitable return. The pleasure principle of Freud's earlier theorizing gives way here to an «unpleasure» principle which he reads as a longing for the end, or death, as the promise of a return to the state of quiescence before the subject was jettisoned into the explosion of sentient excitement at birth. The compulsion to repeat follows a logic of longing for an end of desire.

Brooks is interested in Freud's «masterplot» of a compulsion to repeat, generated by a desire for the end, as a way of reading plot in narrative. With the gift of «Anna O». (Bertha Pappenheim) to Freud of the «talking cure», modern psychoanalysis has grounded itself in narrativity. Accordingly, the analysand is impelled to «work through» painful memories by an unconscious compulsion to repeat past events toward moments of recognition, or transformation, or «metaphor», in which the ghosts of the past can be forced to acknowledge their pastness and return to it in peace. Thus, repetition serves a more primitive principle than the pleasure principle, offering insistent returns in the text, binding it together, as plot moves toward the pleasure of its ending.

For Brooks narrative begins, as life does for Freud, with an arousal from quiescence, an awakening, an irritation into narrativity. As Freud posits that «the aim of all life is death», Brooks argues that narrative is drawn toward its ending by a desire for that moment at which indeterminacy will give way finally to understanding through transformation. Readers attend to narrative with an «anticipation of retrospection», Brooks claims, patiently waiting for the end, rather than «reading the last page» since they know that the ending is meaningless without the middle. The «middle» offers a series of detours, or deviances, experienced as the pleasures of «life» on the way to the end. Attending to narrative enlists readers in a «textual erotics» generated by conflicting desires: a desire for the end which offers the agency of metaphor, or transformation, vs. the desire to postpone the end, which is after all the death of narrative, and to enjoy the pleasure of those «bindings», or repetitions, along the chain of metonymies, which is the course of human events. Thus, narrative is Eros on its way toward Thanatos, or metonymy in pursuit of metaphor.

In this way Brooks offers a provocative beginning for what might be called a «New» Psychoanalytic Criticism, ironically «New» because it began almost three decades ago.<sup>2</sup> He reads Freud's *Beyond* less as a scientific demonstration of extractable truths than as a «text on textuality»,

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<sup>1</sup> In guessing that the sounds he heard were «*fort*» and «*da*» Freud is in fact *reading* the ambiguous signifiers in a «text» which Lacan's readers would interpret as representing the child's movement from the register of the Imaginary into the Symbolic register of representation. The point is that Freud may have unconsciously *misread* the child's signifiers in order to fit neatly into his theory of repetition as an effort at mastering the separation anxiety generated by the mother's absence.

<sup>2</sup> The approach initiated by theorists such as Shoshana Felman and Peter Brooks continues paradoxically to be «new» because so much of contemporary psychoanalytic criticism of literary texts seems mired in older, structuralist readings dating back at least to Ernest Jones's *Hamlet and Oedipus* in which Freud's disciple «applies» Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex to Shakespeare's Hamlet as though this literary «character» were an analysand.

construing Freud an Author, rather than a Scientist. To Brooks such a reading makes possible «a psychoanalytic criticism of the text itself that does not become – as has usually been the case – a study of the psychogenesis of the text (the author’s unconscious), the dynamics of literary response (the reader’s unconscious), or the occult motivations of the characters (postulating an ‘unconscious’ for them)» (299).

D. M. Thomas’s *The White Hotel* offers a bizarre narrative which seems to be reading Peter Brooks’s reading of «Freud’s Masterplot».<sup>3</sup> At its center the narrative is the ersatz case study written by the «Freud» who is a key player in Thomas’s novel. Lisa Erdman, the Frau Anna G. of the case study, sought Freud’s help for shortness of breath as well as pains in her left breast and pelvis, symptoms for which no physical causes could be found. Because these symptoms became most pronounced in anticipation of her husband’s return from war and the inevitable full consummation of their «white marriage» Freud leads Anna back into childhood to discover the roots of her sexual repression. In a brilliant narrative strategy Thomas crafts Lisa’s mother as an identical twin, making possible a marvelous Primal Scene in which Lisa at three witnesses her mother and uncle having intercourse *a tergo*, while her aunt looks on. Eventually we discover that Lisa’s mother and uncle died in a hotel fire, perhaps in each other’s arms, raising the distinct possibility that Lisa was fathered by her uncle. Since the deranged engineers of the Third Reich are preparing the Holocaust to frame the climax of Lisa’s story, it becomes increasingly important who fathered Lisa, her legal father being a Jew and her uncle being a Christian, like Lisa’s mother and aunt. Freud continues his analysis of Lisa, eliciting the information that as a teenager she was the victim of a sexual assault by a gang of rebellious sailors who taunted her as a Jewess while forcing her to perform fellatio on one after another of them. Thomas’s «Freud» even goes so far as to intimate that Lisa may be attracted to women as he attempts to explain her «hysteria» in reaction to the performance of her «wifely duties».

In the sections of the novel following Freud’s «case study», readers follow the modest success of Lisa Erdman as an opera singer, after she and her husband separate. She becomes attracted to the diva whom she replaces and in a dream-like, fairy tale framework Lisa eventually marries the diva’s husband, also an opera star, some years after the diva dies in childbirth. Although poor and no longer able to sing professionally, Lisa has some years of happiness until the Germans invade the Ukraine and order Lisa and her stepson Kolya to board the train for a resettlement camp in Palestine. Before they get on the train, those to be resettled must leave their belongings, including the clothes they have on. The story is all too painfully familiar.

Suddenly, Lisa has her devastating recognition scene. It is scarcely a coincidence that the last opera Lisa sang in was *Oedipus the King*, for she discovers how the unconscious can function like the Delphic oracle, urging her to avoid becoming a mother, because motherhood is potentially lethal. Now she suddenly understands, why she could never enjoy the pleasures of the marriage bed: there were always those «on the other side of the hill», as she phrases it, who were suffering, especially children. Like Oedipus she was fool enough to believe she could avert the calamity awaiting her by refusing to consummate her marriage and by postponing a second marriage until she had begun menopause. All of her life, all of this story, has been a preparation for this death, this «climax», in which her experience is in a moment raised through the transformative power of metaphor from the trivia, or metonymies, of incomprehensible scraps of Life up to the level of a Truth in Death. When the Germans ordered the evacuation of Jews, she could have «saved» herself by proving she is not a Jew. However, she could not have saved her stepson Kolya, because his papers identify his ethnicity. She could have survived, but the price would have been an anticipated survivor guilt in knowing she had done nothing to ease the pain of Kolya in his last moments.

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<sup>3</sup> In his memoirs *Memories and Hallucinations* Thomas reveals the large impact his reading of Freud had; however, he indicates no awareness of Brooks’s essay «Freud’s Masterplot».

This brief summary marks the *Beyond* of Freud's essay which the Thomas novel contains. For the reader attuned to postmodern narrative, however, the more interesting *Beyond* is not what *The White Hotel* contains so much as what this narrative *performs* of Freud's theorizing about the repetition compulsion. In one sense *The White Hotel* testifies to Brooks's presumption of an unconscious in the text, compelled to perform a series of repetitions until it can break free into the quiescence of a *Beyond* desire. It is this sense of the seemingly disjunctive narrative repeating itself – starting over again and again with the Anna/Lisa story as though the narrative is compelled to repeat until it finds its proper end – which makes the structure of *The White Hotel* an expression of Freud's *Beyond*.

Following a Prologue of fictional letters exchanged between Freud and his associates, *The White Hotel's* readers confront «Don Giovanni», a long, erotic (some might say, «pornographic»)<sup>4</sup> poem with a female persona describing her nonstop orgy of sexual experience with «Freud's son», at a lakeside white, hotel in the Alps. This fantasy, or dreamscape, combines Eros and Thanatos in a mélange of polymorphous-perverse sexuality and deaths by drowning, avalanche, and fire. The text repeats the compulsive sexuality of the lovers, for its primary reader, Freud himself:

I went into a kind of fever, so  
besotted by your son's unresting stroke,  
Professor, driving like a piston in  
and out, hour after hour. (19)

The next section of this «novel», «The Gastein Journal», begins again and repeats in prose the events of the preceding section. Now, however, the unnamed female lover of Freud's son is represented in the third person as a «she». Because this text is longer and because prose fiction is grounded in the metonymy of detail, the fantasy of the earlier section seems to be modulating into something closer to «reality», still in keeping with the strange mixture of love and death. Repeating in advance the Primal Scene witnessed at three, the persona is described having intercourse *a tergo* with the hotel chef or Freud's son, although

she could not tell which of them was making love to her, it was all equally rare, tender, and full of good juice. She felt happy that part of her body was occupied by somebody else. The spirit of the white hotel was against selfishness. (86)

Then, the centerpiece of the «novel», section three, «Frau Anna G.», renders the young woman's experience as a case study with «Freud» in the first person. This fictional case study offers a «scientific» rendition of the Anna story in which her shortness of breath and pains in the breast and pelvic area are «explained» as... what else? «Hysteria». This «Freud» dates his sessions with «Anna» as beginning in 1919 when, not coincidentally, he was working on his *Beyond*. Central to Freud's text, Thomas seems to be stressing, is the rationalist's faith, or self-delusion, that reason offers an infallible instrument of knowledge. His «Freud» writes:

The psyche of an hysteric is like a child who has a secret, which no one must know, but everyone must guess. And so he must make it easier by scattering clues. Clearly the child in Frau Anna's mind was telling us to look at her breast and her ovary: and precisely the left breast and ovary, for the unconscious is a precise and pedantic symbolist. (99)

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<sup>4</sup> Although this brief essay has too little space to explore the troubled relationship between the erotic and the pornographic, it might be added here that D. H. Lawrence's distinction continues to be useful. In his essay «Pornography and Obscenity», Lawrence states: «No matter how hard we may pretend otherwise, most of us rather like a moderate rousing of our sex. It warms us, stimulates us like sunshine on a grey day» (*Phoenix* 173). «Pornography [in contrast] is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it» (175). Lawrence might worry, as some readers have, that the mechanical or compulsive nature of the sexuality diminishes the erotic. In Section One, for example, the persona notes the «man's unresting stroke... driving like a piston in / and out, hour after hour.»

Vintage «Freud»! Psychoanalysis is a variety of Sherlockholmesing<sup>5</sup> one's way into the secrets locked in the «dark cellar» of the unconscious.<sup>6</sup> «Freud» writes:

In the private hotel, the white room stood for the womb of her mother, which awaited only the coming of Anna's father to conceive the male child. The drying-out umbrella in the hall was symbolic of the discharged penis. (106)

It is difficult here not to add at least in passing that this is also indicative of traditional psychoanalytic criticism. Many who have an interest in the troubled relationship between literature and psychology continue to encounter critical essays and conference presentations in which critics are drawing their readers/listeners into just this kind of psychological «detective work». It is no coincidence that Freud enjoyed the Sherlock Holmes tales of Conan Doyle, nor that the Freudian Peter Brooks points to the detective story as the quintessential plot in narrative. In one sense the model for psychoanalytic criticism, like the model for Freudian analysis, is the detective's collecting «clues», or the metonymic details of the story or analysand's narratives, moves toward that moment of metaphoric transformation when the symbolic value of one or more of these clues, or metonymies, produces the «recognition scene» in which everything apparently arranges itself in a pattern of Truth. Readers/ listeners await the moment of recognition, like so many Watsons to Sherlock Holmes, awed by the detective's cleverness.

The remaining three sections of the novel are repetitions of the Anna/Lisa narrative represented in the first three. Section 4, «The Health Resort», confronts readers with yet another new (and presumably unrelated) text in which a Frau Elisabeth Erdman is traveling by train to La Scala in Milan to stand in for a diva with a broken arm. Only toward the end of this section do we confirm our suspicion that Frau Erdman «is» Anna G. in a marvelous exchange of letters between Lisa and Freud as he was preparing the text of his case study, presumably Section 3 of this novel. Here, Lisa adds to, corrects, and leaves uncorrected a text which Freud will publish *without* any of its subject's readerly interventions – the case study as a form of fiction, or «literature», rather than «science».

Sections 5 and 6 are even more devastating assaults on «Freud», as the unconscious of the text discovers what it has been working its way to through the compulsive repetitions preceding it. In the seething ravine of corpses machine-gunned at Babi Yar, Lisa is discovered to be alive by an SS man when the glint of her crucifix catches his eye and in tearing it from her body he swings his boot into her left breast and her pelvis. Lisa's pains are not an hysteric's symptoms but a clairvoyant's flashes-forward to horrors awaiting her. And if there were not enough, the text moves Lisa and all the other «characters» in the novel into «The Camp» of Section 6, a kind of fantasy future as Purgatory where Freud, the rationalist who rejected an afterlife, is himself a resident. If Freud's *Beyond* posits a death instinct toward which the subject is drawn through the repetition compulsion what are we to make of this life instinct which will not shut down but insists on continued existence, despite its meager pleasures?

Thus, Thomas offers, a narrative which may be read across the spectrum of psychoanalytic criticism of literary texts. At one end of that spectrum, *The White Hotel* pays homage to traditional Freudian criticism. Within what Norman Holland has called a modernist<sup>7</sup> psychoanalytic framework in which readers have been schooled in «applying» psychoanalytic insights to their understanding of fictional characters, the white hotel clearly functions as a «symbol» of the mother's body to

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<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Corinna del Greco Lobner for the term «Sherlockholmesing». It might be added here that Nicholas Meyer's novel *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* hypothesizes a meeting between Freud and Sherlock Holmes in which Freud treats Holmes for cocaine addiction in exchange for the Holmesian paradigm of detection for his psychoanalytic «detective work».

<sup>6</sup> Brenda Maddox cites D. H. Lawrence's dismissal of the Freudian unconscious as «the cellar where, the mind keeps its own bastard spawn» (qtd by Maddox 280).

<sup>7</sup> My reading has been shaped by Norman Holland's extremely useful essay, «Postmodern Psychoanalysis».

which Lisa longs to return. Life for Lisa – as well as her rendering of it as narrative, in the erotic poem, in her journal for Freud’s eyes only, but especially in her «talking cure» – is a series of repetitions compelled by the impulse to reach out toward the quiescence she experienced in her mother’s womb before she was propelled into a life of desire. Lisa may also be read in a Lacanian context of the *objet petit a*. Well before she witnessed the Primal Scene of her parents’ intercourse *a tergo*, Lacan would argue, Lisa at a year and a half underwent Castration, the foreclosing forever of the Edenic utopia-for-two of the child’s union with the (M)Other before being transported out of the register of the Imaginary and into the Symbolic. In this context Lisa/Anna’s repetitions in turning her experience into narrative – the metonymies of this-then-this along the chain of desire – may be read as her pursuit of *objet petit a* of desire, the part-for-the-whole of Desire,<sup>8</sup> or the Phallus, left behind in the paradise lost of the Imaginary bond with the mother.

Such a reading has its own limited validity. Its limitations are centered in the tragic figure of Thomas’s «Freud». Like his tragic counterpart Lisa Erdman, this Freud is impelled by good intentions – to heal tormented souls through the agency of reason. In one sense, his is also the tragedy of modern psychoanalysis and its faith in rationalizing the indeterminacies of the unconscious. As Paul de Man suggests, the structuralist/modernist/rationalist operates on a faith that texts-writings, but also by extension dreams, the analysand’s narratives of her past, and perhaps even signifiers such as the *fort/da* – represent an outside which is to be opened like a box to reveal a secret hidden within. Or as Norman Holland has suggested in his three stages of psychoanalysis, this is the «high modernist» notion that the truth of the self can be found like a “lost glove” (299). In any case the Freud offered by Thomas can understand Lisa/Anna’s pains in her breast and pelvis only as symptoms of a hysteria grounded in the Family Romance of her childhood, instead of as markers of a visceral clairvoyance, her body reaching out across the years into a future of suffering and death.<sup>9</sup>

In the end *The White Hotel* is offering a variety of postmodern psychoanalytic text, one which performs the *Beyond* of Freud by which Brooks was seduced but also one which takes readers beyond the structuralism and modernism inherent in the Freud/Brooks paradigm. Thus, the novel offers a validation of Brooks’s theorizing that narrative implicates readers in a «textual erotics» of a conflict between the desire for the end at which meaning will become transmissible and the desire to postpone that deathly metaphorizing of experience into tragic art. *The White Hotel* draws its readers forward to Lisa’s experience of *anagnorisis*, or tragic recognition, in the scene of her death so that their desire for the end is satisfied by a devastating moment of truth. At the same time, however, the conclusion of this narrative subverts the rationality embodied in «Freud» by requiring its readers to entertain the «truth» of two propositions beyond the realm of reason: the agency of clairvoyance and the existence of an afterlife. In this way Brooks’s narrative performs the repetition compulsion by setting down texts («chapters») *nebeneinander*, one next to each other, establishing the illusion that these texts (parts of the novel) are *nacheinander*, or after one another, in a series of iterations suggesting a textual unconscious working toward its own end, the quiescence of a «beyond» words, a silence apparently subverted in the final section, «The Camp», with its implications that desire is unending, once it is set in motion by the entry into the Symbolic register and the foreclosing of Desire in the Imaginary. The context is postmodern: this narrative legitimates the modernist psychoanalytic writing of Freud and Thomas at the same it subverts the truth it has subsumed.

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<sup>8</sup> I follow Ellie Ragland-Sullivan in capitalizing Desire. Her view of the subject’s move from the Imaginary to Symbolic register has significantly my own reading of Lacan.

<sup>9</sup> Freud’s biographer Peter Gay notes Freud’s interest in telegraphy. In the years following World War I he wrote a paper on telepathy and in the mid-1920s it would appear Freud and his daughter did some playful experimenting with telepathy. In a 1926 letter to Ernest Jones he indicated a «favorable prejudice in favor of telepathy» (qtd. in Gay 445), but he feared for the future of psychoanalysis if it became involved with the occult.

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# Sifting through Freud's reliquary: Personal cultural history, legend and myth in the process of identity formation

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Last summer, while reviewing some work for a paper which relied on potential historical antecedents for Sigmund Freud's construct of «Ich, Uberich und Es», I found a very touching, confessional «open» letter that Freud had written to one of his mentors, Romain Rolland, the French dramatist, essayist and romantic idealist as published in Vol. 22 (239-48) of the *The Standard Edition of the Complete Collected Works of Sigmund Freud*. In the letter which is part of the subject of this essay, Freud told Rolland that he was writing the letter because Rolland was a believer in truth and Freud wanted to share a «truth» about his own life in connection with his own father Jacob Freud who had died in 1896. This particular truth devolved from reflection in Freud's middle years while just in his 40s. For the poet within, Freud's mind often seemed like a tomb of fleeting shadows and links, or like a cavernous cave of desire for psychoanalysis and for its success (his mind, labyrinthine, deep, dark and rich in treasure as one sorts through his confessional writings as he revealed the personal all along the way).

Freud's thought processes appear in his letter as an instant virtual reliquary for his identity development as stored within memory, for his intellectual productions and senses of personal enlightenment, a collection of intimate recollections, observations, hypotheses and allegorical interpretations. As a prolific writer with his discourse part of that metaphoric repository filled with words encased for his readers (which is what the Collected Works seem like at times), one is drawn intimately into his life's work. He unleashed a meta-psychology for himself and for our selves to look at the individual life and the life within society, and how the two (the personal and the social) become intertwined. We all use life experiences, dreams, even our moments of laughter therein, a way to look at our own individual «family romance» whether it be of an Oedipal nature or not to discover our own mysteries, just as Freud did, plumbing the depths.

On the one hand, psychoanalysis for some individuals is like a religion to which they adhere strictly; and to others it is an open debate as an ongoing discovery, a discipline in flux and process. The Freudian structural psychoanalysis has given us a way to view our very own complexities (and

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complexes) no matter how much we may or may not agree with Freud's final conclusions (which he acknowledged to be always in the process of change anyway) and no matter how many neo-Freudians have gone beyond the father of psychology. Peter Gay has said in a short essay on Freud that «we all speak Freud now correctly or not. We casually refer to oedipal conflicts and sibling rivalry, narcissism and Freudian slips» (ix Introductory Essay, *Jokes and the Unconscious*). Clearly, Freud contributed mightily to his own legend and myth by working with his own historical cultural background in many of his diary-like essays, papers, his own self-analysis and his lectures as well as by the dubbing of himself ambivalently at first as the father of psychoanalysis.

As we know, many other writers have contributed to Freud's personal cultural history, legend and myth and this essay refers in brief to the work (while mentioning others) of at least two important Freud scholars: 1) firstly, to Jose Brunner whose pragmatic and positivist approach in his *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* places Freud squarely and progressively within the historical milieu of his day, within the international politics of psychiatry of the European community and by his review of the hermeneutic of Freud's meta psychology. For Brunner, Freud's hermeneutic reflects the inner workings of the self reflective of the outer world of class and interactive psychic and interactive social and political dynamics of his day. This placement of Freud within his historical and national settings helps the reader to see the actual contributions that Freud's form of psychiatry made within Austria which impacted France and Germany among other world nations. For instance, Freud has been credited with being largely responsible for more humane treatment of those diagnosed as hysterics (as Charcot and Freud in Paris in 1885-86 knew that hysteria was an illness that affected men as well as women). Later in 1895, with Josef Breuer, Freud would publish *Studies in Hysteria* sharing his wide knowledge. While his contemporaries were torturing and humiliating hysterics often in sadistic public displays, Freud was talking with his clients while realizing that hysteria was not a somatic physiological condition but a psychological one which could be «talked» away.

Within recent historiography, our most recent epoch, another author of importance for this essay (besides those who will otherwise be more briefly noted) is that of the psychoanalyst Dr. Jonathan Cohen, the author of *Apart from Freud, Notes for a Rational Psychoanalysis*. Dr. Cohen accepts much of Freud's work (for instance, the impact of the family on developmental issues for the child, and the unconscious processes of the psyche) but separates and counter-indicates himself from and denies Freud's overarching pedestal for the Oedipal complex and implicit desires for family incest their orthodox reign within his own psychoanalytic practice with his patients as he finds that reductive and like a false mask placed on each client. In fact, Cohen holds with the findings of the Finnish sociologist and moral philosopher Edward Westermarck (who is also considered to be the first evolutionary anthropologist) whose early hypothesis was «a Darwinian theory of incest aversion involving a complex developmental instinct that evolved through natural selection» (27).

Looking more closely at Westermarck's text *History of Human Marriage* in 1891 (and with later historical empirical evidence), Cohen notes that the theory of an incest-aversion mechanism was «maintained by law, custom or tradition» (27) which predominates in the human kingdom at maturity. He notes also that incest-aversion is an «instinctual aversion to incest and inbreeding (which would be harmful to the species) found in lower animals... probably evolved into a complex human behavioral instinct» which Westermarck later called an «innate aversion» (27). This anti-incest hypothesis has continued to be studied empirically in a variety of settings, including some in the Israel Kibbutzim research of Yonina Talmon, and later in the kibbutzim research of Bruno Bettelheim, Albert Rabin and Melford Spiro (among others) wherein early incestuous contact is spurned at maturity in favor of exogamous marriage. Additionally in the research of the anthropologist Arthur Wolf in Taiwan, the incest aversion theory and its outcomes are reviewed in the instance of «sim-pua marriage» an early childhood marriage (called «minor marriage») wherein the bride and groom are raised as brother and sister from an early age. Early physical contact of an intimate nature was seen later to be most often spurned (or rejected) for contact in the more common form,

in uxori-local marriage community (or major marriage) at maturity. As Freud once confided to a friend that «psychology became his tyrant», we continue to see that psychologists, psychiatrists, as well as theorists from other disciplines have and still wrestle with this tyrant and often in concerns for issues related to incest, sexual consent or coercion in general.

However, in his own work and often using a very personal and open tone along the way, Freud no matter what the ultimate outcomes of his own work historically, presented himself directly to his audiences, whether talking about such of his concepts as «penis envy», «castration» anxiety and the like. By using his own psyche with his self-analysis after the death of his father in 1896, he indicates that he himself suffered from an Oedipus complex. By our review of Freud's use of his imagination as an instrument for psychoanalysis as well as those psyches of his patients and clients, we (the readers) often feel that we have a voyeuristic view into his intellectual inner sanctum whether any one feels that this is a gift of the highest order or not. He was not hiding in the shadows, but out there, trying to communicate and postulate. And, «No, he did not spring forth wholly formed and perfectly framed ideologically from any thigh of the god Zeus» - no first time perfections in Freud or ourselves.

At times, we feel like metaphoric clients of Freud's whether we are on his proverbial symbolic couch or not as we read his individual cases and sometimes identify with issues for our selves or others we know. Additionally through our studies, observations and interpretations (with some being within the realm of literature), some of us still foray into Freudian territory and within whatever psychological realm we feel the most comfortable, and no matter which psychological dogma we might presently adhere to (or those which we dally among with the wide variety available). Indeed, some individuals use more than one method simultaneously as, after all, we postmodern, twenty-first century beings wish always to be on the virtual cutting edge of some new discovery or for some veritable disappearance or reappearance of meaning. Yet, no matter what we say of Sigmund Freud finally, he reveled and revealed so much of his own mystery to the unsuspecting detective of psychological interpretation by his monolithic view of reality, his mythic, sweeping gaze of the psychological and ethnographic landscape, and his own imagination, right or wrong.

In *Totem and Taboo* in Vol. 13 for instance, Freud insisted that

... the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex. This is in complete agreement with the psychoanalytic finding that the same complex constitutes the nucleus of all neurosis (156-57).

For Brunner in his *Politics of Psychoanalysis*, Freud's hypothetical interpretation of primordial society in terms of the killing of the first father leading to his dominant focus on Oedipus eventually was total speculation and the first instance of conjecture for a mythical «political» construct «by an absolutist regime and mechanisms of dependence and coercion». It was additionally an instance of Freud's own myth-making capabilities although other mythical primordial constructs from social construct theorists had been formed by such individuals as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

That Freud relied on literary texts drawn from the well of ancient Greek literature, legend and myth shows what an early inter-disciplinarian he was and what a synchronic thinker; that is, he was a cross-cultural thinker who could fathom similarities across historical and ideological backdrops and borders. Not only was he mired there in that Classical past, but he was also mired in the daily diachronic rhythms of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries with the every day historical resonance of Western European political life. However, Freud's early and profound attachment to Greek philosophical models of thought and literature mark him further as he notes that he takes «as the basis of my whole position the existence of the collective mind of an individual» even unto assuming collective guilt for actions of past generations (Vol. 13, 157). This must have been a very difficult solution for him as he struggled with guilt in what he categorized as the «ambivalence» that one feels (and that ambivalence that seems to prevail) as one views one's self in comparison

with «the father». Additional to the historical father, he presumed the primordial one as well. Finally, he felt this ambivalence toward the father was at the root of social psychology and many important cultural institutions (157). The patriarchal construct represented his most conservative side in competition with the implied «emancipatory» politics of his clinical practice which was designed to «free» individuals from pain and rigid compliance and wherein he was often seen as subversive in contrast to many of his fellows in the field.

In his essay on another Greek myth, that of the Zeus-Prometheus-Epimetheus mind allegory, in his own «The Acquisition and Control of Fire» (1932), Freud made it clear that he knew of the god Prometheus as a character from myth (as a being without a superego he thought) even though Freud did not view Prometheus as a part of the Greek mind-allegory from which Prometheus devolved (Frick 1985, 1994, 2001). In this text, Freud posits an interest in the binaries of fire and water and his own associational link of water to biological urine (able to put out many a fire). Indeed, he wonders why the acquisition of fire is inseparably linked additionally to the idea of a crime (Vol. 22, 188). Further, he wondered why human desire is linked to divine privilege through this human «cultural hero who was still a god» (189). Clearly, as one of the earliest among psychoanalytic seed and roots, Freud was also a talented literary theorist asking questions of his texts which he read closely and to the bone.

Indeed, very near the end of his *Moses and Monotheism* (a text close to his own ancestral heart), he wondered rhetorically where those legendary Greeks got their original material that was worked over so well by Homer, Hesiod and the great Attic dramatists for their own masterpieces. He replied to his own query that the rich trove of the Greeks indicated that «this people had probably experienced in their prehistory, a period of external brilliance and cultural effervescence which had perished in an historical catastrophe and of which an obscure tradition survived in these legends» (Vol. 23, 70). He appreciated the remains of Greek culture, that fine Classicist that he had become, and was open to the psychic, symbolic value of that trove. He often saw Greek texts as cautionary tales from which we could learn so much but perhaps not as much as he wished.

At the age of 80 in 1936, Freud in celebrating his friend Romain Rolland's 70th birthday (as noted earlier) wrote a text simply titled and published as an *Open Letter to Romain Rolland on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis* (1936, Vol. 22). In his letter, Freud, as his own patient/client recalls an experience with his brother in Trieste, Italy, on one of his European trips to Italy during his middle age. The letter essentially recalls and analyzes the before-and-after periods that the two brothers experienced as they were encouraged to and made a journey by ship from Trieste to Athens, Greece, to experience their presence at the Acropolis, a journey that had been made some 32 years earlier (in 1904) that marked «ambivalence to the father» for Freud wherein they (but particularly Sigmund) felt emotionally stewed and skewered. Instinctively, the brothers felt that to go to Athens instead of to Corfu was something that «they could not do». Although Freud had been taught about the sights of Athens, upon viewing the sight of the Acropolis, he felt that he had regressed to a childhood state. At that point in his text, he metaphorically divides himself into a variety of discrete selves in the midst of discourse in order to try to explain to himself as to why he felt so startled by the reality, wonder and joy of the experience. Too, he makes use of this «divided self» motif in his work in his text *The Creative Writer and Daydreaming*. Through the use of hyperbole and using analogy, Freud felt that the experience at the Acropolis could be likened to himself as being another,

it was as if someone, walking beside Loch Ness suddenly caught sight of the form of the famous Monster stranded upon the shore and found himself driven to the admonition admission, «So it really does exist – the sea serpent we never believed in!» (Vol. 22, 244)

Acknowledging that seeing is believing, and although he HAD believed in the existence of the Acropolis as a child, in his unconscious he felt that he had NOT believed in it until he actually saw it. His disbelief became a point of study for him in the remainder of his letter to Romain in which he could begin to understand by free association «a sense of some feeling of the unbelievable

and the unreal in the situation of the moment» in which he felt that his doubt had been displaced into the past and transposed to the real experience at the existence of the actual Acropolis. He noted that feelings of «de-realization» are not «unknown among normal people, just as hallucinations occasionally occur in the healthy». His experience of depersonalization made him feel that «a piece of his own self is strange to him» (Vol. 22, 245) as an experience of «fausse reconnaissance», «de ja vu» or «deja reconte». Because depersonalization leads to what he calls «double conscience» or split personality which he deems «so obscure» and so «little mastered scientifically», he desires not to continue further on that track lest he find himself to be a split personality. Instead he continued by reflecting that de-realizations serve as a defense «in keeping something from the ego» by delaying knowing something that is «distressing or unbearable» as if in a state of «denial». He likened himself to King Boabdil, the last Moorish monarch of Grenada who needed to continue to experience a sense of «absolute power» by killing the messenger who delivered the message that Boabdil's kingdom was lost. A verse written upon this history goes,

Cartas le fueron venidas/que Alhama era ganada:  
 las cartas echo en el fuego,/ y al mensajero matara.  
 (Letters had reached him telling that Alhama was taken. He threw  
 the letters into the fire and killed the messenger. {Strachey, Trans.})

Freud cleverly used this analogy of King Boabdil in comparison to his own feelings of denial at the Acropolis and realized that he had not doubted that the Acropolis had actually existed but instead doubted «that he should ever see Athens beyond the limitations and poverty of our conditions of life in my youth» because his pleasure in travel was rooted «in dissatisfaction with home and family». Further he compares himself and his brother to Napoleon and Napoleon's own brother Joseph when Napoleon at his coronation wondered aloud what «Monsieur Pere» would have thought about his and at their having «gone a long way from home» – the forbidden travel away from and yet to the child's «criticism of his father» latent within the desire as Freud sees it.

It seems as though the essence of success was to have got further than one's father, and as though to excel one's father was still something forbidden. (Vol. 22, 247)

To Freud, «The very theme of Athens and the Acropolis in itself contained evidence of the son's superiority» (247) and what interfered with his own journey with his brother was a «feeling of filial piety», a reverence of the father and a desire not to go beyond him. However, at the time of this letter, Freud notes that, «I myself have grown old and stand in need of forbearance and can travel no more» (248). Herein, he seems to encourage others to go beyond him.

All roads led to the father for Freud not necessarily to Thebes, Athens, Rome or Trieste in his considerations of identity and a mastering of its process. That is all roads lead to the father except when they lead to the mother (or women), the real Sphinx-ian riddle of life for Freud and all of mankind as he would tell it (and as he told it several years previous to his 1936 text on the Acropolis). In his lecture on *Femininity* (a conflation of two previous essays in 1934), he noted that «throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity» and that men are continually «worrying over the problem» but women must not worry because women are «the problem». He imagines those banging heads thus as in a text from Heine's *Nordsee*,

Haupter in Hieroglyphenmutzen,  
 Haupter in Turben und Schwarzum Baret,  
 Perupenhaupter und tausend andre  
 Arme, schwitzende Menschenhaupter...  
 (Heads in hieroglyphic bonnets,  
 Heads in turben and black birettas,  
 Heads in wigs and thousand other  
 Wretched, sweating heads of humans. {Strachey, Trans.})

In acknowledging his lack of coherency on the topic of women and our vile personalities fraught with-penis envy and a sense of castration, Freud acknowledges in his lecture that he is a man of his age and realizes that future «science» may have other things to say on the topic of women. He is finally apologetic to some degree and seemingly aware of his own biases. This we see when he notes at the end of his lecture

That is all that I had to say to you on femininity. It is certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly... I have only been describing women in so far as their nature is determined by their sexual function... an individual woman may be a human being in other respects as well... enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information. (Vol. 13, 113)

And so we have waited, and so our science has grown as we have been wondering how many women Freud had spoken to in order to determine «their sexual function» for all of womanhood. Indeed, we have gone beyond our filial piety of Freud, but I exact a bit of reverence in spite of all differences and railings against, for and with him because he recognized his place within history and knew that there was much more to be known. Women and men all over the world are getting it right for women, even now as we speak here. Our gender knowledge seems to increase daily, and our appreciations of gender do additionally.

Many psychologists have used much of Freud as a starting point, a veritable spring board for their own referential decoding of identity and that mysterious self with which each of us must interact on a daily basis, not to mention those myriad others whose lives our own might touch on a daily basis. Among these authors I have already mentioned as contributing to the ethos of this short essay, I include the work of Jerome Bruner in his *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* and his *Acts of Meaning* which posit the richness of the story of the self and the narrative of one's own life within a social context of others. Some depart from Freud in ways that they find useful including the anthropologist (also a cross-cultural structuralist) Claude Levi-Strauss who decried making Freudian psychoanalysis into an institution to become degraded and «no longer an interpretation, but a variant of the Oedipus myth» (*Structural Anthropology* 1963). Indeed, Jonathan Cohen wishes to take readers beyond what he sees as the limitations of the family romance into a landscape that will actually bring us to freedom instead of back to the family altar. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their text *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* have their own politics to deploy in the face of that mythic father-mother lover. They in comove deconstructive Freudian note prefer their own concept of schizo-analysis to psychoanalysis; of freedoms from what they see as the restrictions of the ego; and they seek a «cure» from the so-called cure of psychoanalysis. Preferring «flows» to structures, these two wished for the end of the sovereignty of Oedipus as well as for the emergence of what they determine to be «liberated desiring machines» in their so-called «break through mode». Finally, but not limited here, for Jacques Lacan, Oedipus becomes the more poetic-seeming and gentle «paternal metaphor».

Structural anthropologists and mythographers have added to and departed from Freud's trove noting parallels and differences, including ethnographers like Branislaw Malinowski, Claude Levi-Strauss as already mentioned and Edmund Leach in his *Culture and Communication, The Logic by Which Symbols are Connected: An Introduction to Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology*. Malinowski wrote of the matrilineal descent (from the mother's line) in Trobriand Island familial relations in his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* wherein he notes that

A child belongs to the clan and village community of its mother, and wealth, as well as social position, are inherited, not from the father to the son, but from maternal uncle to nephew (55)

Further, in his *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927), Malinowski attempted to modify Freudian theory in the sense of the realization that there is a deflection from the father to the

maternal uncle in terms of the family politics. That is, not all things were running the Oedipal line, but that does not deny an absence of the *family romance* that Freud claimed for all; it would just have different (but similar) structural underpinnings albeit less hostile to the father one might presume. We realize as well that other societies based on matriarchies such as that of the Trobriand Islands would have alternate structural delineations. Levi-Strauss attempted the Herculean in trying to interlink cultures formally and structurally in his text *The Raw and the Cooked* as well as in his other works. In doing so, he suggested doing away with the word «primitive» to replace it or to use it only to imply «those without written language». Joseph Campbell brought more cross-cultural structural material to the fore in such texts as *The Flight of the Wild Gander* and in his *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* so that readers could view the variety of structural forms of the hero/heroine within a corpus of cross-cultural dynamics noting similarities and differences. The psychoanalytic venture is often seen as parallel to that of the hero/heroine with a setting out in the world of the individual, going through the underworld of the unconscious for an apotheosis, a deeper understanding of life and the spirit, which leads into greater ego strength.

Finally and indeed, for myself in returning to Freud's thoughts on women in his lecture on *Femininity*, I would say that if men have banged their heads against so many walls over trying to understand *femininity*, one could easily wager that many millions of women for many hundreds of years have been simultaneously banging their heads against those same proverbial walls of which Freud and Heine spoke, and all wondering what those idiosyncratic and monolithic men, shelved and clothed in their mystique of *masculinity* really needed and wanted. It is not difficult to posit that women at times feel similarly in their confusions and conflicts with men – those at times wonderful and at other times mysterious men whose very masculinity has been much of a problem (and at times a pleasure) for women. One can almost hear a chorus of women from out of the past and the present (sounding like Freud and his cohort once did) shouting, wailing, moaning and groaning in a variety of forms of head gear, «What do they actually want?»; with comments continuing like, «I just don't understand men!»; and, «They're all alike!» boomeranging back to us. However, these kinds of comments are often said in moments of frustration more often than not, and often have a humorous cast when reviewed if there are no other mitigating factors of an egregious nature. Across cultural and gender demarcations then, we continue to begin to understand one another more, building bridges but with more women involved in the constructive research.

Now we can smile together and laugh together, as we have all traveled this dark and lonely road, much like Freud to the Acropolis of our imagination, to the symbolic order of our machinations, to our individual family romance (metaphoric and otherwise) and its ultimate meaning for the richness of the insights that we occasionally do glean in our lives, the knowledge and spirit which help us to move forward. I enjoy the spirit of Freud in his letter to Remain Rolland for his contributions, erroneous or not for each of us as individuals, for his musings (which can sometimes amuse us), and for his confessions which were so full of vital information from which we all still have potential to learn from and most occasionally to enjoy. Freud seems to have surprised both himself and the world with his genius, and now he does deservedly rest as his words and many of his most unique ideas do deservedly live on while some other of his ideas fall by the wayside as from within a broken but beautiful reliquary on the crossroads outside of mighty Thebes.

# Synesthesia: Normal and pathological

RAE BETH GORDON (\*)

Our sense of these things changes and they change,  
Not as in metaphor, but in our sense  
Of them. So sense exceeds all metaphor.

Wallace Stevens, «Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight»

O métamorphose mystique  
De tous mes sens fondus en un!  
Son haleine fait la musique,  
Comme sa voix fait le parfum!

Baudelaire, «Tout entière»

The intense interest of some writers and most painters in color as emotion, and as corollary of other sensory experience, inevitably strikes the observer of late 19th-century culture. By the 1880s and 1890s, scientists were trying to elaborate a systematic theory of color, line, and sound as pleasure or pain and to identify correspondences between form and color, while at the same time psychiatrists pinpointed certain perceptions of color, angular movements, and synesthesias as pathological. In order to understand the role of synesthesia in 19th-century aesthetics, one must study it in the context of psychophysics, a science founded in 1860 by Gustav Fechner. Psychophysics attempts to measure the relationship between physical stimuli and sensory-psychological response. Not only was Fechner thus the father of experimental psychology, but he also became the father of the scientific aesthetics mentioned above with his 1873 *Vorshule der Aesthetik*, which contains a large-scale study of synesthesia.

Synesthesia is the transfer from one sensory modality to another, such as «colored hearing» where one sees a color upon seeing a particular sound. The most common among synesthesias is the perception of «warm» and «cool» colors; the concept is almost universally accepted.

If synesthesia is a bridge from one sensory experience to another, in the Romantic period, it is also a bridge from the material world to the spiritual world, to transcendental experience (cosmic harmony and unity) through the senses. In both instances, the bridge takes the form of an analogy.

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Naturally, the source of synesthesia is sensation, with its accompanying nervous activity; thus its source is in what many 19th-century psychiatrists and physiologists conceived of as the lower forms of human activity, including the instincts, nervous reflex and other motor response. Synesthesia's link to the lower faculties will become apparent only later in the century. When it does, the thrust of the technique will change: synesthesia connects the language of automatism (the instincts, the body, the senses) with the elaborated language of the higher faculties.

But already in the 1840s, Théophile Gautier's and Charles Baudelaire's experiences with hashish, emphasizing transpositions of color, taste, and sound, placed synesthesia in the context of pathology and hallucination. Gautier has «heard the noise of colors» («Le Haschich», *La Presse*, 10 July 1843). Baudelaire describes a state in which it is «as if your former personality could not bear the weight of your new one. Your senses develop an extraordinary degree of delicacy and acuteness. Your eye penetrates the infinite .... The hallucinations begin .... [M]onstrous forms ... deformed and transformed [present] the most singular ambiguities. Sounds take on color, and the colors are heard as music.... These analogies (natural in any poet's brain) take on an unaccustomed vivacity; they penetrate, they invade, they overwhelm the mind with their despotic character.... From time to time your personality vanishes». Doubling and loss of identity accompany the pleasurable, then painful, sensory revelations (Baudelaire 575). Synesthesia is part of the hallucinatory experience.

Nonetheless, his subjective experience of the sensory phenomenon doesn't color Baudelaire's sonnet, «Correspondances», the text that put forth a poetics of synesthesia and firmly anchored it as an essential component of French Symbolism. Nor does the hallucinatory quality of synesthesia affect the mystical epiphany of «Tout entière», cited as an epigraph here. What has often struck readers who reflect on Baudelaire's exploration of sensory experience is his extraordinary insistence on the sense of smell. The poet as olfactory sensualist was in fact an absolutely new creature in 1850. Baudelaire had uncovered a little-tapped realm of the senses, particularly for poetry. Max Nordau, the author of the 1892 *Degeneration*, castigated Baudelaire and the Symbolists he influenced, who «pretend to perceive mysterious relations between colors and the sensations of the other senses, with this difference, that they hear colors while he smelt them; or, if you will, they have an eye in their ear, while he saw with his nose» (296).<sup>1</sup>

When Baudelaire writes: «J'ai cultivé mon hystérie»<sup>2</sup> («I cultivated my hysteria»), one can ask whether synesthesia plays a role in that project, even if it remains firmly tied to idealism and the spiritual world in his poetry. Certainly, Baudelaire is the poet par excellence of *sensation*, and much of the sensory experience in *Les Fleurs du Mal* is «unhealthy» or perverse. In «La Sensation en littérature: La folie de Charles Baudelaire», Maurice Barrès calls *Les Fleurs du Mal* «that oeuvre of nerves» (Barrès 4).

Baudelaire's sensations are... the most excessive that the human machine working on itself can attain... More often than not, he proceeds by associated sensations, by *correspondance*... that is, he has the secret intuition of invisible relationships. In this way, he brings together already strange sensations by unexpected analogies... [After Rimbaud], all young artists of this school call on these transpositions... Reason no longer has a role here. (14-17)

For Rimbaud, like Poe before him, synesthesia is a tool for producing art at the same time as it is clearly marked as pathology. And, as with Poe, the risky business of descending deep into abnormal states has as its reward the creation of an entirely new form of art. Usher's synesthetic delirium culminates in abstract art; Rimbaud's visions, likewise, produce poetic abstraction. The means Rimbaud called upon to become a *Voyant*, a seer, are well known: *le dérèglement de tous*

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<sup>1</sup> Nordau was born in Pest, Hungary, but became famous in Paris as a psychiatrist, sociologist, journalist, and literary critic.

<sup>2</sup> A contemporary critic called Baudelaire a «Boileau hystérique» (André Dusolier, cited in Barrès 6).

*les sens* to arrive at *l'inconnu*, the unknown. And chief among the various forms of sensory disturbance are hallucination and synesthesia. The derangement or disordering of the senses in Rimbaud's project is an entry into the unconscious: sensation (especially extremes of sensation, as well as peripheral sensation and unconscious sensation in the viscera or muscles) surges up from the automatic, lower order of the Self, bypassing perception (with its necessary components of will, judgment, and selection). Hallucination and synesthesia catch perception off guard, so to speak, and present the mind with a direct corporeal response to the external world. Rimbaud circumvents the processes that censure and select, in order to present the reader with pure sensory experience. Rimbaud writes, «I regulated *the form and the movement* of each consonant» (emphasis added). Rimbaud's experiments in sensory disordering are systematic: they are part of a *method*. They are painful and pathological: «all forms ... of suffering, of madness .... Ineffable torture... where [the poet] becomes among men the great *sick* one, the great criminal, the great cursed one – and the supreme *Savant!*» (Rimbaud, «Lettre du Voyant», 346). The poet begins by pathologizing himself and ends by having become the greatest scientist-scholar and knower of *himself* as well as of the world: «the quantity of the unknown awaking in its [own] time in the universal soul» (Michaud 138). And this «unknown» emerges from the individual mind traversed by sensory experience: new sensations will produce a new language that speaks *directly* to the soul. «This language will be from soul to soul, summing up everything, perfumes, sounds, colors, thought gripping thought and pulling.» Synesthesia, in Rimbaud, is pathology – but also science and metaphysics. In this sense, too, «Je est un autre»: *je*, I, becomes the experimental subject that the mind observes to see what happens between sensation and mind. *Je* is «an inventor ... even a musician, who found something like the key of love.» Rimbaud proclaimed that he had «*invented* the color of the vowels». It is true that Rimbaud deliberately manipulates and «pathologizes» his intellectual and sensory apparatus, which is precisely what interests me in his «method»: his acknowledgment that poetry needs a pathology of the senses before it can be «absolutely modern». My point is that 19th-century poets and novelists looked for a new art in synesthesia precisely *because* it is a disturbance of sensory perception; Rimbaud's project of a systematic disordering (*dérangement*) of the senses states this intuition concisely, and synesthesia is presented as one aspect of his pathology: «A moi. L'histoire d'une de mes folies .... I invented the color of vowels – A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green. I flattered myself with having invented a poetic Verb accessible, one day, to all the senses» (Rimbaud, *Une Saison en enfer* 228).

Two decades later, the psychophysicologist Alfred Binet correctly perceived that writers like Rimbaud who sought to experience sensations that had never been felt before, were «convinced that colored hearing leads to a form of exalted sensibility that allows one to penetrate the most hidden property of the external world» (Binet 607).

Rimbaud practiced «simple hallucination» and the «hallucination of words». One of these simple hallucinations produced the personification of numbers and letters – prevalent in the decorative arts of the 19th century, in posters by artists like Chéret, and in lithographs by artists like Grandville. The transformation of numbers and letters was also the object of psychophysiological experiment. One of the most well-known researchers in synesthesia, Claparède, «had the ingenious idea of focusing his inquiry simultaneously on colored hearing and on visual schema (an idea suggested by Galton's research) .... For certain people, numbers take on a figural representation in the mind .... For one of [these people], each number reminds him of the silhouette of a different personage: a duelist, an old woman, a banker, etc.<sup>3</sup> Claparède thought that one could also 'picture' other abstract notions, such as the months and the days .... The results of the inquiry showed a frequent coincidence between visual schema and colored hearing» (Binet 603).

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<sup>3</sup> There was also the case of a schoolboy who saw prayers in the form of a sofa and the adverb *où* as having the outline of the map of France (Segalen 62).

Synesthesia in the fin de siècle is used primarily to exacerbate the senses, to induce a form of hyperesthesia that procures an ecstatic sensual and aesthetic mix for the Subject and becomes a source of intense pleasure. The most frequently cited example from the Decadence is, of course, from Huysmans' *A Rebours*: Des Esseintes's mouth organ of liqueurs:

The taste of each liqueur corresponded, according to him, to the sound of an instrument. The curaçao sec, for example, to the clarinet, [with its] frail and velvety song; .... He also thought that the assimilation could be heard, that quartets of string instruments could operate under the palette, .... Thanks to érudite experiments, he had succeeded in playing silent melodies on the tongue. (Huysmans, *A Rebours* 99-100)

Huysmans did in fact believe «that perfumes correspond to certain ideas, [and] can evoke paintings ... or sounds» (cited in Michaux 252).

René Ghil's *Traité du Verbe*,<sup>4</sup> where each letter corresponds to a color and to a musical instrument (and where gestures, sensations, moral character, emotions, and ideas all have their common denominator and essence in the rhythm that emerges from the value of the timbres), is an elaborate synesthetic system, but no more elaborate than the extravagant spectacle performed in December 1891 at the Théâtre de l'Art, *The Song of Songs*, in which colors were harmonized with lighting, decor, vowel sounds, and musical instruments, and perfumes were sprayed into the audience at key points. In fact, the physiologist Charles Henry and the critic Félix Fénéon carried out the olfactory end of the program. As Fénéon describes the event, «vaporizers ... sprayed the house.... And under the coalition of these chromatic, auditory and fragrant forces, the spectator surrendered to the Word of Solomon» (Fénéon, ed. Halperin 836; also in Halperin 199). A principal aim of this theater and of its successor, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, was the unification of the arts through synesthesia.

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The pathological face of synesthesia hasn't been discussed by critics since 1920. But much aesthetic theory, literary criticism, and psychiatric documents of the fin de siècle do contain this discussion. It is found, for instance, in Jean d'Udine's *L'Art et le geste* (1910), in Victor Segalen's writings on Symbolism (1902), and in Dr. Gatian de Clérambault's observations of nervous disorders (in «The Passion for Fabrics», 1908, and «Chloral», 1910) whose etiologies date from the 1880s and 1890s. Synesthesia, along with such distortions of perception as anesthesia, hysterical blindness, sensory stigmata, dyschromatopsy, and hallucinations, was classified as a sensory disturbance in the fin de siècle. In the last decade of the 19th century, several books and more than 100 papers were published on the topic. For example, Dr. Jean Clavière (1898) presented a theory of synesthesia as uniformly pathological, whereas Pedrono and de Rochas (1882, 1885) had proposed that it was caused by a meshing of sensory centers in the brain (that is, by a physiological abnormality). The French oculist F. Suarez de Mendoza, who collected an impressive quantity of observations, thought that synesthesia was caused sometimes by association of ideas established in childhood and sometimes by an action of the brain unknown to the science of the time; he also believed that synesthesia most probably had «a certain similarity» to illusions and hallucinations (*L'Audition colorée: Etude sur les fausses sensations secondaires physiologiques*, Paris, 1892). Another theory is highly reminiscent of synesthesia in Poe's «The Fall of the House of Usher»: Charles Féré

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<sup>4</sup> Ghil reworked the text several times (1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1891, 1904); in the fourth edition, he added a corresponding emotion and moral character to each instrument. See Louis W. Marvick's excellent study, «René Ghil and the Contradictions of Synesthesia», in *Comparative Literature*, 51 (1999).

thought that stimuli acting on all the senses could produce equivalent excitations (for example, changes in muscular tonicity), and that such general physiological changes could then introduce associations of these stimuli into sensory perception (1892). This hypothesis is still current in recent theory, where generalized muscular sensation functions to unite the senses (Marks 1975, 323). M. A. Chaix's 1919 thesis, «La Correspondance des Arts dans la poésie contemporaine», confirms (as my own research also indicates) a considerable degree of interest in synesthesia among medical practitioners of the 19th-century. Baudelaire's and Gautier's experiences with hashish were duplicated in scientific experiments in the 1880s. Physiologists and psychiatrists, using themselves as subjects, confirmed that certain facets of experience under hashish (notably hyperesthesia, loss of control over thought associations, and synesthesia) were exactly the same as those found in hysteria. At the end of the 19th century, according to Chaix, «psychology and medicine frequently concluded that cases [of synesthesia] were pathological. For many [doctors], audiocolorists were neurotics [*névropathes*]. The influence of Lombroso [that is, Lombroso's assimilation of genius to madness] could be felt in this judgment» (Chaix 3). Indeed, one of Lombroso's most vociferous disciples was none other than Max Nordau, whose diatribes likened the synesthetic techniques of Baudelaire and René Ghil to antediluvian modes of sensory perception. If synesthesia is morbid pathology, then all the practitioners of the Symbolist school should be consigned «to the hospital, indeed, to the asylum» (Nordau 80). After diagnosing Rimbaud, Ghil, and Poictevin, Nordau observes that to reduce the variety and the refinement of the senses to a single sensory experience is to «bring human perfection to the low level of the mollusk and to proclaim as progress the return of human consciousness to that of an oyster» (Nordau 245-55 [141, Eng. ed.]). Nordau is not alone in this assessment. Anatole France wrote in 1890 that the synesthetes Rimbaud and Ghil were «exquisite sick men» (cited in Fiser 198), and that the future belongs «to Symbolism, if the neurosis [synesthesia] that produced it becomes generalized» (cited in Chaix 4).

The psychiatrist G. Gatién de Clérambault stated that hysteria particularly predisposes one to synesthesia (his female patients' use of silk, satin, and taffeta in connection with erotic phantasy while masturbating is a unique form of it). In Clérambault's case studies, the experience of pleasure as pain inevitably comes to light (687). Clérambault classifies this form of genital synesthesia (along with all other sexual perversions) as a degenerative syndrome – like hallucination, a phenomenon of disaggregation. He sees it as an automatism on a lower level of the «mental ladder» than other automatisms noted in the same case studies.

All the synesthesia that anyone could ever hope to find was contained in the person of a single individual, Ernest, an epileptic patient whose case was presented in the *Revue Philosophique de la France* of 1903. Ernest, «born in 1878 into a family of neurotics», had been epileptic from the age of three. His sense of color was extremely fine, and since early childhood he had been hearing human voices as «colored». The most intense color impressions accompanied the sounds of vowels. A was light green and had a bitter taste, as well as a cold feeling and the form of a flat surface, like a sheet of ice. E was yellow and tasted like buttered toast. O was red and sweet, like a ripe fruit; it was warm, and when it emerged from the mouth of the speaker, it looked to Ernest like a little red cloud. There were musical and other sonic synesthesias, too. The C of a violin was a shade of pink tinted with carmine, whereas the C of the piccolo was a yellowish pink. The sound made by a cow was indigo, whereas that made by a goat was light yellow. Circles appeared red and, naturally, had the sound of vowel o. The sensation of pain was accompanied by a certain taste and temperature. Pricking, pinching, and headaches also produced sensations of color. (Ulrich, *Revue philosophique* 181-82).

At the same time as cases of synesthesia less extreme than Ernest's are categorized as pathological, synesthesia is also put forth by physiologists as a **universal** phenomenon. Charles Henry's understanding of synesthesia encompasses dimensions ranging from the physiological to the poetic: the relationship of sound or taste to the sense of smell is «felt by every refined nervous system, the cortical center of perception of color and sound being localized in the same highly confined region of the cerebral cortex (*écorce*)» (Halperin ed., *Fénéon*, 555-56). What is perhaps most interesting is

that Henry's theories about how the different elements of the color spectrum affect the nervous system (some colors are «cool» or «sad» and inhibit nervous reactions, while others are «hot» or «gay» and generate energy) were «confirmed» by Charcot's experiments with muscular reactions to certain colors in his hysterical patients. Not only by Charcot but also by the observations of d'Abbadie, Galton, and Bertillon, which, «although they concern pathological facts ... are precious confirmation of the correlation of number, color, and direction» (Fénéon, *Oeuvres*, 170). In other words, experimental subjects who are continually prone to illusion and hallucination become the arbiters of scientific truth in questions of sensory perception (a necessary aspect of the experimental method as first elaborated by Claude Bernard), since science turns to them so often for the answers to its enigmas. The pathological is not barred from the construction of aesthetic theory, nor from the understanding of normal sensory and perceptual experience. Indeed, pathology, far from being excluded, is the crucial component of Decadent aesthetics in the fin de siècle, not only in questions of plot and character in literature, but also in questions of scientific validity. F. Fénéon is interested in synesthesia for its potential to validate artistic truth scientifically and thereby establish the value of art (Halperin 82).<sup>5</sup> «[As for] *the demonstration, until now refused by science, of a connection between the harmonies of all the senses, we finally have it*» (Halperin 172; emphasis added). Fénéon's cultivation of synesthesia in the prose of his art criticism seems harmless enough: in Seurat's color he perceives «a certain salty flavor», while Signac's colors «provoke each other to wild chromatic escalades, exult and shout» (cited in Halperin 93).

In an article from 1892 that summarizes the research into synesthesia up to that point, Alfred Binet, very much involved with psychophysical experiments at the Salpêtrière, writes: «Colored hearing has recently received a lot of attention. It has been treated several times in newspapers and in literature and scientific journals; it has been the object of medical theses, of articles... it has figured in poetry, in the novel, and even in the theater... Physiologists have focused on the problem.»<sup>6</sup> He inquires into two basic features of synesthesia, and he wonders whether the first of these – namely, the use of metaphor (that is, the expression of synesthetic experience by the statement that «e» is blue) – may be responsible for the fact that synesthesia is so widely misunderstood; the second feature is what Binet calls the «mechanical» or automatic association between sound and color. *In other words, he is concerned here with the two features that make synesthesia comparable to hallucinatory mental pathologies.* Explaining why a psychiatrist (or anyone else, for that matter) might classify synesthesia as pathological, Binet says that anything «exceptional» in the realm of sensation «appears abnormal and takes on the character of an illness» (593). This is an extremely telling remark, and it goes a long way toward explaining why so much art of the late 19th century could be regarded as pathological by writers like Max Nordau.

A vivid pleasure often accompanies synesthesia, but sometimes this pleasure can take on «a painful intensity» (597). Synesthesia not only causes intense pleasure and pain but also can act like a «real» sensation, one produced by an external stimulus. Binet thinks that any form of mental imagery that can acquire such a great degree of force must entail practical consequences: it *must* produce psychological changes in the Subject. The true synesthete *cannot* alter his associations, and its «fundamental character [of being] insurmountable [signifies that] one cannot consider synesthesia as a strictly physiological state; it is a *deviation*, no matter how insignificant, ... from the ordinary and normal workings of thought» (ibid; emphasis added). Binet perceives the «two

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<sup>5</sup> When studies of synesthesia were not based on data obtained from confined experimental subjects, the studies were often vague, like Charles Levêque's «L'Esthétique musicale en France»: «Instrumental voices, like human voices, render with clarity three sorts of *états de l'âme*: pain and joy, and between these two extremes, the simple movement of life» (*Revue Philosophique de la France*, 16, July-December 1883).

<sup>6</sup> A committee of seven physiologists was constituted at the 1890 International Congress of Physiological Psychology to standardize the terminology for describing this experience and to advance the understanding of synesthesia (Lawrence Marks, *Psychological Bulletin* 82, 3 [1975] 304).

parallel explorations» in literature and medicine as leading to different conclusions:<sup>7</sup> «While doctors have seen in colored hearing only a disturbance of sensory perception, poets thought to discover a new form of art there» (607).<sup>8</sup>

A decade after the publication of Binet's article, the novelist Victor Segalen published an essay that treated literary synesthesia with more sophistication than Binet was capable of bringing to bear on it. In synesthesia, there is a primary «objective» sensation and a secondary «echo sensation». When the «echo sensation» is *objectified*, projected into and situated in the external world as if it were a real sensation, it is comparable to a hallucination; when the «echo sensation» is simply *thought* (is simply a mental image), it is perceived as *analogous to* the primary sensation, rather than as an actual *manifestation of* it. Although Segalen thinks that synesthesia can never be a means to a collective or universal art (because, as Binet underlined a decade earlier, it is «exclusively personal» [67]), «profound artists» have «illuminated» their works with these «delicate suggestions that caress each listener's dream».

Segalen may be the first to have enlarged the notion of synesthesia to include abstract terms or principles evoked by a sensory term. A character or a fact can be evoked by musical leitmotifs, such as those in Wagnerian opera: the leitmotif is the «echo» of the primary sensation. The second term of a synesthesia can also be a feeling (*un Sentiment*). Segalen does not fail to see the correlation of synesthesia with Symbolism itself: «The symbol is the substitution for the primary term of the element evoked by this term.» Symbolism is the «subtle and precious *science* of these analogies» on a higher level (78). In other words, individual cases of synesthesia are subjective analogies, but art can raise analogy to the level of science.

For the novelist, it is a «fertile and powerful means of *cerebral excitation*» (79). But, unlike nicotine, alcohol, opium, caffeine, and «the excitation of dazzling lights», all «poisons of the mind», synesthesia – «a true Alkaloid of the chemistry of ideas» – is harmless, despite the fact that hysteria often coexists with it. However, any normal, healthy synesthesia can «become a symptom of mental disturbance if it transforms itself into a hallucination or obsession» (Segalen 83-84). There is only a question of degree, not of two distinct sensory-mental states. The *complexity* of the experience is also one of its «morbid» aspects (85). So the problem of pathology does not disappear so easily.

For Segalen, synesthesia is a new trope, similar to metonymy (since it proceeds by substitution), «rendered possible by the progressive refinement of sensory data» (86). «Synesthesia-the-trope

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<sup>7</sup> Binet makes an exception of Baudelaire because his «Correspondances» are vaguer, less rigid, and therefore less obscure (612).

<sup>8</sup> By 1908, there is a new way to look at sound and light correspondences. Sensations can now be regarded as abnormal because they «seem to run riot – instead of being linked with their respective images, they call up *associated* sensations» (Sidis 64). «In stimulating a sense-organ, ... the peripheral psychological process ... gets irradiated along other neurons of other sense structures .... Such sensations ... should be regarded as secondary sensations. The phenomenon is known as synesthesia» (62-63).

Such psychic states appear uncanny and are regarded as abnormal ... as freaks belonging to the domain of pathology. Now, curiously enough, our study reveals the fact that *what has been regarded as pathological and exceptional turns out to be ordinary and normal* .... Secondary sensations constitute the texture of the percept. The reason why [percepts] appear so strange is just that [they] are so common and so familiar .... Appearing alone, out of [their] perceptual context, [they] cannot be recognized as the old familiar attendant[s] ... and [appear] *ghostly, hallucinatory* .... [Yet] the main content of the percept consists in hallucinatory secondary sensations. *Percepts and hallucinations are of the same grain. A percept is a hallucination with the primary nuclear sensory elements present*, a hallucination is a «real» percept with the primary sensory elements absent. (65; emphasis added)

Lawrence Marks believes that synesthetic metaphors and metonymies reveal universals of perceptual experience: «Certain metaphorical similarities may be wired into our perceptual mechanisms .... If similarities are hardwired, they should not be considered metaphorical» (Marks, 1982).

marks a stage in literature, just as Synesthesia-the-sensation marks a period in our sensory evolution. Still dispersed and *having the appearance of an aberration in the brain*, but nevertheless already numerous, ... [the two] seem to be a progression, coordinating and situating themselves as *new functions of mental life*» (89; emphasis added).

To conclude, then, literary synesthesia typifies the paradox of the convergence of an extreme refinement, and a regression to primitive drives and feeling states. This paradox is fundamental to fin-de-siècle art and, played out in all its variations, constitutes that art's modernity.

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# Still singing after three thousand years: Orpheus and the orphic tradition – His psychological impact

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The myth of Orpheus teaches the principles of loyalty, dedication and fortitude that are pertinent to just rulership and to social responsibility in general as well as the power of love. The tale provides the basis of an ordeal tale, the psychological archetype of venturing into the subconscious for discovery and return. It has inspired, since classical times, countless creations in every art form. Orpheus is the musician, poet, preacher, lover, the singer of truth and lament and lyric, the artist who while losing his life remains the inspiration for others of the need for courage to love, of confrontation of and acceptance of loss. This remains as cogent and fruitful a theme today as it was three thousand years ago.

This Orpheus theme covers all historical periods, Classical, we begin with the representation of the Conversation of Orpheus mosaic at Paphos, Cyprus, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th/19th century, Modern and Contemporary, Post Modernism and numerous disciplines including, Classical Myth, Literature and Drama, Visual Arts, Music and Film. It is clearly outside of the more narrow scope of the discipline of English Literature.

Orpheus himself was not a «real person» but a tradition, and scholars seem now agreed that the legendary Orpheus never really existed, and that the many verses and poems attributed to him were the work of various hands. His followers constituted a band of priests and proselytizers quite similar to their later Christian counterparts, as they traveled around the Mediterranean proselytizing and dispersing their texts forged in the name of Orpheus, performing their purification rites and other priestcraft. Orpheus observed that the healing power of music lay in its relation to the mathematical structure of the cosmos and humanity.

In the Orphic Mysteries Bacchus is associated with Orpheus, the founder and author of the Mysteries. As such, Bacchus is known as the divine author, the hidden or secret author of the Mystery plays, masked to the outer world. Theatrical comedy and tragedy derive from the Orphic Mysteries, and so Bacchus is commonly referred to as the god of Drama.

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When we seek to explore and synthesize works of art from classics, literature and drama, art history, music and film within an historical context stretching from Homeric times to the present to investigate the psychological value of the theme of Orpheus and the Orphic tradition we discover why this theme has been so fruitful and how and why it continues to persist today as a source of inspiration.

The myth teaches us that young Orpheus, grief stricken after the death of his beloved young wife Eurydice who was slain by the bite of a viper while being pursued by Aristaeus, undertakes the dangerous descent into Hades to ransom her with his poetic gifts, his song. He plays his song so plaintively that relenting, Hades and Persephone, herself abducted at a young age, permit Eurydice to follow Orpheus back up the arduous path to the world of the living, provided that he will not look upon her until they reach the earth's surface, into the open air. Overcome by the passion of his love and concern for Eurydice, tired and wounded and spying the blue sky above, Orpheus irrationally disobeys the gods. Just as the couple are about to ascend into the daylight, he turns to glance over his shoulder at Eurydice and sees her vanish back into the sleep of death, into a shade and out of his grasp forever.

Hereafter, he wanders through Thrace, mourning with such a touching song that the trees and stones weep and beasts are stilled with pity. But not so the raging Bacchantes who are spurned by Orpheus who will have no woman after Eurydice, but instead, according to Ovid, has initiated the practice of homosexual love. The jealous Bacchantes tear him from limb to limb, and practicing *sparagmos*, feast on his flesh, and fling his lyre with his severed head into the river Hebrus. The Hymns of Orpheus, Plato's version of the myth, Virgil's and Ovid's versions of the myth, all tell of the severed head of Orpheus, still singing and prophesizing, and his lyre, washing up on the shores of the Island of Lesbos where the Lesbians enshrined them and hence, were rewarded with the gift of poetic voice which found superb expression in the lyric poetry of Sappho.

The relationship between Orpheus and Christ developed from Clement of Alexandria's identification of the song of Orpheus with the Word of Christ. For Clement and the early apologists, Orpheus prefigures the logos, which leads men to the truth and announces the coming of the New Jerusalem.

In addition to the classical versions, Boethius is the Medieval source of the myth, which is expressed, in the English Medieval lai of «Sir Orfeo». Following this the Renaissance philosopher Ficino and the Florentine Neoplatonists contemplate the Orphic writings and the theme is used abundantly in the visual arts of the 1400-1600. In 1607 Monteverdi's *Orfeo* allows the full union of drama and music and begins as an attempt to recreate Greek drama and results in a new tradition of music drama, which lasts four hundred years. Calderon's Baroque «El Divino Orfeo» circa 1634, two short plays or *auto sacramentales*, allegorize Orpheus as the word of God, Eurydice as the bride of Christ and Aristaeus as the Devil. The theme continued and it found further shape with Spenser and Milton.

With the approach of the modern era the theme is revived by the visual arts and poetry, especially the symbolists: Apollinaire writes his «Bestiary: or, The Parade Of Orpheus». Orpheus becomes the subject of operas by Gluck and Offenbach and later a ballet by Balanchine and Stravinsky, Maria Tallchief dancing Eurydice. Cocteau films the «Testament of Orpheus» and Anouilh writes *The Legend of Lovers: Orpheus and Eurydice*. Later over the course of seventeen years Tennessee Williams writes his «Orpheus Descending» which is filmed in two versions, «The Fugitive Kind» starring Marlon Brando and Anna Magnani and «Orpheus Descending» starring Lynn Redgrave.

In 1959 the world sees the film «Black Orpheus», notable for the music of Jobim which becomes linked with the Movimento Negro of Brazil where it is filmed. Twentieth century poetry abounds with the subject; Rilke writes his famous Sonnets to Orpheus and Denise Levertov composes her poem, «A Tree Telling of Orpheus» while the Nigerian poets adopt the name Black Orpheus for the title of their journal of African poets.

Contemporary music from the time of the crooners through Elvis and Jim Morrison to current singers can be seen to follow in the Orphic tradition. It remains a source of subject and inspiration

for artists today. Recent publications on the subject range from *Under the Spell of Orpheus. The Persistence of the Myth in Twentieth Century Art to the North American Indian Orpheus Tradition, Orpheus and Company: Contemporary Poems on Greek Mythology* to *The Earth Beneath Her Feet*, a recent novel by Salman Rushdie. Orpheus has even become a metaphor for the dismemberment of Contemporary Literature through criticism. Truly it is a theme which is still singing.

Why is this theme archetypal and why does it persist to provide inspiration for artists even today?

Each version of the tale makes use of the archetypal convention of the forest as the realm of enchantment, chance, and the unknown and also of growth, change and transformation. Since the time of the ancient sacred grove, the forest has been the place where humans meet with gods. It is the place of illicit love and the outlaw, the border between the cultivated world and the wilderness, the passage to what was for the Celts the realm of the Faery, the uncivilized, and the magical, the place of shapeshifting where herbs are gathered, spells are cast and where the Druids have sanctuary.

In the ancient myth recounted by Ovid's *Metamorphoses 10-11*, Virgil's *Georgics 4*, and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (3 metre 12), Orpheus represented the obscure realm of the pagan mysteries which, despite Christ's blinding light, coexisted with Christianity through the Middle Ages.

In early Christianity the metamorphosis of the myth developed into an identity between Orpheus and Christ with the interpretations of Clement of Alexandria of the song of Orpheus and the Word of Christ as correspondent. This story of sexual love became the fictional base upon which the allegories that compared Orpheus to Christ were constructed. During the Renaissance Orpheus reemerged to illuminate the Neoplatonists, who pondered the Orphic teachings and plundered them as a source of philosophical, poetic and artistic inspiration. This contemplation of the Orphic teachings of the Florentine Neoplatonists had a profound impact on the visual arts. Says Pico «Nothing is more effective in natural magic, than the hymns of Orpheus, if the proper music, mental concentration and other circumstances which the wise are aware of be applied».

In addition the didactic power of ordeal stories evokes courage; they passage through the dark forest window of the unconscious through grief, loss, depression and anxiety, as stories of survival. The adventure in the woods, in the view of Jung, is an inseparable part of the encounter with the animus. It is only when Orpheus leaves the underworld into the light of day, that he is reawakened to a new consciousness and yet he continues to wander in the forest, the symbol of the unconscious. His emotional difficulty is mirrored in this symbolic imagery, where he loses himself in the coolness of the glades. The forest provides sanctuary, its canopy a protective shelter for those who need a refuge from daily life. The forest's darkness brings forth hidden emotions and provides escape from mandates of law and religion. The forest allows Orpheus to express a profound and mystic feeling that dwells far beyond all rationalism within nature as a labyrinth of darkness and hidden forces. Jung explains:

«the forest dark and impenetrable to the eye, like deep water and the sea, is the container of the unknown and the mysterious. It is an appropriate synonym for the unconscious. Trees, like fishes in water, represent the living contents of the unconscious.... The mighty old oak represents a central figure among the contents of the unconscious, possessing personality in the most marked degree. It is the prototype of the Self, a symbol of the source and the goal of the individuation process. The oak stands for the still unconscious core of the personality, the plant symbolism indicating a state of deep unconsciousness. From this it may be concluded that the hero of the fairytale is profoundly unconscious of himself. He is one of the 'sleepers', the 'blind' or 'blind-folded'...» (Jung in Alex Aronson, *Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare*, p. 206).

And so the Orpheus myth remains as a symbolic tale of the importance of self expression, the confrontation of one's depth of feeling and the danger which comes to those who fail to face their inner darkness and transform their grief. It suggests a metaphor for the psychoanalytic process. Perhaps this accounts for why it is constantly revived as a theme in the arts even today.

Orpheus was the magic singer, the poet that illuminates the uplifting and informing spiritual power of his gift, the first poet in the Greek mythology, who, like Solomon, or like Vyasa, the mythical poet of the Mahabharata, could speak the languages of animals and plants and stones. Orpheus, this inspirational archetype of poet and priest, became an archetype of musician, of creator, of cursed poet, or an artist, one who ventures from the Garden, which signifies a loss of innocence, the searcher going to the Underworld.

Orpheus' descending to the underworld is a variation of a rebirth Archetype; his journey to the underworld and back (as Virgil says, any fool can go down there, but to return – this is the labor, this is the task) is more than the search for his lost wife Eurydice. It means as well the recovery of the organic connection with the rest of the universe. Orpheus' look back exemplifies a breaching of the veil that separates us from the divine, the disobedience and punishment which ensues is echoed in Lot and his daughters.

In «The Inner Meaning of Poetic Form» Frederick Turner has elucidated further:

«Orpheus can make his journey only because he possesses and can use his lyre, the instrument by which Greek poets kept the measure of their meter and gave their lines a rhyme. It is the lyre that opens the gates of the underworld; and it is when Orpheus fails to trust its magic, and looks back to see if Eurydice is following, that he tragically loses her forever.

We can follow the mysterious logic of the myth still further; for the lyre of Orpheus (and of his father Apollo) was originally the invention of Hermes, who traded it for the caduceus, the snake-entwined rod by which he conducts mortals between the lands of the living and the dead. It so happens that the double helix of the two snakes is an exact model of the shape of the DNA molecule; and this is not just a coincidence, for the double helix is perhaps the best intuitive diagram of any feedback process, and DNA is the feedback process of feedback processes. If the lyre, then, is in some sense equivalent to the caduceus, we may infer that the meter of poetry is analogous to the meter of biological reproduction and evolution.

And so Orpheus belongs to the same pattern of fertility symbolism that one finds in the rituals of such other «saviors» as Osiris, Tammuz and Balder. They too, were of divine or semi-divine birth, they flourished, were killed, and were reborn. They belonged, in fact, to cyclic religions in which the death and rebirth of the god-King was an eternally recurring myth.»

Orpheus is the first to venture forth into and return from Hades and so remains the original searcher and guide. Today there rests in the British Museum a pre-Socratic document, the Petelia tablet from the 4th-3rd century BCE which was found in excavations of a tomb near Petalia in southern Italy and was written in Greek on a leaf of thin gold rolled up and placed in a hexagonal cylinder on a delicate gold chain and worn as an amulet, clutched to the breast of the deceased to give protection and direction in the underworld, a passport to the universe.

It says:

«You will find a spring on the left of the halls of Hades, and beside it a white cypress growing. Do not even go near this spring. And you will find another from the Lake of Memory, flowing forth with cold water. In front of it are guards. You must say 'I am a child of earth and starry heaven, but my race is of heaven (alone); this you yourselves also know. I am dry with thirst and am perishing. Come, give me at once cold water flowing forth from the Lake of Memory'. And they themselves will give you to drink from the divine spring, and thereafter you shall reign with the other heroes.» (Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, Kathleen Freeman, Oxford, 1971.)

For memory and song are what connect us all to the history of humanity and we are, all, like Orpheus, searchers, «We are stardust We are golden And we've got to get ourselves Back to the garden».

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- «I came upon a child of God He was walking along the road And I asked him, where are you going And this he told me I'm going on down to Yasgur's farm I'm going to join in a rock 'n' roll band I'm going to camp out on the land And try and get my soul free We are stardust We are golden And we've got to get ourselves Back to the garden Then can I walk beside you I have come here to lose the smog And I feel to be a cog in something turning Well maybe it is just the time of year Or maybe it's the time of man I don't know who I am But life is for learning We are stardust We are golden And we've got to get ourselves Back to the garden By the time we got to Woodstock We were half a million strong And everywhere there was song and celebration And I dreamed I saw the bombers Riding shotgun in the sky And they were turning into butterflies Above our nation We are stardust We are golden And we've got to get ourselves Back to the garden»

# Sylvia Plath's Man in Black: Lacanian phallus in mourning

DIANNE HUNTER (\*)

In the context of muse representations in North American white women writers coming of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including Adrienne Rich (born 1929), Joyce Carol Oates (born 1938), and Margaret Atwood (born 1939), Sylvia Plath's imagination of demonic masculinity in her journal account of the party where she first met her husband stands out for its examination of white, puritanical attitudes and its sense of psychic complicity in World War II. Plath (1932-1963) conceived her personal history as participating in the political history of German Fascism. She examined the implications of that history for heterosexual romance and for writing as a white woman.

Plath's «man in black» appears as a rector in her late Bee poems (1962), as a professor and a Nazi in «Daddy» (1962) and as black marks against *tabula rasa* surroundings in «Man in Black» (1959). The poem «Daddy» gives us perhaps Plath's most famous version of the man in black:

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,  
In the picture I have of you,  
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot  
But no less a devil for that, no not  
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.  
I was ten when they buried you.  
At twenty I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you.  
I thought even the bones would do

But they pulled me out of the sack  
And they stuck me together with glue.  
And then I knew what to do.  
I made a model of you,  
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.  
And I said I do, I do.

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Adrienne Rich's 1971 essay «When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision» observes that «at this moment», there is «for women writers in particular», a «new psychic geography to be explored» ([1971], 1979, 35). Quoting Jane Harrison's question to Gilbert Murray, «Why is Woman a dream and a terror to man and not the other way around?», Rich names two twentieth-century American women poets for whom The Man is, «if not a dream, a fascination and a terror». In the work of Diane Wakoski and Sylvia Plath, says Rich, the source of fascination and terror «is, simply, Man's power – to dominate, tyrannize, choose, or reject the woman. The charisma of Man seems to come purely from ... his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life-giving in him». In the poetry of both Plath and Wakoski, says Rich, the woman's sense of herself as embattled and possessed gives the work «its dynamic charge, its rhythms of struggle, need, will and female energy» (36). Wakoski's glamorous male figure appears in *Motorcycle Betrayal Poems* (1971): the bumblebee man in a black-leather jacket with petrol grease under his fingernails who buzzes away on his motorcycle, sonic expression of testosterone. Plath's dominant male figure includes the male addressee in her austere poem titled «Man in Black»: «you, across those white/ Stones, strode out in your dead/ Black coat, black shoes, and ... hair», a «Fixed vortex» «riveting stones, air, /All of it together» (CP, ed. Hughes, 119-120). The black-haired man in black coat and black shoes pictured at land's end pulls the stony seascape together as Plath's terse black marks on the white paper tick out the finale of the poem from its bleak surroundings. The man in black is phallic in the symbolic sense articulated by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) in the late 1950s, around the same time that Plath was discovering her man in black.

The phallus, claimed Jacques Lacan, derives its cultural centrality and power from its capacity to symbolize the transmission of life between generations and therefore the capacity to leave a trace, including a legacy of words. The phallus as a signifier thus represents the power of not only biological transmission of life but patriarchal cultural transmissions: «It can be said that this signifier is chosen because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent there to the (logical) copula. It might be said that, by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation. The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of logos is joined with the advent of desire» (Lacan [1958], trans. Sheridan, 287).

My argument here is that the male muse in the psychic territory Rich calls «The Man» represents sexualized death and the Lacanian phallus in mourning. The mourning phallus represents a concept of masculinity marked by the legacy of the twentieth-century's two world wars.

The man in black can be seen as a resented and desired muse figure in Wakoski, who had not read Plath. An avatar of the man in black appears as well in the demonic Arnold Friend of mesmerizing voice and Pied Piper irresistibility in Joyce Carol Oates's 1966 short story «Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?», made into the film *Smooth Talk* (1985, directed by Joyce Chopra), with Treat Williams as the threatening and seductive Friend. Comparable though marginally more benign male friends appear as seducers, lovers, and muses in Margaret Atwood's 1976 novel *Lady Oracle*, which presents the story of the development of a literary artist as a young woman. The woman writer-protagonist in this novel models her emerging vocation and public image in part on Sylvia Plath and on Tennyson's doomed «Lady of Shalott». The novel presents a series of male figures formative to the young woman writer: a man with daffodils who lurks in a dreadful gully waiting to exhibit his genitals to schoolgirls; a recessive father, now a surgeon, with a hidden history of killing suspected traitors within the French Resistance during World War II; and a rightwing Polish aristocrat who lives in postwar exile in London, keeps a secret gun, and makes money by churning out trashy romances. All these artistically-formative male figures boil down in a novel within the novel to an alluring romance villain, Atwood's version of Plath's man in black.

Thanks to Sylvia Plath's numerous biographers (Edward Butscher, 1976; Linda W. Wagner-Martin, 1987; Anne Stevenson with Olwyn Hughes, 1989; Paul Alexander, 1991; Ronald Hayman, 1991); plus the determination with which Plath recorded her personal life in journals, letters, fiction, and poetry; and the vehemence and persuasiveness with which her husband finally wrote

back, publishing his version of their life together in *Difficulties of a Bridegroom* (New York: Picator, 1995) and *Birthday Letters* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), Plath's «man in black» can be identified at least in part with Ted Hughes. Indeed, Hughes complained that commentators on Plath's work were writing about him. In «Black Coat», published in the 1990s in *The New Yorker*, the man in black writes back to Plath: «I had no idea I had stepped/ Into the telescopic sights/ Of the paparazzo sniper/ Nested in your brown iris./...No idea/ How that double image,/ Your eye's inbuilt double exposure/ Which was the projection/ Of your two-way heart's diplopic error,/ The body of the ghost and me the blurred see-through/ Came into single focus,/ Sharp-edged, stark as a target,/ Set up like a decoy/ Against that freezing sea/ From which your dead father had just crawled./ I did not feel/ How, as your lenses tightened,/ He slid into me» (*BL*, 102-103). Since Sylvia and Ted put their personal life on paper for a public to read, it is difficult if not impossible to avoid the biographical when analyzing Plath's man in black. But beyond the biographical and autobiographical concerns, one must ask why this particular version of masculinity recurs in the work of North American women writers who came of age after World War II, and why it is discernible as well in such popular entertainment representations during this era as the character Johnny, played by Marlon Brando, leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club in *The Wild One* (1953, directed by Laslo Benedek), widely recognized as a landmark film of 1950s youthful rebellion.

In 1959, Plath confided to her journal, «It is as if Ted were my representative in the world of men» (Kukil, ed. 466-467). Described in *Burnt Diaries* (1999) and *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet* (2001), by his contemporaries Emma Tennant and Elaine Feinstein respectively, Hughes was an articulate Teddy Boy, known as «Ted Huges» because of his height, and «Heathcliff» because of his Yorkshire accent and outsider status at Cambridge University, where, as an undergraduate in the 1950s, he rarely bathed and went about in smelly black corduroys. For an overcoat Hughes wore an uncle's World War I army-issue hand-me-down, representing not only his relative poverty and the drab world of post World War II England, but Ted's role as bearer of the legacy of two World Wars. In a fictionalized account of their first meeting, written in 1957, Plath dresses the Ted Hughes figure in an out-at-the-elbows black sweater with a green shirt underneath it, suggesting a renewing, vegetal green man poking through wearing-out, ritual black. This character is named Leonard, suggesting an association to Leonard Woolf, husband of Virginia, a writer Plath saw as a trailblazer for her own literary ambitions.

Like the masculine ideal one still hears about in America, the actual Ted Hughes was tall, dark, and handsome. As his life unfolded, the «dark» about him became less his black hair and clothes than his depression, rooted in the legacy of his father's traumatic participation in the Gallipoli battle of 1915. Hughes's poem «Out», from the mid-1960s, suggests that European wars have left a woeful weight on the survivor family of England, which should close its wounds within its sea boundaries as an island. The mortified, possessed speaker in this poem, now a man, has encrypted within, like an anchor holding his «juvenile neck bowed», cast iron grief, the internalized weight of his father's psychic mutilation in World War I ([*Wodwo*, 1967], *NSP*, 87-89).

In her 1974 essay «Fascinating Fascism», Susan Sontag discusses the aesthetic and erotic appeal of Nazi SS regalia, quoting the back cover of a British-compiled book of photographs showing SS costumes and insignia:

The uniform was black, a colour which had important overtones in Germany. On that, the SS wore a vast variety of decorations, symbols, badges to distinguish rank, from the collar runes to the death's-head. The appearance was both dramatic and menacing (Sontag, 322, quoting *SS Regalia*).

Sontag observes that SS uniforms were stylish and well cut. They were «tight, heavy and stiff», including «gloves to confine the hands and boots that made legs and feet feel heavy, encased, obliging their wearer to stand up straight» (322). Like all military uniforms, the SS style was supposed to intimidate the enemy, project power and inspire respect and fear.

The *SS Regalia* book cover blurb doesn't say what the «important overtones» of black were in Germany, but one may imagine they were co-determined by the convergence of least three strands of significance: 1) The grief symbolized by black clothing ritually worn as a sign of respect for the dead; 2) The spirit of people mourned in their absence, to be avenged in the Nazi bid to reclaim Germany from its defeat in World War I; 3) Death itself owned as a power to be feared and therefore commanded.

Plath's «man in black», «Daddy's» panzer-man [a man in a World War II tank moving on treads, stealthy and relentless as a panther] and Daddy at the blackboard with a cleft in his chin instead of his foot, but «no less a devil for that», appear to be forms of the fascinating, fearful figure Rich has in mind when she mentions Plath's work. But insofar as Ted Hughes became Sylvia's muse, and the «Man in Black» in her early poem with that title represents black marks on white paper, the marks that pull a scene together, it isn't quite true to say that the charisma of Plath's Man comes not from fertility but from forceful control of the world. Hughes's fascination for Plath was rooted in his literariness. Plath's masculine muse has imaginative, creative power, a power to dream and evoke, and the power to draw and withdraw inspiration; he is a teacher and role model as well as a lover and husband. Though as a poet he represents mastery for Plath, she writes of Hughes and his dark, poetic friends after first actually meeting them in person: «Well, they are hardly white, even though they are men» (Kukil, ed., 214). Describing in her journal how Ted had «banged a black grinning look» into her eyes, Plath says, «I would like to try just this once, my force against his». She notes that «the blonde one, pure and smug and favored, looks, is it with projected pity and disgust?» at the side of herself that is «this drunken amorphous slut» (Kukil, ed. 212).

Rich's 1971 artistic credo brings to mind various entries in Plath's journals; her poems «Pursuit», «Man in Black», «Colossus», and «Daddy»; as well as the short story «Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams», where Johnny Panic «injects a poetic element» (*JP* 157). Abandoned by her husband, Plath wrote her most famous poem «Daddy» on October 12, 1962, the day she learned Ted Hughes had agreed to a divorce, and an anniversary of her father Otto Plath's leg amputation. «Daddy» describes the speaker's ambivalently exorcised husband as a «man in black with a Meinkampf look/ And a love of the rack and the screw», and as a vampire who said he was Daddy and drank her blood for a year. By invoking in «Daddy» the title of Hitler's (1925-27) autobiography and manifesto *Meinkampf* (German for «my struggle»), Plath identifies the man in black as a Fascist. The speaker says she had to kill Daddy; but she adds sardonically, he died before she had time. The dead Fascist Daddy is «black shoe» organizational man, a «ghastly»/ghostly statue spanning the American continent from San Francisco to Nauset inlet on Cape Cod, an engine chuffing the speaker, «like a Jew», to World War II concentration camps, a panzer-man, a black swastika, a devil, a Professor standing at a «blackboard», a «black man» who bit his daughter's heart in two, and finally a vampire with a stake in his heart, danced and stamped on by villagers. If one imagines the speaker joining in the stamping dance, she has by the end of her poem herself powerful, joyful, destructive feet, a transformation not only of the poor white foot of stanza one but the adored «boot in the face» of stanza ten. These feet are poetic as well as corporeal and militant. They have the sexual beat of Plath's line «Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You».

The range of epithets identifying the Father as a Nazi, colossus, ghost, panzer-man, brute, boot in the face, vampire has led commentators to identify Daddy with patriarchal phallic power, and the male literary tradition that makes it difficult for a woman poet to breathe or sneeze, much less speak (Axelrod, 227). The opening stanza: «You do not do, you do not do/ Any more, black shoe/ In which I have lived like a foot/ For thirty years, poor and white, / Barely daring to breathe or Achoo» recalls the nursery rhyme «There was an old woman who lived in a shoe. She had so many children she didn't know what to do», and «moocow» and «baby tuckoo» in the opening sentence of James Joyce's 1912 *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. A poetic narrative of female psychological maturation, Plath's «Daddy» yokes together baby talk: «Daddy», «Achoo», «chuffing», and «gobbledygook», with educated allusions to «Tyrol», «Dachau», «Auschwitz», «Belsen»,

«Luftwaffe», «swastika», «Fascist» and «panzer-man». The maturing speaker reports difficulty in learning to talk: «The tongue stuck in my jaw. /It stuck in a barb wire snare.» She stutters, «Ich, ich, ich, ich/ I could hardly speak/... I began to talk like a Jew».

Plath's poetic terrain is racially marked by her heritage as a German American. She so hated studying the German language that she stabbed what look to be ice-pick holes in her German textbook, now preserved in the Mortimer Rare Book Room in Neilson Library at Smith College, Plath's undergraduate Alma Mater. In *The Bell Jar* (1962), Plath's autobiographical protagonist describes Gothic German script looking like barbed wire, suggesting that the language perhaps marks a battle zone or forms the perimeter of a World War II prison camp.

By identifying the speaker of «Daddy» as «like a Jew», and someone who thinks she may «well be a Jew» whose Daddy is a black man, Plath goes to the heart, writes Renée Curry, of what constitutes whiteness. To the Aryan imagination concerned with racial purity, the German, along with the Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian, says Richard Dyer, evokes the «apex of whiteness» (Dyer, quoted by Curry, 163). Plath's contemplation of Germany involved images from films she had seen of the opening of concentration camps after World War II and memories of Otto Plath, who, she writes, «heiled Hitler in the privacy of his home» (Kukil, ed. 430). Plath's poetry written in the aftermath of Ted Hughes's departure from their home suggests that her situation of perceived abandonment triggered a reliving/revision of the 1939 death of her father when she was 8 years of age and the first news of Nazi victories in Europe was being broadcast to America.

Sylvia's eroticized, hateful construction of Otto Plath in her poetry can be analogized to the traumatic realization of war guilt Bernard Schlink sets out in his 1995 novel, translated into English as *The Reader*. A fifteen-year-old German boy living in Germany in the 1950s, Schlink's protagonist Michael falls in love with Frau Hanna Schmitz, a woman of the previous generation who lives in a formerly-grand apartment building now in decline, smelling of cabbage, and subject to «the scream of saws» (11) from a carpenter's shop in its courtyard. Michael keeps their sexual relationship a secret from his friends and family. Though he feels obscurely guilty, Michael at the outset of the novel remains unconscious of his own and his parents' survivor guilt; he only gradually comes to know about World War II as any German child would have who was born after the war. Michael's relationship with the middle-aged Hanna can be analogized to growing up German after the war, loving your parents and then discovering what their generation had done. After the mysterious Hanna Schmitz leaves his city suddenly and without explanation or farewell, Michael goes numb, adopting «a posture of arrogant superiority», as if nothing could touch him (88). He fails to have a good relationship with any woman because none of them are Hanna, on whom he remains physiologically fixated.

When Michael gets to law school, he takes a seminar on the Nazi past and the related trials. This brings him into a courtroom, where he is surprised to see Hanna again for the first time after many years. On trial for war crimes, she turns out to have been guilty of more than seducing a boy.

For me, the psychic impact generated in this book stems from Michael's having felt pain for the loss of a woman later found to be guilty of war crimes. The crimes happened before his time; but having loved Hanna implicates Michael in her acts. This is an after shock because at the time the relationship started, Michael did not know who Hanna was. If she had just been lost to him, the significance and emotional impact of the book would be smaller. What generates the book's powerful affect, as I understand it, is Michael's *ex post facto* recognition of having loved a person who participated in Nazi crimes.

Sylvia Plath writing about her father as a Nazi shows comparable deferred affect. She was 8 when he died. She discovered German guilt later by seeing films of the opening of death camps after the end of the war. In 1959, during her Boston year, Plath reconstructed in psychotherapy with Ruth Beuscher memories of Otto Plath Heil Hitlering at home – perhaps expressing Nazi sympathies in private, perhaps acting like a Fascist patriarch, or perhaps both. At that time, Daddy became Plath's subject. Her psychotherapeutic work with Dr. Beuscher, which Plath wanted to use «to the hilt» (Kukil, ed. 476), moved Plath to visit Otto Plath's grave. This visit found its way into the

«black coat» in Plath's poem «Man in Black», written during the time Ted and Sylvia were living in Boston, the poem that received its reply in Hughes's «Black Coat» decades later.

Sylvia Plath's cognitive style tended to divide the world into sharp oppositions (Axelrod, 219), so, if Daddy is a «black shoe», she is «poor and white». In wishing to break out of her constriction by Daddy's shoe, not only a German shoe but a Nazi boot, Plath as a poor white foot must «blacken the father» (Curry 163) and remove herself from his blackness. She thus becomes a Jew to his Nazi. Attempting to separate herself psychically from her father, whose power she associates with blackness and Nazism, she imagines taking on the role of persecuted and executed Jew.

Analyzing Plath's racial imaginary, Renée Curry quotes Richard Dyer on the racial indeterminacy of Jews. In Aryan ideology during World War II, Jews and gypsies were not regarded as white. Like the Irish or the Mexicans however, in different places and in different eras, «Jews have been both included and excluded» from racial whiteness; and their indeterminacy «has been used as a 'buffer' between the white and the black or indigenous» (Dyer, quoted by Curry, 163). A «buffer» is a shock absorber. Thus, the imaginary Jew the speaker becomes in «Daddy» is a shock absorber permitting, writes Curry, «multiple associations with and protections from whiteness. As a Jewish victim of Nazis, she is non-Aryan. As a Jewish victim of Otto Plath, whom she describes as black in the poem, she is white. As a white woman claiming identification with Jews, she proclaims separation from the domineering whiteness» of Nazis (Curry, 163-164).

These multiple identifications provide the poet with openings for moving between varying psychic positions. Jacqueline Rose explains how Plath's mobility from one position to another in «Daddy» forces its readers to enter into a set of fantasies they are often unwilling to consider except on «condition of seeing it as something in which, psychically no less than historically», they play «absolutely no part» (Rose, 236). But there is a problem when stanza ten declares, «Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute/Brute heart of a brute like you». Here the speaker appears to exchange her affinity with the victimized Jew for adoration of the Fascist, and claims this adoration emerges «from her womanliness rather than from her Jewishness» (Curry, 164). Rose thinks these lines pose the question of women's implication in Nazi ideology, a reading that works if the speaker is imagined to be a masochist, or a vicarious sadist observing a man kicking in someone else's face and getting off on his display of violence. Perhaps the speaker joins mob violence, for the final stanza disperses the agency of violence among the avenging villagers who come to dance and stamp on the staked vampire Daddy.

Rose says that her own excitement in working on Plath was in seeing how the poet «seemed to articulate together in the space of her writing – in a single text, a poem, a line of a poem... a strong, articulate protest against» the very social institutions with which the poet was pleurably involved. At the same time that Plath is voicing women's protest, she is also «acknowledging women's complex and sometimes self-defeatingly pleasurable engagement in the very structures against which they protest». Plath's ability, writes Rose, «to hold these two things together in such a way that they didn't cancel each other out, but if anything strengthened both, was, I'm sure, one of the reasons for my continuing fascination in and commitment to her. Plath allows us to think about political language in which recognition of the 'perverseness' of the fantasmatic and the assertion of political protest and identity could be articulated simultaneously» (1993, 238).

The perverse fantasy of simultaneous protest and erotic turn-on shows in the way the poem «Daddy» iterates cooing sounds in its rhymes «do», «shoe», «Achoo», «you», «du», «Jew», «gobbledygo», «who», «glue», «screw», «two», «true», «knew» and «through». The cooing incantation of the marriage vow «I do, I do» recalls the witch in *Macbeth* who chants, «I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do». These «oo» rhymes reverberate with Plath's married name «Hughes». The poem declares, «If I've killed one man, I've killed two – /The vampire who said he was you/And drank my blood for year/ Seven years if you want to know». This vampire «man in black» is the husband the speaker has made a «model» of Daddy.

Like the iterated cooing sounds in «Daddy», incantatory internal rhymes on the name «Hughes» inform Plath's poem «Pursuit», dedicated to Ted Hughes in her journal, and written shortly after

the two poets met at the now famous 25 February, 1956 party celebrating the launch of the short-lived *Saint Botolph's Review*. The title word «Pursuit» contains an internal rhyme on the letter «u». The ambiguous, ironically prophetic first two lines declare, «There is a panther stalks me down:/ One day I'll have my death of him». A sexualized transformation of William Blake's (1794) «Tiger, Tiger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night», Plath's panther-man of «yellow gaze» is a radiant «black marauder, hauled by love/ on fluent haunches». His «taut thighs» are «hungry». The «h» in «hauled», «hungry» and «haunches», the «u» in «fluent», and the «gh» in «thighs», along with the «TH» (Ted Hughes) embedded between the words «fluent haunches», and at the beginning of the word «thighs», and in the second syllable of the word «panther» – all suggest that Plath is saying «Ted Hughes», calling him to come to her. She says, «Blood quickens, gonging in my ears:/ The panther's tread is on the stairs», suggesting she can hear the excitement in her blood, Ted is coming up the stairs. This excitement is part erotic and part literary; the sexual partner is both a devouring predator and a «voice» that «spells a trance» (CP., ed. Hughes, pp. 23-23). This treading panther-man transforms in the love-hate poem «Daddy» (1962) into «panzer man» (World War II tank): «Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You –/ Not God but a swastika/ So black no sky could squeak through.» The thrusting repetition in the line «Panzer-man, panzer man, O You –» suggests erotic pleasure in being dominated, rolled over by a hated invader.

Having bought a copy of the first (and only) issue of the *Saint Botolph's Review* from her Cambridge friend the American student Bert Wyatt-Brown (now a Professor of History at the University of Florida), Plath immediately memorized its poems by Hughes and by the American poet Lucas (Luke) Myers. She knew Hughes as a poet on paper before meeting him as a flesh and blood man. To celebrate the *Review's* launch, its literary contributors organized a party to which Plath arranged to go. That evening, Plath approached Lucas Myers at what she called the «Bohemian» party in Falcon Yard, Cambridge. The party took place above a fish market, the party space permeated with the smell of it. Plath writes in her journal that she «began talking about how Luke was satanic». Lucas Myers was very drunk, reports Plath, who, before arriving at Falcon Yard, had herself gotten fairly drunk in a pub with the Canadian student Hamish Stewart, her escort that evening. Plath describes Lucas wearing «dark sideburns» and a «stupid satanic smile on his pale face». She moves on to another poet published in the *St. Botolph's Review*, an unfriendly reviewer of poetry Sylvia had published in Cambridge magazines. Cruising through the poets in the room, she next comes to Than Minton and Daniel Weissbort, both *Saint Botolph* contributors; and finally to the «dark and immaculate» poet and editor David Ross, whose father had financed the *Saint Botolph's Review*. Plath sums up this crew: «They were all dark.» The jazz, she writes, «was beginning to get under [her] skin». Lucas Myers appears to smile with «that far-off look of a cretin satan». Plath remarks, «I suppose if you can write sestinas which bam crash through lines and rules after having raped them to the purpose, then you can be satanic and smile like a cretin Beelzebub».

«Then» writes Plath, «that big, dark, hunky boy, the only one there huge enough for me, who had been hunching around over women, and whose name I had asked the minute I had come into the room... came over and was looking hard in my eyes and it was Ted Hughes. I started yelling again about his poems and quoting... and he yelled back, colossal, in a voice that should have come from a Pole.... We shouted as if in a high wind about the review... I was stamping and he was stamping on the floor, and then he kissed me bang smash on the mouth and ripped my hairband off... and my favorite silver earrings: hah, I shall keep, he barked. And when he kissed my neck I bit him long and hard on the cheek, and when we came out of the room, blood was running down his face.»

Hughes himself later understood the bloody bite as Plath's branding him (BL, 15). If she branded Ted as her possession, her bite also connects to her Cambridge journal view of herself as a vampire filled with «old, primal hate» (Kukil, ed., 200). Reporting the blood running down Ted's face, Plath writes, «His poem, 'I did it, I,'» quoting Ted's *Saint Botolph's* poem about a man who murders another man out of mysterious, instinctual mutual hatred. «Such violence», writes Plath, «and I can see how women lie down for artists. The one man in the room who was as big as his

poems, huge, with hulk and dynamic chunks of words; his poems are strong and blasting like a high wind in steel girders. And I screamed in myself, thinking: oh, to give myself crashing, fighting, to you» (Kukil, ed. 211-212).

In her Boston *Globe* review of Plath's *Journals*, Diane Middlebrook notes that the forcefulness of the diction here: «bam», «crash», «bang», «smash», «blasting» conveys the idea that «sexy is violent, writing is sexy, writing is violent». Striving for authority, Plath's journal-writing exercises are efforts to find the diary of a novel that will represent her vision: «'The modern woman: demands as much experience as the modern man.'» The force of Plath's morning-after account of the night of the *Saint Botolph*'s party where she met the «one man» who could «blast» her previous lover Richard Sassoon provides momentum, says Middlebrook, for the decision to write what became «the definitive scene in *The Bell Jar*» (E2). Plath writes, «I shall write a detailed description of shock treatment, tight, blasting short descriptions with not one smudge of coy sentimentality, and ... I shall send them to David Ross» (Kukil, ed. 212). The word «blast» describes what Ted could do in her mind to Richard. Ted's poems are «blasting like a high wind». Ted said her name «in a blasting wind which shot off in the desert behind» her eyes. Plath will write «blasting» descriptions of shock treatment. Eventually this impulse finds its way not only into the autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* (1962), but also the short story «Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams» (1958), and the pivotal high voltage psychic rebirth via shock treatment in the «Stones» section of «Poem for a Birthday», written at Yaddo in 1959.

Having worn red shoes, a red bandeau, bright red lipstick, and a flashy outfit to the party, the diary-writing Sylvia the next day describes herself «demure and tired in brown, slightly sick at heart». Though she would like to try her force against Ted, she thinks he won't look for her and she «could never sleep with him anyway» because, «with all his friends and his close relation to them», she «should be the world's whore, as well as Roget's strumpet». Here sex is imagined to be like writing: sleeping with a man whose friends will know is like using a thesaurus to write. (Plath inherited her father's thesaurus when he died).

Plath's journal describes the rest of her remarkable *Saint Botolph* evening. Having told Sylvia that Ted Hughes was «the biggest seducer in Cambridge», Hamish invites her to his own room in Queen's College, which will require them to climb over the spikes on the locked gate. As she goes over the fence, Sylvia, wearing a tight skirt, pierces her skirt as well as her hands, thinking she might lie on a bed of spikes and feel nothing, or be crucified near an anthill like Celia Copplestone [the adulterous young woman who becomes a religious martyr in T. S. Eliot's play *The Cocktail Party*]. Of her hands, Plath remarks, «The stigmata». Inside Hamish's room, they lie down on the floor by a fire and Plath begs Hamish to «scold» her. Slow on the uptake, Hamish tells her she isn't a «whore or a slut» but «only a very silly girl». Suddenly, writes Plath, it was two-thirty and she «couldn't imagine being illegal», so they sneak back out, Sylvia apparently disappointed by Hamish's failure to play Richard Sassoon's role as sexual disciplinarian.

In the fictional account of this episode published as «Stone Boy with Dolphin», when Hamish kisses the Plath protagonist Dody Ventura, «Nothing stirred». When tiptoeing down the staircase of her escape route, Dody's hand sliding down the rail feels a splinter enter her index finger, but she keeps «her hand sliding down along the rail, right on into it». We read: «Unwincing. Here. Strike home. The splinter broke off, embedded in her finger with a small nagging twinge.» The couple crash through a rough-thicket of briars that scratch and scrape the woman's legs. The splinter, the briars, and the metal spikes on the gate prove more penetrating than Hamish.

Back at last alone in her own college room, Dody Ventura opens her window: «The cold took her body like death.» Going to sleep after «the first cock crowed», readably an allusion to masturbation, Dody does not fathom the sun blooming «virginal in the steel-rimmed eyeglasses» of the woman working downstairs in the kitchen whose «widowed bosom» fountains clear light, «giving back the day its purity» (*JP*, 191-192, 195). In this story, the woman without a man restores purity, but the woman who seeks a man gets hurt, doesn't obtain satisfaction, and gets stigmatized.

*Saint Botolph's Review* was named for the Church rectory where Lucas Myers found lodgings in a disused chicken coop after difficulties living at Downing College. It is a remarkable convergence of cartography, psychic geography, and history that the Church of St. Botolph memorializes a seventh-century martyr who founded a monastery destroyed by the Danes near the present town of Boston (from «Botolph's Stone») in East Anglia, from where Puritans under John Cotton, a Vicar of St. Botolph, sailed in 1633 to Massachusetts Bay colony and founded Boston, Massachusetts. Plath's concept of purity frames her journal account of the «Bohemian» *Saint Botolph* evening: «A small note after a large orgy. It is morning, gray, almost sober, with cold *white puritanical eyes*; looking at me» (Kukil, ed. 210, my italics).

In the fictional reworking of this account, Dody, wasting her time with Hamish, appears to have missed a sort of poets' *Kristallnacht*. In Falcon Yard, says the story, before dawn, «panes of the diamond-paned windows» fall in «jagged shards to the street below. Crash. Bang. Jing-jangle. Booted feet kicked the venerable panes through before dawning» (*JP* 194).

When Plath in her journal records actually consummating her attraction with Hughes, she describes a «holocaust night with Ted in London», which left her «battered» and «wounded» (Kukil, ed. 552). She writes, «Re Ted: Consider yourself lucky to have been stabbed by him» (Kukil, ed. 570).

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# About new aspects of psychocorrective music hearing

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This paper focuses upon an interaction between different human representative sensory systems – auditory, visual, and kinesthetic – in the process of music hearing. The study will consider that such an interaction gives people important additional opportunities for psychological self-improvement. The paper seeks to reflect on the roots of human emotional reaction to music patterns. It suggests the concrete ways how the guided listening to music may contribute to the guided mood change.

**Terms Definition.** The term «*Psychocorrection*» is used here to refer to the improvement of a human state, as distinct from the term «*psychotherapy*» which holds mostly a clinical sense. There are two main reasons to use music in *psychocorrection*: 1) psychological, 2) physiological.

1) Music is the most hypnotic and non-specific art where one can hear, see, and feel something during a time dimension. Therefore, music is very well suited for personal psychocorrection. Listening to music serves as a means of the development of the right brain hemisphere, with its prevalent imagery and holistic thinking.

2) Music has also curative powers in aspect of physical health. It is known, for example, that music has an effect on blood pressure and cardiac rhythms. This phenomenon may be actively used though the synesthetical hearing of music.

The term of «*Synesthesia*» is interpreted as «the condition in which a sensory experience normally associated with one modality occurs when another modality is stimulated» (A. Reber, p. 779). This phenomenon has been an object of numerous investigations in the field of visual arts. In the field of music the main accent has traditionally been made on colored hearing as the experiencing of color with auditory stimuli.

The term «*Guided imagination*» signifies the special approach to the listener. One of the most important condition of such an approach in my framework is the application of certain synesthetical links in individual imagination in order to conduct the change of humane mood.

The psychocorrective role of the guided synesthetical imagination might be especially important in the following aspects:

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1) Music can produce a trance effect similar to that produced by certain drugs. It may therefore be used as a substitute for drugs and can thus promote a drug-free lifestyle in those whose drug addiction is a result of a strong desire to be more creative.

2) Music may also aid in the solution of some gerontological problems because it can provide the so-called mental age regression, transferring the listener to the world of his childhood by means of music recollection, so called auditory anchors.

**Problem Statement.** In spite of the essential interest to the question of psychocorrection by means of music, nowadays, there are only a few professional attempts being made in this direction. As a cause, the following key obstacles may be considered:

1. Narrow specialization: psychologists usually do not have sufficient professional knowledge in the field of music; musicians, for their part, are unfamiliar with psychological theories. In addition, practitioners are, as a rule, rather separated from theory scholars.

2. Considerable informative disconnection between the investigations in different countries.

It should also be noted that there are some differences in approach to the roots of the problem of «healing music hearing». Some scientific schools, for instance in the U. S., pay much attention is to music appreciation, cognitive musicology, and music therapy. In Russia, however, there is deep experience in the discipline of ear training, concerning not only classical but also contemporary music with its non-third harmony and irregular rhythms. There is a highly hierarchical system of musician skills development. It provides rich practical material and a well adjusted methodological base for the study of music psychocorrection.

**Aims of Study.** The main aim of my research is to combine the achievements of the Russian academic school in the field of ear training with the newest foreign achievements in the field of modern psychotechnologies and, thus, to contribute to further development of music psychocorrection using professional music tools.

It is important to note that the traditional music therapy approach is usually based on discrimination of the music mood only as a whole, without the examination of its components. In this connection, the proposed approach would be the first to provide more detailed information about concrete components of the musical influence on human psychological state and activity.

**Background & Scientific Base.** The successful development of the study of music psychocorrection now is favored by achievements in practical psychology and psychotherapy and the new fields of these sciences which have been extensively developed for the past 15 years. In particular, my investigation is based on guided imagery, music psychodrama (J. Moreno), and anthropomorphical hearing (P. Kivy) as well as on *neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)*. Thus, my table of associative links (see it below in the text) has been elaborated on the base of the theory of submodalities extraction developed by G. Grinder and R. Bandler (USA).

**Personal experience of the author.** This paper has also incorporated the author's research in professional ear training, theory of modern harmony, and practical psychology. It is a part of large study on psychotechnics of ear training which has been my Post Doctoral dissertation (Moscow, 1999).

**Empirical data.** The main experiment on synesthetical hearing was conducted by the author in 1992-2002. Among participants there were students of different departments at Moscow Conservatory, including foreign students, as well as non-musicians of different age and social level.

**Main Contribution.** The main claim in this study is that it is quite possible to elaborate the scientific methodology for selection of the following opportunities provided by music: basic communicative (rhetorical) melodic and rhythmic patterns, as well as the basic trance (meditative) elements (such as revolving melodic patterns, with «the loss» of down and up rhythmic beats, or the Messiaen's modes etc.).

**Illustrative interventions.** In this paper, the sensory modalities theory and the submodalities extraction methodology have been considered as basic for the music material demonstration. In

order to illustrate this theory, I will present some of distinctive samples of chords to show the concrete ways of synesthetical hearing.

Numerous experiments have shown that certain types of chords are invariably perceived by the people in certain color (or in sector of color spectrum), geometrical figures, clearness, volume, contrast, density, temperature, taste, smell and so on. Given below, the methodological table is presented which collects the main visual, auditory, and kinesthetic submodalities within three modalities.

SUBMODALITIES OF SENSORY PERCEPTION

| VISUAL<br>how we see                                      | AUDIAL<br>how we hear                            | KINESTHETIC<br>how we move and feel  |
|---|--|--|
| Color<br>(kind or a part of spectrum –<br>war/cold shade) | Pitch<br>(high, middle, low)                     | Movement and its direction<br>(ascending, descending, horizontal)                                |
| Brightness<br>(bright, pale, fade, dark)                  | Timbre   | Weight<br>(light, heavy)   |
| Shape<br>(round, angular)                                 | Tempo<br>(fast, slow)                            | Texture<br>(smooth, rough, stichy, elastic, foamy)   |
| Distance<br>(near, far)                                   | Mono/Stereo                                      | Temperature<br>(hot, mild, chilly)   |
| Contrast degree<br>(high/low contrast)                    | Duration<br>(prolonged, discrete)                | Muscle feelings<br>(strained, relaxed, torpid)   |
| Size of mental «picture»<br>(large, small)                | Dynamics<br>(loud, low)                          | Pain feelings<br>(acute, aching, dull)   |
| Clearness degree<br>(clear, slurred)                      | Resonance<br>(sonorous, dull)                    | Smell<br>(fragrant, perfumed, floral, fresh, pungent,<br>strong, acrid, smoky, chemical, poison) |
| Movement in your «film»<br>(is it static or not)          | Distance from the sound source<br>(near, remote) | Pressure<br>(knocked down, floating, fluttering)   |
| Framing<br>(with frame or panoramic)                      | Articulation<br>(conjunct, disjunct)             | Taste<br>(sweet, bitter, sour, salty, insipid, spicy,<br>hot)                                    |

**Necessary explanations.** Using this table, listeners have being got an access to their own potentialities. In this way, different types of chords – in classical and modern structure – were given for synesthetical analyzing. Thus, Webern-style chords (such as «g-es-fis», etc.) were permanently associated with cold colors, crystal in texture, chemical smell, pain feelings (NB: all of these components may influence the decrease of blood pressure and pulse). Chords with pentatonic base («f-b-d-g-c»), etc.) were linked in perception with somewhat natural, warm, sweet/fresh, relaxing etc. Chords in Spanish style (like «d-a-fis-c-es-f») were perceived in red

spectrum as aggressive, spicy, and hot ones. (NB: these type of imagination may conduct the increase of blood pressure and pulse.)

**Essential results.** On the base of practical investigations, the special classification of chords and their typical influence has been made (M. Karasseva, 1999).

One of the additional psychological and pedagogical results has been the fact that listeners have always changed their believes. They used to think that synesthetical hearing is an attribute of only a few eminent musicians like A. Skryabin or N. Rimsky-Korsakov who were known to have a colored hearing. During several music sessions, listeners began to discover that they could to hear not only in color, but also in touch, taste etc. This «amazing discovery» has raised their creative feelings and has strengthened their interest to music.

After having focused on a chord perception, I should say a few words about creation of positive states of mind by means of music listening.

There are two main types of music resources: external and internal.

External resources are on the level of environment and behavior. This is mostly march, dancing music.

Internal resources are as usual connected with the human belief level. It is possible to mark two main types of the positive resource access:

- 1) by means of so called age regression,
- 2) through the music guided regulation of the scale of human emotional states.

The first type may be realized when a composer wish to play with different musical styles within one composition. In such a polystylistics (often in A. Snittke's compositions) there are «Mozart style» fragments implanted in the modern hard-sounded music.

It is interesting to mention that during the traditional psychotherapeutic session a client is searching for positive stimulus as a rule only in his individual memory. The power of music gives people the opportunity to spiritually attach to earlier period of history, to the golden age of mankind by means of applying to the eternal values and cultural wealth. Also for purposes of the genetic memory arousal, the modal scale of pentatonic as one of the most ancient mode system is successfully used.

Within the second type of access to resources we can mark two groups: toning up (like the beginning of the First concerto by P. Tchaikovsky) and relaxing resources (like «Swan» by C. Saint-Sans) with quiet still sounds.

Therefore, it would be practically efficient to analyze and systematize, from presented point of view, music literature with the regard for different historical and national music styles.

**Major Outcomes to be Achieved.** The significance of the presented approach consists of the possibility of the wide interdisciplinary outcome of its basic ideas. This possibility is based on the expectation that many laws of the perception of musical language to be discovered during my investigation, will turn out to be important for other communicative structures too.

Presented approach gives opportunity for a wide music-psychological correction. It shows that music may be effectively applied not only for clinic purposes (as it used in the frame of music therapy) but also for a social psychocorrection based on creative imaginary and holistic thinking. One possible application is the establishment of «music self-improvement» seminars in high schools and colleges.

**Discussion.** It seems that the further practical exploration of my ideas may be of helpful use both for psychologists and for educators. The results of this study provide them with a new theoretical methodology of submodalities extraction on the base of music patterns.

Potentialities of music psychocorrection may be extended if we are able to get an effective selection and application of music elements and forms. The act of listening to the music and guided imagination in concert halls is actually a kind of unique session of psychocorrection because all the people can perceive the same music form while filling it with their personal sense.

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# The uncanny and the real: The anticipation of the abomination

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*Déjà vu: A plane crashes into a massive skyscraper and leaves a black hole outlining the shape of its penetration. Flames lick the windows of a towering inferno; black smoke billows out of a dark gash in its side; tiny figures leap from high ledges into space, falling, falling. The tallest buildings crumple and collapse like sandcastles, while incredulous millions watch helplessly. We have been here before.*

On 9/11/2001 most Americans sat glued to the screen of their television sets, watching a rerun over and over again in numb disorientation. Many had watched the original event as it happened, in real time. But even in real time, knowing that we were watching a unique act of devastation, the scenes before our eyes seemed familiar and unreal. For even as this historical event unfolded, it was quickly recognized, placed in a familiar category, and given a local habitation and a name: «it's just like a movie», the newscasters blurted out, a remark echoed repeatedly that morning; «it's just like *Independence Day*», «it's like *Towering Inferno*». Even King Kong scrambling up the Empire State Building after having devastated midtown Manhattan entered the chain of association. Thus the actual reality before our eyes was almost immediately transformed into and by the virtual reality of Hollywood, and made familiar, *deja vu*. In this assimilation, as we turned to the movies to orient us to the real disaster, the historical was confused with the fictional, and the event of 9/11 itself – familiar and unfamiliar, real and unreal – took on an uncanny ambiguity.

Indeed, our response to 9/11 made disturbingly clear how much our perceptual experience as well as our psychic life is filtered and managed through films we have seen, even experienced as films we have seen. But these associations to films also pointed to a set of preexisting anxieties, mirrored and exploited by films, that were released by the trauma of 9/11. In *King Kong* (1933), for example, the Empire State Building had stood as an icon of the cultural power of New York, the «Empire» state, which in spite of the Depression, could withstand and ultimately overcome the primal forces embodied in the giant ape – though barely. Fifty years later the status of the Empire State Building and its symbolic significance had been displaced by the World Trade Center. Now it was not New York but the United States that was the empire state, its imperial power and outreach signified through the new euphemism, globalism. And its phallic icon, the World Trade Center,

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arguably the biggest erection in the Western World, was uncannily doubled by *twin* towers, a doubling whose psychic logic insured its indestructibility. Like the Gothic cathedrals of past centuries, this addition to the skyline of New York stretching heavenward seemed to confirm America's privileged relation to omnipotence. (For this reason alone, how could the World Trade Center not be a target of rage and envy for those outside its arena of dispensation?)

Americans have long believed themselves the chosen people, a nation founded in, and protected by, both innocence and godliness. Puritan dogma had initially propagated the belief that economic success was the sign of one's chosenness, and while that belief had been tested a number of times since the founding fathers declared that we deserved to pursue happiness, in the twentieth century only Vietnam seriously punctured our idealized self-image. (It was no accident that Vietnam elicited a new name for what Freud had called «the war neuroses»: PTSD remained widespread in part as a correlative of our collective disillusion with our role in Vietnam and its effects on returning veterans.) Yet by the end of the twentieth century, those war wounds seemed to have healed; our virtue seemed to be increasingly confirmed by world events – perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the defeat of our archrival, the Soviet Union – the last evil empire – and the subsequent explosion of domestic wealth on Wall Street. As the century drew to a close, we were riding the crest of a new wave of illusion, a childlike faith in a well-stocked and bountiful future that we had earned, and that the World Trade Center symbolized. Narcissistically confident in our unchallenged position (even though the stock market rumbled a bit), we were alone at the top of the world. «I made it, Ma, top of the world!» James Cagney had cried out from the top of a skyscraper in *White Heat* (1949) before the reality principle shattered his delusion. Was there not something analogous in our situation in the 90's? How long did we anticipate staying on top?

Slavoj Žižek points out that the most deeply unsettling traumas are not those that are entirely unexpected, but those which are anticipated in fantasy, those in which one has a libidinal investment.<sup>1</sup> Wasn't the World Trade Center disaster such an event? Was there not from the beginning of its ascent an anxious anticipation of downfall, of a plunge equal in intensity to the reach? Was there not something of that anxiety already hovering over its observation deck – where the visitor who peered vertiginously over the edge was rewarded but also terrified by its awesome prospect? Surely, a similar anxious exhilaration must have hovered around visitors to the observation deck of the Empire State Building in mid-century, when it was *that* structure that towered over the city as its sublime embodiment. Yet after World War 2 America was the good guy in its rescuing relations to the world, more admired than envied. The horrors of Hiroshima were still buried under the justification of its having shortened the war and saved Allied lives (and indeed never fully disclosed to the public until John Hersey's book)<sup>2</sup>. The Holocaust was something that happened in Europe and could never happen here; our version of apartheid was still excluded from national scrutiny. On

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<sup>1</sup> «When we hear how the bombings were a totally unexpected shock, how the unimaginable Impossible happened, one should recall the other defining catastrophe from the beginning of the XXth century, that of Titanic: it was also a shock, but the space for it was already prepared in ideological fantasizing, since Titanic was the symbol of the might of the XIXth century industrial civilization. Does the same not hold also for these bombings? Not only were the media bombarding us all the time with the talk about the terrorist threat; this threat was also obviously libidinally invested – just recall the series of movies from *Escape From New York* to *Independence Day*. The unthinkable which happened was thus the object of fantasy: in a way, America got what it fantasized > about, and this was the greatest surprise.» «Welcome to the Desert of the Real», (internet), in Indymedia.

<sup>2</sup> «In “Hiroshima and America,” Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell (Avon Books, 1995) detail the ways in the US government curtailed the reporting of the press, independent authors and scientists not inclined to follow the party line. Photographs and other evidence of the effects of the bombs on civilians were suppressed, and alternative “stories” that downplayed the effects or plain lied were circulated and published. While the publication of John Hersey's book changed this somewhat and allowed the US public to begin the process of acknowledging

the surface, we still shared a pervasive sense of apple-pie goodness and still heard as our destiny the ringing rhetoric of a God Blessed America.

We are less naive today; we have come to know that the discourse of foundational innocence on which Americans had established their public identity had hidden a more rapacious reality. If America in the nineteenth century saw itself figured as the new Adam, the multi-culturalist ethos of the late twentieth century has insistently uncovered behind that figure of innocence acts of economic and social exploitation – particularly toward the Native Americans who, like the European Jews a century later, were almost decimated as a cultural entity, and toward the Africans on whose back an economy grew without reparations. Given the rapidly expanding international gap between the culture of plenty and the culture of poverty in our own time, would it be surprising if many of us unconsciously anticipated envious acts of retaliation from the margin, from unknown antagonists «over there»? After several decades of globally exporting media images of American prosperity to those struggling for economic and cultural survival elsewhere, did we not perhaps in some corner of our minds expect some version of the fiery flights that were propelled from the Middle East, expect that after all the sunshine of the past decade, a sandstorm might blow into the United States from another center of energy, where our ceremonies of innocence are engulfed in outrage? Only our hubris kept us from acknowledging the probable consequences of our position. 9/11 opened our eyes.

What were we seeing when we saw the black gash in the side of the first tower? What did we imagine was happening inside that dark hole spewing flames? What confirmation did we dread when we saw that wound repeated like an exclamation point as another plane blasted into the companion behemoth, now both spewing flame and ash? The blasted side of American narcissism? A castration? A deserved punishment for some unacknowledged guilt? An apprehension of an even greater catastrophe to come?

Clearly, the sight of the World Trade Center buckling, collapsing into a heap of rubble was a trauma to our national identity as well as a real disaster for thousands who lost their family and friends. Especially for those who identified with New York's skyline, those for whom the World Trade Center was a self-object as well as those for whom it served as a symbolic bulwark against undefined external dangers, the collapse of the towers was unthinkable and at the same time the very image of what was thought. The rubble – itself a compelling metonymy for the invisible incineration of the thousands who were trapped inside – marked our fall, our entrance into the culture of political violence. After years of prelapsarian security, we were falling into a new knowledge. This was not, however, the fortunate fall of Adam and Eve, our myth of origins; through that fall, we are born into the human world, precipitated into a symbolic universe of discourse which can contain our erotic and aggressive energies and displace our terrors. The traumatic fall of the World Trade Center precipitated us into a more primitive anxiety of obliteration; it shattered our symbolic certainties, forcing us to acknowledge the reality of disintegration and annihilation through the very materiality of the ash and debris raining down on lower Manhattan.

And through something even more disquieting: there were actual people falling along with the ash and debris; some were even jumping, forced from the fire into the abyss *as we watched*, already anticipating their certain deaths seconds later. Significantly, although European television showed these images, they were withheld from the American reruns, as if too much to re-present here. Indeed, the experience of the assault on America was mitigated for television viewers by the

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what occurred, the controversy over the exhibit in the Smithsonian a few years ago (in which veterans and other groups successfully prevented the inclusion of evidence of effects on civilians) demonstrates that the US public, cultural authorities and the government are still not ready to face the truth, regardless of how one stands on the military necessity of the bombing. In other words, killing civilians in wartime does not only have effects on the targeted state, but is something quite troublesome for the citizens of the state which does the killing.»

Janine Holc, Loyola University, email on Holocaust list, August 26, 2002.

absence especially of sound and smell; the trauma to civic identity was primarily carried through a visual field that was mediated by commentary. (In a recent CBS screening of the documentary, *9/11*, a French documentary filmmaker filming the firefighters inside the North tower captured the off-screen sound of bodies hitting the ground outside, a sound reflected on the faces of the firemen who winced with each awful thud. And the viewer winced with them. Thus a visceral core of the traumatic scene was played out on the TV screen for those who had seen the falling bodies but not heard them.)

In «Falling from the Sky» (*Diacritics*, 1999), Eleanor Kaufman observes a link between trauma and falling that seems critical to understanding U.S. television's early foreclosure of images of falling people. Falling, she points out, is itself a marker of the abyss-like structure of trauma. *Falling: losing ground, being pushed over the edge, «catch me I'm falling ...»* My own free-fall thoughts suggest that archaic memory traces of infantile experiences inhabit the metaphor of falling, signifier of the ultimate loss of control, of agency, of self. In all likelihood, the fear of falling is part of our neurobiological makeup and contributes to our survival; but it is certainly compounded by a host of psycho-cultural associations that came to the fore on 9/11.

But there is more to the fear of falling than the fear of falling; falling evokes not just memory but fantasy, contaminating both memory and desire with perverse wishes that push us past our limits, urge us toward risk, even toward death itself. Romantic writers especially were on familiar terms with this seduction:

We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss – we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably, we remain. By slow degrees our sickness, and dizziness, and horror, become mired in a cloud of unnamable feeling. By gradations, still more imperceptible, this cloud assumes shape.... But out of this our cloud upon the precipice's edge, there grows into palpability, a shape, far more terrible than any genius, or any demon of a tale, and yet it is but a thought, although a fearful one, and one which chills the very marrow of our bones with the fierceness of the delight of its horror. It is merely the idea of what would be our sensations during the sweeping precipitancy of a fall from such a height. And this fall – this rushing annihilation – for the very reason that it involves that one most ghastly and loathsome of all the most ghastly and loathsome images of death and suffering which have ever presented themselves to our imagination – for this very cause do we now most vividly desire it. (Edgar Allen Poe, «Imp of the Perverse»)

No wonder that the response of witnesses to the realization that it was not just debris, but people who were falling, even leaping, from the windows produced sheer terror; it was the terror of a radical ambivalence about life itself that was called up by our empathic identification with those images on the screen. Was this also a reason they were so quickly suppressed? Certainly to make a spectacle of those forced to jump is ethically repugnant, but it is also beyond the limits of what we can bear to see. The images of live people becoming falling bodies were too real, opening the viewer to a mimetic identification with figures of imminent death that was, that is intolerable.

In fiction, of course, we are permitted to flirt with the abyss. Alfred Hitchcock, a master of uncanny effects, mined the fear of falling in *Vertigo* (1957), in which the acrophobia of the protagonist Scottie and his compulsion to repeat the past in pursuit of an impossible ideal, points to his own perverse drive toward death. *Vertigo* ends with an uncanny repetition of the scene that has controlled the narrative from its beginning, a fall from a high tower. Similarly, E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sandman*, Freud's exemplary text of the uncanny, ends with Nathaniel, its protagonist, hurling himself from a high tower after he spies the dreaded sandman. In the way that death haunts life, both scenes of falling haunt their respective tales. Both illustrate aspects of the uncanny that Freud first elaborated and that haunted our perception as we watched the traumatic collapse of the World Trade Center into itself – falling not once but twice. An uncanny repetition indeed, externalizing our traumatized interiority, reifying our inchoate apprehensions.

Freud had described the uncanny as occurring when archaic beliefs we thought we had surmounted suddenly confront us in the world of ordinary reality; among the most common, dread of the evil eye, of confusing the living and the dead, of being buried alive or pushed over the edge. In *The Sandman*, Freud pointed out, Nathaniel had been threatened as a child with a fearsome punishment for wanting to stay up and spy out his father's secrets: the Sandman would come in the night and throw sand into his eyes, blinding him. Interpreting that punishment as a form of castration for oedipal wishes, Freud described how the story traces the hallucinatory repeated return of the persecutory Sandman at significant junctures in Nathaniel's adult life. At the tale's climax, Nathaniel, having climbed a tower with his fiancé, spies the Sandman below and crazed by the sight, leaps to his death. Looking, seeing too much, can be suicidal.

Freud used the Oedipus myth as an explanatory narrative, structuring inchoate experiences to extract their meanings transforming seemingly random acts into metaphors. This is the task of literature: to contain in metaphors the unspeakable as it assaults us from within and without. A century ago, Gothic fiction gave us ruined castles, labyrinthine interiors, cliffs and abysses: these external sites were the formal images that conveyed the apprehensions of an increasingly labile society that was reconfiguring its boundaries under the pressure of historical flux.

Today, Hollywood is the prime producer of popular images for our psycho-cultural life, but the stakes have been raised. Gothic castles are gone, but their secret interiors are now illuminated and projected onto the screen: what had been taboo is now overtly offered for our voyeuristic delectation; sex and violence have dominated the forms of our specular play. But the recurrence and blockbuster success of the disaster film speaks to something more: to a heightened and pervasive sense of imminent catastrophe, of a massive global trauma waiting to happen. Indeed, I think it speaks to our anticipation of a trauma to the *species* itself, our extinction foreshadowed through realistic fears of nuclear proliferation, pollution and global warming.

And what has been our response to these fears?

Trauma has become the shared currency of contemporary metaphors: narratives of rape and child abuse, mass murder within the home, genocide, the Holocaust – all have become grist for the mill of popular titillation as well as the subject of historical curiosity. Trauma has become aestheticized, that is to say, an object of pleasure which we avidly consume. Witness the recent proliferation of Holocaust representations: the media resurrection of visual images of the starving Jews of the ghettos and concentration camps, of bodies being shoveled into mass graves, corpses piled like dung on a heap to be buried or burned. Corpo-real trauma, hard to look at, harder to acknowledge as a version of the human, of the self, and yet compelling. Documentaries have become fictional docudramas that exploit images of abjection that we watch as if at a Roman Circus, not cheering but gasping. Brutally realistic films capitalize on the historical traumas of the past through new digital film technology, so that veterans of the Normandy invasion seeing *Saving Private Ryan* described themselves as re-traumatized by the realism of the filmic representation. Perhaps the most vulgar of such circus acts is reality TV, in which survival is a sport and humiliation a gratification to the viewer. Cumulatively assaulted by images of violence from around the globe and from within the American dream-machines, we seemed already to have been preparing ourselves for apocalypse, and to be fascinated by the prospect.

And then came 9/11.

Many of us sat frozen before the images on the screen, our own compulsion to see repeatedly mirrored on the screen as again and again we were shown, again and again we watched, what could not be actually happening. Yet we could not not watch. What does it mean to be so fascinated? One recalls that the Latin *fascinum* was a phallic amulet that was worn around the neck and gave the wearer the power to freeze whoever looked at it, made every wearer a Medusa, rendered every viewer motionless. The eye of the snake fascinates its prey in the same way.

«Fascination of the abomination», Joseph Conrad called it in *Heart of Darkness*, pointing to the perverse seduction exerted by images of human degradation on the one hand, transgression on the other. Within the novella, Conrad plays with the image of the Congo River as a primordial

fascinating object, a snake winding its way through the center of the map of Africa. It compels him to make his journey into the heart of Africa, an unknown interior where, without the usual boundary-marks, he confronts the multiple faces of abomination. Tormented and emaciated African workers, the human detritus of the European rape of the Congo, lie around dying, while the manicured managers plot their own advantage; shrunken heads surround the house of Kurtz, the European idealist who had gone into the interior to bring enlightenment, but ended by scrawling «Exterminate the brutes». And the ultimate abomination: Kurtz himself, the fascinating object of Marlow's quest, who in the pursuit of an ideal, has lost all restraints: «He had kicked the earth to pieces», Conrad writes, admiring the sheer destructive narcissism of this over-reacher, but also horrified by the implications of such absolute power. The analogies to the Holocaust are startling. Doesn't Kurtz foreshadow Hitler, his delusion of omnipotence and his blind pursuit of an idea leading like the Nazi Leader's to «the horror, the horror»? And isn't there something of this horror in the absolutist drama of good and evil to which we became committed on 9/11?

Conrad gave voice to the fascination of the abomination at the end of the nineteenth century, at the height of a barbarous European imperialism in Africa. A century later, when we are the only imperial power left, that fascination has returned in the form of our fascination with spectacles of death and dying, with a voyeuristic relation to the Real. 9/11 was hyperreal, but also surreal in its evocation of the uncanny. We saw death that day in the only way that we could see it and live, as a dark hole in the side of a superstructure, the site of the disappearance of the object, which nevertheless left the trace of its impact in space. For a day we looked at what we couldn't see, and lost our bearings. We became frozen in time and time became frozen in us. 9/11: a zero state – ground zero of the psyche.

But watching that disintegration on the screen, we also recognized with shame and guilt the relief of being safe, of experiencing the shudder of the real as a specular event. On the evening of the disaster, on *Nightline*, Jonathan Franzen characterized 9/11 as having a terrible beauty, taking the phrase from Yeats' apocalyptic poem, «The Second Coming». Coming too soon, that characterization must have unsettled many viewers who were looking for another kind of comfort. And yet Franzen was not wrong. On that severely bright and clear morning in September, a set of compositional elements came together – downward from the sky and upward from the earth – in a material interaction that had its own aesthetic, moving from form to formlessness through a shattering of form, a trauma.

It is this experience of titillation and terror, numbing depression and the fullness of the moment, disgust and the recognition of a certain beauty in the formal image of devastation, feelings that seemed to be not uncommon during the first few days following the disaster that made it such a complex psychic as well as social and political phenomenon. On that day we had our fall: we watched the enactment of a multidimensional set of primal fears uncannily become history: the invasion of our invulnerable boundaries, the failure of the Law of civilization and the collapse of social guarantees that are enforced by its prohibitions, and an apprehension that we too will be pulled from civilization with all its discontents into a dark hole, into what actualization of the unspeakable in our blind pursuit of justice. «Exterminate the brutes?» Perhaps because we live with a post-Holocaust consciousness, soaked through with images of death and disaster both virtual and real, 9/11 stirred up the terrors of our political and social condition and infused them with echoes of archaic psychic history. And as is our collective habit, we turned to the security of the movies.

Jonathan Hensleigh who wrote «Armageddon» (1998), a Disney movie about an asteroid hitting Earth, remarked that he hadn't really worried much about the effects of the scenes of devastation in his film, which included computerized images of smoldering twin towers. «When we made 'Armageddon,' we all of us certainly didn't think we were going to be seeing any of those images in real life... When it actually does happen and you're watching it on CNN, frankly, it gives you the creeps.» It certainly does.

# The psycho-history of Riviere and Klein's book, *Love, Hate and Reparation*: Reparation in Klein's evolving theory, clinical experience, and self-representation

ELIZABETH M. FOX (\*)

## INTRODUCTION

Like writers of fiction, psychoanalysts presumably «write what they know». In *Love, Hate and Reparation*, Joan Riviere and Melanie Klein explain, in non-technical language, «the instinctual sources of emotion in normal adults» (front cover). Presented in March, 1936, as public lectures titled «The Emotional Life of Civilized Men and Women», the talks were revised and published in 1937 under the new title, emphasizing the reparative impulse and mechanism for negotiating between love and hate. In the first half, «Hate, Greed and Aggression», Riviere introduces the destructive tendencies and dangers they pose to the infant and growing individual and analyzes men and women's envy of each other, motives for infidelity, and dynamics of jealousy. Her final section, «Conscience, Morality and Love», touches on religion's attempts to control «hate and egoism» (46). Just before World War II, Riviere writes, «severe disillusionment ... [with] extreme insecurity, depression and helplessness» might have «manifested itself had not a gradual reaction set in», taking the form of «interest in the *external* world and of a *search for truth and goodness in material things*» (46). She considers external conditions important but often a deterrent to «the even more difficult struggle for inner riches and peace of mind» (51). As a result of emphasizing the material, she writes, «the vicious circle of aggression and disruption is increasing its momentum; the Western civilization which owes so much to the power of love may even be destroyed .... the civilized form of life seems to be in danger of disintegration» (52). Her part of the book ends with pleas for constructive outlets, tolerance, and imagination. In contrast, Klein's part is longer (62 pages vs. 50); comes second (carrying more weight); has a more positive title – «Love, Guilt and Reparation» as opposed to «Hate, Greed and Aggression»; attends even less to the outer and more to the inner world than Riviere's; and implies expertise in reparation while illuminating Klein's

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struggle towards it, in cases of a good friend, understanding mother, puzzle-solving theorist, daring explorer, and creative woman at peace with herself.

Measuring four by seven inches and one hundred and nineteen pages long, the volume is deceptively light; it bridges the gap between Klein's «discovery» of the depressive position in «A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States» (1935) and its fuller formulation in «Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depression» (1940). *Love, Hate and Reparation* presents reparation in terms of development, examples from adult life, and self-revealing material. The mid-1930's found Klein «in her professional hey-day», Juliet Mitchell states; Hanna Segal calls the article on manic-depressive states «a watershed in the development of Klein's thought» (both, Mitchell, 115). Reparation played as key a role in Klein's personal and theoretical life as in the book's title. While mourning her son's death (possibly by suicide) and writing as a manic defense, as Grosskurth suggests (218) against acknowledging any part in it, Klein enjoyed a period of great productivity. Histories of her theory and her life make examples in «Love, Guilt and Reparation» all the more telling about Klein's own reparative efforts.

John Rickman's «Preface» terms the book a «departure in psycho-analytical exposition because it calls for understanding the workings of the unconscious» (v); with a lay audience in mind, it omits clinical evidence and theoretical justifications for its conclusions. Instead, the book describes the integration of loving and hating impulses, which Rickman calls an individual's «long and painful struggle»:

his attempt to deal with these unconscious processes in himself, the way in which he tries to push intolerable thoughts and impulses out of his consciousness, and finally, his growing awareness that when these buried thoughts are brought to light they do explain things about himself which are otherwise inexplicable. (v)

Beyond the light these processes shed on the universal struggle to integrate love and hate, they speak poignantly to Klein's struggle, especially around mothering. Klein saw stressful periods as the best opportunities for analysis, and her work demonstrates ways she used the turbulent years after her son's death in April, 1934: that August, for example, she read her paper on manic-depressive states at a Lucerne conference. How well, then, does Klein know reparation? Better in print than in life.

## THEORETICAL HISTORY

Klein first mentions reparation in a 1929 article, «Infantile Anxiety Situations in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse» but it appeared earlier in Riviere's work.<sup>1</sup> A key term in the mechanisms of the depressive position, reparation is Klein's most original idea during this time.<sup>2</sup> «[M]aking reparation», Klein says, «is a fundamental element in love and all human relationship»; it occurs when in «unconscious phantasy we make good the injuries which we did in phantasy, and for which we still unconsciously feel very guilty».<sup>3</sup> The book treats the concept more fully than any previous paper, if not in explicit relation to theory, and inserts reparative mechanisms into a framework of lifelong psychic development. Klein argues the existence of «a profound urge to make sacrifices, in order to help and to put right loved people who in phantasy have been harmed or destroyed. In the depths of the mind, the urge to make people happy is linked up with a strong

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<sup>1</sup> Petot notes that Klein uses the idea, not the term, in «Criminal Tendencies in Normal Children», (Petot 266). Grosskurth states, «Riviere's Vienna Exchange Lecture had been the first to elaborate the concept of reparation» (236).

<sup>2</sup> Petot, Vol. I 265.

<sup>3</sup> *Love, Hate and Reparation* (hereafter referred to as LHR) 68.

feeling of responsibility and concern for them» (65-66). This urge finds expression through the mechanism of reparation, which takes varied forms and can appear in a sadistic (hate- or aggression-dominated) phase although it arises from co-existing genital (libidinous or loving) impulses.<sup>4</sup> Much of the confusion Klein struggles with in her theoretical formulations in the 1930s derives from the forms of anxiety or guilt that produce reparative urges and the varying motives and successes of *restitution*, *restoration*, *manic and obsessional reparation* and simple (or full) *reparation proper*. The first two are earlier forms, closer to sadism, and the manic and obsessional versions constitute necessary detours on the way to full reparation.

The appearance of guilt, through the ability to perceive «whole», that is both «good» and «bad», objects (i.e., the gratifying and frustrating mother) makes real reparation possible. To feel guilty, an individual must both sense the object's injury and feel empathy, identification, or pity. Without the sense of responsibility inherent in guilt and the connection of empathic feeling, the individual is preoccupied with feared retaliation for phantasied attack instead of the injuries suffered by the object of attack. Jean-Michel Petot, author of a two-volume study of Kleinian theory, finds Klein's relative disinterest in finding «a deep-seated motive for sadism» remarkable: «It was not because she lacked the means of making this conceptual study of sadism that she was uninterested in it» (Vol. II). Instead, her interests lie elsewhere, as if she assumes sadism's ubiquity. One reason may be her claim that introjection permits guilt, although she also states that guilt permits identification.<sup>5</sup>

Freudian theory distinguishes between reactive movements, defenses against aggression usually operating as countercaethexes, and libidinal movements (Petot, Vol. II, 276). These distinctions allow for a separation of «spontaneous love or good will», to use Petot's terms, from constraining love, «often translated as 'compulsive' ... regarded as an overcompensation for repressed unconscious hate» (276). In Kleinian theory, however, every object relation beyond the pre-object, oral sucking stage contains sadism and anxiety; their presence requires reconsideration of the mechanisms of reaction-formation and, in particular, the place of reparative mechanisms within that sequence (Petot, 276-77). Klein situates reparation mechanisms and reaction-formations in the second anal stage, «when the child's relations to the object have developed», because its objects' wellbeing «is also a guarantee of the child's own safety, and a safeguard against destruction from without and within, and the restoration of its objects is a necessary condition for its body to remain intact» (*The Psycho-Analysis of Children* 165, quoted in Petot, 177). Note that Klein uses *restoration* here along with the concern for bodily safety, implying fear of bodily injury by focusing on making good a loss.

Reparative libido follows sadistic tendencies, which transform fear into revenge, through four levels of psychic territory united by symbolic equations: «the mother's body, the external world, the internal world, and the child's own body» (Petot 277). Symbolic equation between the mother's and child's body makes the child fear retaliation for every sadistic fantasy: a wish to bite or destroy a withholding breast or mother produces fear of a mirroring attack by the breast or mother. Similarly, Petot notes, «reaction-formation and restitutive fantasies repeat every detail of these fantasied attacks and try to overcompensate for them» (277), and reparation constitutes a special kind of reaction formation.

The classification of reparation (and pity) among reaction formations produces some of the confusion about its role, as does the use of *restitution* and *restoration* as well as *reparation*. Petot equates the German *wiedergutmachung* with reparation, *wiederherstellung* with restoration, and

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Michel Petot classifies the reparation mechanism as a reaction-formation (Vol. I, 267-271 and 276-283).

<sup>5</sup> Petot notes that Klein «soon ... abandoned [the notion] of empathic identification» in her 1937 book's picture of the depressive position (Vol. I, 41).

*wiedergabe* with restitution, although the last gerund is unusual in German. (More frequent is the noun *wiedergabe* or *zuckgabe*, so *wiedergeben* might better appear as *wiedergabe*.) «Restitution» denotes behavior «inspired by fear of the threatening object, whether internal or external», Petot claims; «the instinctual bases of restitution are *usually anal rather than genital*» (281, italics added). The clinical epitome of giving back in child analysis is a compulsive taking and giving back. Such restitution «occurs, together with anxiety and guilt, as a reaction to preceding representations of acts of robbery and destruction» (*The P-A of C*, 167, quoted in Petot 281). Significantly, the sadistic tendency that restitution mirrors is more like taking or stealing than destroying; «more infiltrated with sadism and anxiety than reparation properly speaking», restitution stands «between pathological mechanisms, whether psychotic or neurotic, and normal ones» (Petot 281). Restitution constitutes a more «advanced» and subtle mechanism than projection of aggression and a less generous one than struggles against guilt, for restitution still confronts anxiety. This reactive motivation exposes restitution to more failure than other reparative mechanisms face. In fact, failed restitutive efforts can lead to obsessional behavior and in more severe failure, Petot notes, a felt inability to give back can produce regression to earlier defenses: the case of John in *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* illustrates the eruption of destructive trends in view of a feared inability «to produce the right kind of thing or to give enough, or of not being able to repair what he had damaged» (Klein 169, quoted in Petot 282). Petot mentions the survival of a wish for revenge, as in careful counting of debt and its repayment, which slightly contaminates the spirit of restitution (Petot 282). «Love, Guilt and Reparation» illustrates Klein's efforts toward full reparation and a striking example of Klein's attempt to make restitution appears in her account of asking her dying mother's forgiveness.

#### THE MOTHER IN THE MIND

Klein «never came to terms with the reality of her mother», Klein's biographer argues, (Grosskurth 59); she suggests that Klein never experienced what she needed: «a woman analyst capable of interpreting her fear, hatred, and guilt about her mother» (59). Klein may have instead attempted to create and enact a mother she never had – to «repair» her actual mother by theorizing and instantiating mothering, specifically in analyzing children. In this book and related works, Klein dwells on successful mourning and seems to demonstrate her maternal competence. In its implicit over-reaching and correction of actual mothering, an attempted masquerade in such an effort could either stave off or trigger adult guilt to amplify the infantile guilt in Kleinian theory.

The book's last section, «The Relationship to Ourselves and to Others», states, «We keep enshrined in our minds our loved people» (111).<sup>6</sup> The verb «enshrine» confers sacred associations on the already maternal metaphor of an inner world – maternal because of the womb-like location of a special vitality. «Enshrining» suggests idealization as well as the value of the contents. Similarly noting over-investment, Grosskurth speculates that the version of her mother's death in Klein's *Autobiography* is «fantasized reparation» (65).<sup>7</sup> This account epitomizes enshrining: it deposits venerated souvenirs of an object of devotion to idealize them religiously and to safeguard them from ravages of hate and aggression. At her mother's deathbed, Klein suffered, she reports, «with a certain feeling of guilt that I might have done more for her... I knelt down by her bed and asked her forgiveness. She replied that I should have at least as much to forgive her as she to

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<sup>6</sup> The word «enshrined» sounds like Riviere's contribution, although Klein no doubt recognized its apt spatial and religious resonance.

<sup>7</sup> Grosskurth refers to the unpublished *Autobiography*, «in the possession of the Melanie Klein Trust» (4) fourteen times.

forgive me. Then she said, ‘don’t grieve, don’t mourn, but remember me with love’» (64-65). Grosskurth remarks the disparity between the mother in this vignette and the «bossy, pedestrian, petite bourgeoise» revealed in letters (65). Klein’s reaction to her mother’s last moments further idealizes her: «I did not imagine that one could die in such a serene way, completely without anxiety and regret, no accusations against anyone, and friendliness towards my sister, though there she did actually have cause for complaint.... She has in many ways remained my example» (65).<sup>8</sup> The loving picture may convey only part of the truth.

The person «enshrined» in Kleinian theory is the mother, yet Julia Kristeva sees in Kleinian theory an «ode to matricide» (#), hence a move to bury, as much as to praise. Imperatives to kill and replace conflict with the needs to repair a powerful mother. The interplay between love and hate stressed throughout *Love, Hate and Reparation* makes balance and overcoming depressive and persecutory anxiety the general criteria for psychic health; the specific goals of unconscious struggle are loving, hating, and making reparation to the mother.

#### PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIVITY OR (MATER-)MANIA

Four of Klein’s papers from 1935-40 – «A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States» (‘35), «Weaning» (‘36), this small book (‘37), and «Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States» (‘40) – «emerged out of her own deep personal suffering» (Grosskurth 231). All theorize developmental and pathological negotiations of losses. Least obviously about loss, *Love, Hate and Reparation* shows exquisite sensitivity to the importance of the mother.

Kristeva leans on Klein’s unfinished article on the *Oresteia* as well as Klein’s mother’s intrusive, unresponsive, and manipulative behavior to read Klein as advocating matricide (134). Klein emphasizes the necessity of turning away from the mother; she claims that mourning a mother provided the inner space of the psyche, as a womb-like nurturing matrix replacing the external mother, and an orality that issues in this lament to Libussa Reizes, an elegy that ends with a conventional apotheosis (suggesting the cry: the mother is dead, long live the mother!) even if the mother resides in an inner world. In an elegiac process, the shape and idea of the mother replace her actuality. In this book and her theory as a whole, Klein creates the closest thing she can to the woman analyst that Grosskurth says she lacked. The book’s examples suggest Klein’s view of her own maternal reparations and psychic development, especially in terms of her «fear, hatred, and guilt about her mother». The sequence of roles (wife, mother, friend, professional, secure and content older woman) parallels the course of Klein’s own life; her partnership with Riviere’s provides one example.

#### SISTERS AND FEMALE FRIENDS

Klein seems to have felt closer to guilt, the role of the mother, and a necessity of re-creating the mother, than Riviere. In explaining the process of recognizing the ability to love and hurt and simultaneously experiencing the guilt and wish to make «reparation» that constitutes the move from paranoid anxiety into the depressive position and eventually to overcoming its anxieties, Klein promotes the image of having successfully overcome depressive anxiety. Her position suggests that she has re-created an internal mother, but cracks appear in examples she uses to illustrate the main principles. Coming on the heels of her paper on manic-depressive states, Klein’s delivery and author-

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<sup>8</sup> Abraham and Torok use a similar word, «encrypt», for the subliminal conveyance of a less valued, indeed unrecognized emotional element; encryption is less conscious and less positive concept, however.

ship of the second, longer, and more positive section of the book «perfects» her image as an analyst, mother, and woman. Other examples also reflect well, if not realistically, on her.

An example in the section titled «Friendships in Adult Life» provides a possibly air-brushed glimpse of Riviere and Klein's relationship: «Let us take as an instance a friendship between two women who are not too dependent upon each other. Protectiveness and helpfulness may still be needed, at times by the one, at other times by the other, as situations arise» (100). This opening stresses fluidity and reciprocity in women's friendship; although the authors had been friends for seven or more years, it may be worth noting that *Love, Hate and Reparation* is the only work that gives the two equal credit. Klein's first paragraph links friendship with early relationships: «A successful blending of a mother-attitude and a daughter-attitude seems ... one of the conditions for an emotionally rich feminine personality and for the capacity for friendship» (100). Klein's birth pre-dated Riviere's by only a year (1882 and '83), yet Klein dominated professionally and depended upon Riviere's knowledge of English, editorial talents, and daughterly support. Klein took a pre-eminent role; Riviere, a more filial one, despite their closeness in age. Klein notes that for some women, «there may not have been a sister, or none with whom ... feelings [of motherly care and daughterly response] could be experienced ... and in that case, if we come to develop a friendship with another woman, this will bring to realization, modified by adult needs, a strong and important wish» (100-101). This implicit tribute to their relationship parallels many occasions in which the two interacted well.<sup>9</sup> A biographical sketch of Riviere<sup>10</sup> depicts her mother as cold and strict enough to have been the basis for an example of the housewife who «gives expression to her aggression in destroying the enemy, dirt, which in her unconscious mind has come to stand for 'bad' things» (Hughes 67). Klein's mother's usurpation of Klein's position in her household established a further link; given the strained relationship with Melitta, the image of a reparative sisterhood suggests some of Klein's own longing for and pleasure in maternal and filial care.

Klein also gestures toward her relationship with Riviere when characterizing female friends as sharing happiness and success «even when we ourselves lack these. Feelings of envy and jealousy may recede into the background if our capacity to identify ourselves... is strong enough» (101). This passage reproaches any woman envying Klein's success as insufficiently capable of identification.<sup>11</sup> The claim for identification's power to overcome envy may reveal a less successful identification than it appears to. Klein blames jealousy on a successful woman's «friend»:

*Only if we have successfully dealt with our hatred and jealousy, dissatisfaction and grievance against our mother and have succeeded in being happy in seeing her happy, in feeling that we have not injured her or that we can repair the injury done in phantasy, are we capable of true identification with another woman. (101, emphasis added)*

This judgment bolsters the reproachful note above about envy without mentioning the successful one's responsibility to offer support. The claim implicitly celebrates Klein's successful mourning and recovery from depression, as evidenced in the friendship. The degree of success and means of recovery seem relative, however.

#### KLEIN'S PSYCHIC HISTORY

Psychoanalytic theory tells us that all losses recapitulate earlier losses, and Klein's life gave her reasons for theorizing reparation. Biographer Grosskurth sees among many «sorrows» re-

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<sup>9</sup> Athol Hughes notes that in the 1950s, the friendship cooled (*The Inner World*, 34)

<sup>10</sup> *Joan Riviere: The Inner World*, by Athol Hughes, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Klein's 1956 study, «Envy and Gratitude», argues that envy is inevitable, which emphasizes the importance of identification to overcome or at least offset such aggressive feelings.

awakened by her son Hans's death in 1934 the deaths of Klein's beloved older sister, Sidonie, when Klein was four; of her idolized but dissolute brother Emmanuel when Klein was nineteen; and of her father, when Klein was twenty.<sup>12</sup> Further «sorrows» include her father's preference for the older sister, Klein's «breakdown following her mother's death; her ambivalent feelings toward [her ex-husband] Arthur, her devastation over [her second analyst, Karl] Abraham's death, and the uneasy course of her relationship with [her lover] Kloetzel» (226).

In *Love, Hate and Reparation*, Klein's stress on making reparation exists in tension with implicit displays of her accomplishments, specifically as an explorer, theorist as puzzle-solver, understanding mother, and creative woman at peace with herself. She states that a beautiful picture of a Mother, an image enshrined in the psyche, exists in most or all of us and that the imprint of the mother is deep and lasting (111).

Yet Klein's claims about reparation (at least the implicit claim of having achieved it) contradict her account of her mother's death in her unpublished Autobiography (described by Grosskurth, *passim*). Specifically, stresses on making reparation to real and inner mothers (and on repairing Klein's reputation as a mother) exist in tension with an account that idealizes the mother, a process that Klein labels manic reparation. *Love, Hate and Reparation* contains some confusion (in theory and, perhaps, in life) between reparation of a real mother perceived as a partial object (which would be restoration), reparation *to* a real mother (which would be restitution), reparation *of* an internal object that provides a core of the self, and a transcending of both efforts, in reparation of the self. While this paper relegates many of Klein's examples to the first two processes, her writing and theory approach the latter processes.

Grosskurth writes, «Just as Freud's greatest work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was the outcome of his own self-analysis, so [«Contribution»] is an exploration of Klein's psyche» (216) and suggests that Klein's earlier breakdown resulted from a failure to work through the depressive position, with its simultaneous terror of losing the good object, guilt over injurious aggressive feelings, and wish to restore the object's wholeness (216). Before being capable of splitting objects, the infant perceives separate good and bad partial objects. The baby grows to perceive that the mother proves both satisfying and frustrating and fears that the bad part might destroy the good. Klein writes that in addition to mechanisms of turning away in dislike from a mother, «there existed in [some patients'] minds nevertheless a beautiful picture of the mother, but one who was felt to be a picture of her only, not her real self.... The beautiful picture had been dislocated from the real object but had never been given up» («Love, Guilt, and Reparation» quoted in Grosskurth, 217). Grosskurth asks, *a propos* this passage, «Was she not asking Melitta indirectly to try to see her as a whole person, and was she not inferring that Melitta had never fully worked through the depressive position?» (217). The observation applies to Klein's own picture of her mother as well. Specifically, the stresses on making reparation to real and inner mothers (and on repairing Klein's reputation as a mother) exist in tension with an account that idealizes the mother, a process that Klein labels manic reparation.

Klein's 1940 elaboration of the depressive position eliminates some confusion about the sequence of maturation, which she attempted to assimilate to a set of stages before conceiving of states produced by perceptual development and the balance of opposing drives. Key distinctions among reparation mechanisms involve anxiety (present from birth) versus guilt (which can lead to reparation) versus excessive guilt (which renders reparation a failure); illusions of reparative or destructive omnipotence; and pity, empathy, and identification versus introjection.

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<sup>12</sup> *Melanie Klein*, 226.

In «A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States», Klein says, «in mania the ego seeks refuge not only from melancholia but also from a paranoiac condition which it is unable to master».<sup>13</sup> In 1935, when Klein's son Hans died, she felt too grief-stricken to attend the funeral. Klein had already been so depressed, perhaps by Kloetzel's departure, that Ernest Jones had asked Sylvia Payne to see her *before* Hans died. Grosskurth calls 1937 «the crisis and turning point in Klein's mourning», after a «year of sorrows» in which Klein's daughter, Melitta Schmitteberg, attacked Klein's theory and mothering, her son «plunged down the side of a precipice» (all, 234) in mountains he had hiked as a child, Melitta suggested that it was suicide and cast blame on Klein. Edward Glover had called one chapter in *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* an achievement equal to Freud's «discovery» of the Oedipus complex (Mitchell 215); following such an impressive act may have pressured Klein to demonstrate personal as well as professional achievement.

Melitta, also an analyst, stated pointedly in a meeting on suicide, «excessive feelings of disgust brought about, for example, by deep disappointment in persons loved or by the breakdown of idealizations prove frequently an incentive towards suicide» (qtd. Grosskurth, 225). Given Klein's depression when Hans was young, guilt about «disgust» and «disappointment» on his part may have contributed to her devastation. Given the anxiety, loss, grief, and loneliness in her life, the depression and reparation at the center of the Kleinian psyche do not surprise us; while the disparity between Klein's theory and her psychic state might not either, it suggests a reparative, if not manic autobiographical basis for her theory.

«Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States» formulates the depressive position as a crucial developmental step in infancy as well as a recurring moment for adults because it enables the self to integrate good and bad aspects of others and the self and to feel guilty about aggressive impulses. For Klein, this position would «incorporate and replace the psychic centrality that Freud had accorded to the later Oedipus complex» (Mitchell 115). In the depressive position, persecutory anxieties diminish, a loved object appears whole, and guilt leads to a wish to make reparation, generating creativity, active love, and connection with the external world. Citing an infant's experience of «guilt», «remorse», «pain... from the conflict between love and... hatred, [and] some of the anxieties of the impending death of the loved internalized and external objects», Klein calls this constellation «a lesser and milder degree [of] the sufferings and feelings... fully developed in the adult melancholic» and notes the similar «situation of the 'loss of the loved object'» (142). «Infantile Anxiety-Situations» distinguishes between paranoid and depressive anxieties on the basis of their functions, assigning persecutory anxiety linked to preserving the ego to the paranoiac and anxiety linked to preserving good internal objects to the depressive (Mitchell 124). Discussion of the complexity of depressive anxieties, which interweave with attempts to save good objects, expands into a metaphor of a «beautiful picture of the mother» that resonates with the view of her mother in Klein's Autobiography (Grosskurth, 125). Klein's deathbed scene of mutual forgiveness parallels the «perfect» object that the article links with fear of disintegration in depressive children and adults: «The real object was felt to be unattractive – really an injured, incurable and therefore dreaded person. The beautiful picture had been dissociated from the real object but had never been given up» (125). Specifically, the article links anxiety about repairing «bits» in order to revive the object and about interference «by bad objects and by one's own hatred» (124) with the roots of depression and inhibition of work. This linkage may explain Klein's ability to overcome inhibition in her work while the «perfection» of her account of the deathbed scene suggests a need to «disprove the idea of disintegration»; the account of Libussa's death, then, exemplifies repairing through idealization. The deathbed scene and claim that her mother was her

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<sup>13</sup> (SMK 132) originally in «A Contribution to The Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States».

model demonstrate an identification that for Klein distinguishes paranoiacs from depressives: for the former, anxiety prevents the full identification that allows «stable introjection» of loved objects (126).

In discussing clinical material, Klein uses the words «restore» and «restoration» from the register of sadism as often as «repair» or «reparation» from that of generation (in the sense of prepare, parturition, and making good). Near the end of «Contribution» she declares, «reparation tendencies ... are set going by different methods, of which I shall just mention two fundamental ones: the manic and the obsessional» (144). Her attention to mania's «flight to the good» and the ego's search for «refuge in the extravagant belief in the benevolence of his internalized objects» stresses the centrality of the depressive position; the terms also describe her state while writing (*vide* Grosskurth's claim) and prefigure her representations of herself in the public lectures and book.

Klein's opening comments in her section of *Love, Hate and Reparation* stress the equal power and complementarity of hateful and loving impulses, their «constant interaction» (57) and inseparability, and the mother's central importance. (She writes, in fact, a theory in the *shape of the mother*, whether emphasizing her omnipresence, a need for matricide or turning away from the mother, or this separation as a prerequisite for developing the inner space of psychic life. Her theory even includes a feminine phase for boys and girls and, as Riviere does, notes men's envy of women's reproductive capacities.) Klein underscores the indelible imprint of a mother: «the part she plays in our minds is a lasting one, although the various ways ... may not be at all obvious in later life» (59). The point is apt for both women, whose mothers presented unusual difficulties. Klein writes, «a woman may apparently have estranged herself from her mother, yet still unconsciously seek some of the features of her early relation to her in her relations to her husband or to a man she loves» (59). Klein's multiple losses and depressions evoked the figure of Libussa, whom this book and all work on reparation elegize. Klein's half of *Love, Hate and Reparation* recounts and represents her sometimes manic efforts to repair her own maternal injuries.

#### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IMPULSES

Grosskurth sees Klein's paper as «full of autobiographical echoes» (236) with clear references to the brother, husband, and lover in the section on infidelity. It points out that a Don Juan (all three qualified) fails to make true reparation because, in promiscuity, the «original love object is thus replaced» instead of being recognized as «indispensable» (qtd. Grosskurth, 236) and in need of mourning. The section on infidelity follows a section on the influence of the woman's relationship with her mother on her attitude to her child, with the woman's unconscious death-wishes for her mother «carried over to her own child when she became a mother» (85). The story recreates Klein's relationship with her mother as the explanation for her difficult relationship with Melitta; Melitta's filial unfaithfulness to Klein repeats men's and Klein's mother's betrayals. Autobiography not only «fills» but also underlies Klein's essay.

In touch with her «memories of loss», through her work with young children and worries about her own children, with whom Libussa stayed while urging their young mother to leave them frequently on trips to cure her nerves and depressions, Klein, whose name means «little», had to negotiate the «little Melanie» of her past. Writing that the baby feels «that he has really destroyed the object of his destructive impulses», she could have had in mind her own fear of having destroyed Libussa in phantasy. In consequence, Klein states, a male child, if he has «injured his mother by biting and tearing her up ... may soon build up phantasies that he is putting the bits together again and repairing her» (61). The footnote to this claim cites Klein's child and adult patients as sources yet could include herself. Read for Klein's history, the cannibalism and puzzle-building suggest theorizing as a putting-together repair of the mother, (rejoining good and bad

breasts). The collage-work applies to the gaps in psychoanalytic theory, as well, notably in its story of women's psychic lives. The paper's first sub-section, «Unconscious Sense of Guilt», names the «unconscious fear of being incapable of loving others sufficiently or truly, and particularly of not being able to master aggressive impulses towards others» (62-63). On the other hand, «no productive activity [exists] into which some aggression does not enter in one way or another», Klein writes, repeating Riviere's domestication of hatred and aggression as necessary to secure life (66-67n). The «dread [of] being a danger to the loved one» (63) suggests one factor in Klein's entry into analysis with Ferenczi in 1914, the year her son Erich was born and Libussa died. Her second analyst, Karl Abraham, apparently assuaged the «dread» of being dangerous to the children she attempted to analyze; Abraham encouraged her to interpret their anxiety to them in spite of the Cassandra-like role such announcements might place her in regarding their parents and conventional beliefs about childhood.

Klein's claim that guilt and distress «become an inherent part of love, and influence it profoundly both in quality and quantity» (65) lays a foundation for the logic that guilt fuels reparation. The economy of identification in love makes sacrifice beneficial: «since in being identified with other people we share ... the help or satisfaction afforded to them by ourselves, we regain in one way what we have sacrificed in another» (66). Such an analysis suggests that in giving time and attention to her children, Melanie benefited from playing the role of a good parent «as a way of dealing with the frustrations and sufferings of the past» (67). Her purgatorial view of repairing love carries Christian overtones of redemption spurred by guilt. Given Klein's devotion to her work, both of child analysis and of theory-repair, her sense of guilty aggression seems to have been not only great but radical.

Read for autobiographical traces, her works depict Klein as she (in phantasy) takes, steals, attacks, even kills, her mother as an example to others. Is such globalizing the evidence of monomania, great personal honesty, an insightful return to a tragic Greek view of family life, in which Saturn consumes his children, or all three? Possible sensitivity to being seen as an attacking woman, a Medusa of the mind, may have mandated Klein's presentation (and self-representation) of loving and reparative actions.

The section on «A Happy Love Relationship» states, «[s]exual gratification affords a woman not only pleasure, but reassurance and support against the fears... that her genital is dangerous and could injure her husband's genital» (71). This fear derives from hatred the daughter aims at «her father's penis, because she feels that it denies her the gratification which it affords to her mother» (66). Klein reported being disgusted on her wedding night and deploring the fact that family life, which compensates the woman for having envied her mother the babies inside her, begins on such a bad note. Klein takes on the fear that Freud attributed to men – women's possession of a dangerous genital – and argues that when a man «loves [his wife] and gratifies her sexually, her unconscious sadistic phantasies will lose in strength» (71). Unhappy throughout her marriage and divorced when it was uncommon, Klein apparently drew on extra-marital experience to validate this claim about sexual gratification's power to cure. Her affair with Kloetzel, who resembled her beloved brother, evidently abated some anxieties. Unrequited in love but not, let us hope, ungratified, Klein veils her own experience in her comment on everywoman: «one part of the satisfaction she obtains comes from the fact that she is capable of giving ... pleasure and happiness, and that her genital thus proves to be good» (71). The man carries the actual burden of love while the woman's inner life. Klein gives the woman's unconscious sadistic phantasies liberty, for «they lead to a stimulation of phantasies of a restoring nature»: the happy wife has a «phantasy of healing the father's genital which, in her mind, she has injured or made bad» (71). Because «in phantasy we re-create and enjoy the wished-for love and goodness of our parents» or, as she qualifies it, «as we wanted them to do» (67); through identification, Klein could also experience being a good child.

The link between guilty love and reparation offers several motivations for her analytic work: having failed to offer two of her three children good milk, Klein remedies the lack by formulating a

mother-centered theory and nursing sick children and adults to psychic health. Yet she was alone after Kloeitzel left, and wrote on loneliness late in life. In place of Freud's emphasis on sublimation, her paper implies that theory is a diffusion of love.

In the section titled «Wider Aspects of Love», the case of an explorer exemplifies that of people whose interests seem apparently remote from the first relationship but in truth displace love from it. Klein writes, «anything that is felt to give out goodness and beauty, and that calls forth pleasure and satisfaction, in the physical or in the wider sense, can in the unconscious mind take the place of this ever-bountiful breast, and of the whole mother» (103). Her focus on specific unconscious factors motivating exploration (wishes to penetrate the mother's body and rob it of its contents) echoes her work as a psychoanalytic explorer. Klein credits unspecified «psycho-analytic work» with finding that «phantasies of exploring the mother's body, which arise out of the child's aggressive sexual desires, greed, curiosity and love, contribute to the man's interest in exploring new countries» (104). The small likelihood that she analyzed an explorer suggests that she analyzed her own psychoanalytic explorations, and perhaps Riviere's, as well, though informally.

Klein describes the unconscious symbolism surrounding the explorer eloquently:

a new territory stands for a new mother, one that will replace the loss of the real mother. He is seeking the 'promised land' – the 'land flowing with milk and honey'.... fear of the death of the most loved person leads to the child's turning way from her to some extent; but at the same time it also drives him to re-create her and to find her again in whatever he undertakes .... The child's early aggression stimulates the drive to restore and to make good, to put back into his mother the good things he had robbed her of in phantasy, and these wishes to make good merge into the later drive to explore, for by finding new land the explorer gives something to the world at large and to a number of people in particular. (104)

Reading this example for traces of Klein's life-story, we see her clinical and theoretical explorations as well as recovery from depression as efforts «to re-create [a mother] and to find her again in whatever [s]he undertakes». The drive «to put back into ... mother the good things [s]he had robbed her of» poses a slight problem – has Klein made theory her mother, the container she creates as a recreation of the mother, explaining its female shape? This would make her a product of parthenogenesis, reproduction by one organism; it makes her the product of her own creation, too, adding megalomania to mater-mania. Perhaps Klein makes the world her mother, echoing a «citizen of the world» ethos. According to this cosmopolitanism, Kleinian theory, or at least its depressive position, becomes a 'promised land' flowing with guilt and reparation that Klein presents to the world (to disturbed children «in particular», to quote the passage above), solidifying her status as a good mother and her theory's status as a therapeutic matrix. In a 1980 article, Maria Torok recounts her realization that *mell*, the first syllable of *Melanie*, is «breast» in Hungarian (59). The touch of megalomania in Klein might also arise from her sense of being *kleine* (small in German) and her constant attempts to achieve her mother's larger-than-healthy role. Klein's use of the verb *restore* suggests that the earliest form reparative concern occurs when, as Petot, states, the «question is not yet one of reparation of the damaged object, but of restoration of the self» (Vol. II 266), as was at issue in her writing before 1929. The phrase, «to put back into his mother the good things he had robbed her of in phantasy», evokes the precision of *restitution*, a further stage in reparative tendencies, while «wishes to make good merge into the later drive to explore» and to make «full» reparation, as does the replacement of the real mother. Traces of Klein appear in *Love, Hate and Reparation* even more frequently than Grosskurth notes. While Klein «gives something to the world at large», we can hope that she achieved full reparation through creating the «phantastical» examples (re)presented in *Love, Hate and Reparation*.

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# Freud and Dora: The first dream (\*)

ROBERT SILHOL (\*\*)

«Freud and Dora», what a nice title! A bit like «Romeo and Juliet» or «Héloïse and Abélard», don't you think? In a word, or in three rather, a love story. But no, it is not a love story, it is not «Ginger and Fred», not a love story in the ordinary sense in any case. And this because in a love story you need two persons and in our «story» there are many other characters beside Freud and Dora. And then also because the analyst, in «Freud and Dora», was not, in spite of what he may have thought, one of the two main characters. This is the error he made, the only serious one, perhaps: to think he was a character in Dora's story. An error on his status.

But he remains Freud, all the same, at least for me – as you can see I already take my precautions and make amends –, because without him I could not say what I am saying here today. Yes, he remains the extraordinary discoverer we know, but also the prudent scientist who, in the case of Dora, precisely, admitted he had not done all he could, or should, have done.

I did not succeed in mastering the transference in good time.

Or, still on the same page of his case study:

But when the first dream came, in which she gave herself the warning that she had better leave my treatment [...] I ought to have listened to the warning myself [...] But I was deaf [*Ich überhörte*] to this note of warning [*erste Warnung*]. (*G.W.V.*, 282; *St. Edit.* VII, 000)

And this, as you well know, was written a hundred years ago! On this last point, the duration of the cure, he has already made a comment: his young patient did not leave him enough time to bring the analysis to its conclusion; she left after only eleven weeks of analysis.

It is this abrupt termination of an analysis which attracts our attention today. Others, many others, have already written on the Dora case – the last book on the question, Patrick Mahony's, lists a lot of interesting articles – and some did ask the question: «But what happened? Why did the young lady run away?» Unfortunately, I didn't find any of the answers satisfactory and have therefore decided to ask the same question myself and add my own grain of salt to the already long list of commentators of the case.

And to be certain that I shall be objective – which of course is a psychoanalytical impossibility, but one can always try, asymptotically –, I will restrict my commentary to Dora's own discourse, that is to say to the very text of her dreams – in our case today of her first dream –, considering it,

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if you will, as a tale or poem. To do so, though, I shall not be able to avoid making use of some of the facts reported by Freud in his report of the case, since we know that dreams cannot always be understood properly without some of the associations they produced. This, however, will not prevent me from being careful in my analysis, and, among other things, I shall try not to confuse Dora's own associations with Freud's. Bare facts then, and speech, «*parole de sujet*», this is what I shall analyze. (And here, briefly, I have a first criticism to make of Freud's «case»: he paid too much attention to events which had taken place several months before Dora's visit but which were in no way at the origin of the problem. I found the same «error» in some of the works devoted to the case: I am referring to the immediate influence of Herr K. and Frau K. on Dora's problem. In other words, «day's residues» should not be confused with unconscious desire whatever their apparent importance.)

Naturally, all this happened a hundred years ago; Freud's theory was then in its first stages. If we can manage to go further today it is without any doubt thanks to Freud's discoveries. Which does not mean that he didn't, sometimes, follow the «wrong track». In the Dora case, engrossed as he was in what he had discovered about infantile sexuality and desirous to reinforce his thesis, he obviously took the wrong turn and laid too much emphasis on childhood masturbation. On the other hand, there is much in this first published psychoanalytical case that still appears well-grounded; let me repeat this: he cleared the ground for us.

## I

### Dora's first dream

A house is on fire. My father is standing in front of [beside] my bed and wakes me up. I dress myself quickly. Mummy wants to stop and save her jewel-case, but Daddy says: I refuse [I will not let] myself and my two children burn for the sake of your jewel-case. We hurry downstairs, and as soon as I am outside I wake up. (*S.E.* VII, 64) (I have slightly altered the translation of the *Standard Edition* in order to keep as close as possible to the original German text, which must of course remain our main reference.)

Four sentences, then: I Fire, daughter and father,  
II dreamer dressing,  
III mother, father, and children,  
IV flight to safety downstairs and outside, waking up.

Another way of describing the dream – the text of the dream – is to divide it into a sequence of events, something not unlike movie shots. I count 9/10 scenes: fire/ father in front of bed/ father waking dreamer/ dreamer dressing quickly/ mother (her jewel-case is mentioned, and her desire to retrieve it)/ father's refusal / (bis) father giving his reason for refusing/ flight to safety downstairs/ outside/ dreamer wakes up.

Looking at our text, we notice that the 3rd grammatical sentence was given much more room than the rest. It also occupies the central place in the text. And because of the nature of this scene, of course, it is not too difficult to «reduce» the dream to an obvious little oedipal drama – which it is. A daughter is saying: «I am being saved from a grave danger by my father», the «danger» being represented by the mother. Rightly, Freud insisted on this aspect of the dream; I think, however, that the dream is telling us more than that.

We shall deal with all the details of the text in a moment, but I would like to begin our search with a quick analysis of this central third sentence; I would like to look at it from a structural point of view, because for me its structure is already meaningful. It represents a confrontation, or an opposition, essential to the understanding of the dream: father against mother.

Mummy wanted to stay and save her box  
But Daddy said: I refuse / I don't want... to burn [*Ich will nicht*]

Mother against father: a «primal scene», no doubt, but there is more, and we must not lose sight of the fact that what is described is *a conflict, an opposition*. When Freud asked his patient to associate, the first memory that came back to her was a dispute between her parents. I see the quarrel between parents as an important element of the architecture of the dream, while Freud seems to have slightly pushed this feature aside (he was more interested in enuresis and masturbation).

But let's get back to the opposition between the two characters:

Mummy still wants [*noch*]...

**But** Daddy says...

The mother of the dream wants to save something, wants to retrieve something; she does not want to lose ... whereas the father wishes to escape from a danger... All this, of course, from Dora's point of view; we must never forget that.

Now, what was the actual quarrel about? It was a quarrel about jewels: pearl-drops vs. a bracelet, and again I feel like adding: mother's desire versus father's desire. All this is imagined by the daughter in her dream, but does correspond to a quarrel she has actually witnessed. Naturally, Freud was quick in realizing the symbolical dimension of «jewels» and of «jewel-case». About the incident, he went as far as saying that Dora must have repressed something «intensely», meaning that there was some truth to be sought there.

Now, if I chart the «track» Freud chose to follow, concentrating for the moment on the opposition between mother and father and on the way he analyzed Dora's associations (and his own), this is what I get: **parents** (first memory) – **presents** (father had given mother a present she didn't like) – **mother** (Dora's association and her comment: «I don't know how Mother comes into the picture.») – **presents** (Freud's association; to receive and to give) – **Herr K** («He gave me presents») – **jewel-box** (Freud's analysis: jewels as female genitals and in danger of being aggressed) – **father as savior**.

To this, we must add Freud's comment: **Your wish is to accept what your mother has refused.**

As you can see, the sequence leads to the construction of an oedipal triangle: the father, the mother and the daughter, with the latter supposedly wishing to replace the mother. And it is a fact that oedipal desire does account for much in our little drama (and all the more so if we consider the way Herr K. is brought into the picture by Freud – somewhat unconvincingly, I find – in order, probably, to explain or justify Dora's rescue by her father, which was Freud's thesis). We won't dispute, then, the oedipal nature of the scene.

But what I wish to introduce at this point is an image of the psyche as being formed of several «layers»: in the case of Dora, the oedipal situation constitutes a first «layer», as it were, but I think it is the less repressed part of her unconscious memory. If only because Freud himself was not completely satisfied with what he had found, we must not limit our psychoanalytical search to this first level. (We have learnt from Freud that a dream always sprang from the period of childhood, (See *S.E.* VII, 103) and we also remember he found his conclusions too ambiguous.)

## II

So much, then, for the first layer revealed by Freud. What we know, thanks to the analysis of the structure, is that the oedipal drama cannot account for all that is represented in the dream; the opposition we have noticed has to be examined carefully.

We can now turn to Dora's text, the four sentences or ten scenes which constituted her dream.

## I 1 *In einem Haus brennt es*

### 2 *der Vater steht vor meinem Bett*    2 (bis) *und weckt mich auf*

We note the indefinite article, «a house»; this gives the representation a wide semantic scope: the family house, the holiday house, the house of the analyst, 19 Berggasse (as if to mean: «If Freud's cabinet were to burn, I would escape the analyst's scrutiny») and, last but not least, a house as a representation of the dreamer's body, the connection with fire being here obvious: «*es brennt*», «something is burning», «*ça brûle* in my body». The house, or room, as body, a body burning with (genital) desire. To this we may add a last note, a final interpretation: genital desire and the fire of Hell.

The next picture is an image of the father standing in front of the girl's bed. The dreamer gives him the role of savior, and Freud accepts this. But savior or not, the fact is that he is standing in front of Dora's bed. Freud saw this, naturally: an image of erection, and the last part of the sentence: «*weckt mich auf*», «wakes me up», can easily be read as referring to sexual arousal. An oedipal scene, then, to which we can add that imagining one's parent, here one's father, as savior was also to dream him as a «defender» against analytic interpretation, a mask or, better, a shield.

## II 3 *Ich kleide mich schnell an*

The same movement of denial can be observed in the second short sentence. Indeed, why «*schnell*», «quickly»? Is it the fear of being seen undressed, which of course is not at all far from the fear of one's desire to be seen naked, in short to be discovered?

## III 4 *Die Mama will noch ihr Schmuckkästchen retten*

The confrontation follows close on the production of an image which represents the three actors of the oedipal drama where we had: daughter loves father. The presence of the jewel-box indicates there is something more than a mere oedipal desire here.

There is not much more to add to Freud's analysis of the jewel-box. True, he does insist on the idea that it is a present a woman can make, and why not? But what I take to be more significant is the *quarrel* between mother and father in the dream. House – room – box, we can easily follow this line of association, but why the mother? And at this point we can bring Dora's association into the picture: as we saw, a real quarrel took place between her parents, and it was about a present. The mother wanted pearl-drops (earrings), the father offered a bracelet. I think we already have here a representation of what is also to be found in the structure of the central sentence and of the whole dream in fact. Freud correctly analyzed the pearl-drops as having something to do with humidity – that was the track he was following: wet, sexual desire, wetting one's bed, masturbation – and he even went as far as associating «drop» with sperm. But he stopped there, and if we bear the opposition I have mentioned in mind we can clearly see how a bracelet (decidedly feminine) is placed in opposition to something hanging which I read as referring to the male organ.

So that the dream represents a confrontation between two persons of opposite sex: each parent is respectively given the chance to defend his or her own desire (and organ as a signifier of it).

Dora's dream, and let me repeat we must never forget she is the sole architect of the representation, Dora's dream is a presentation of both sexes, and the real dispute between her parents proves to be a very convenient way to depict difference.

To the representation of an unconscious desire (not her mother's, but her own, which, however, may have taken her mother for model) to save her «jewel-box», and even to the right to «burn» with her body, Dora opposes a second representation in which her father says «No» – «*Ich will*

*nicht*». And what follows in the dream – our text – is Dora’s explanation for her imagined father’s refusal:

5 *Ich will nicht, dass ich und meine beiden Kinder wegen deines Schmuckkästchen verbrennen.*

What Dora places opposite the feminine «jewel-box» is herself and her brother, but if we look at the text closely we find out that what we have is «*Ich und meine beiden Kinder*»: «me and my two children.» I interpret this 3 as a representation of the male genitals in its opposition to the jewel-box, which, by the way, is mentioned twice in the text. Again, then, a representation of sexual difference. Interestingly enough, when Freud mentions this passage of the dream, he leaves out the «I», «*Ich*»: «...your father said: I refuse to let my two children go to destruction.» (S.E. VII, 72) (This may have been a way of leaving danger, castration, out of the scene, the I being forgotten.)

Sexual difference, the opposition between the two sexes, all this as part of a little drama about a rescue from a grave danger (fire, sexual desire). And this danger not only has a lot to do with sexuality in general, but seems related to *feminine desire*. Indeed, the word «*wegen*», for the sake of, because of, points to a responsibility curiously placed by the dreamer on the mother. I am saying «curiously» because we have just read in Freud’s text that Dora’s father had suffered from a genital disease and learnt, which is perhaps more important, that Dora’s mother may have been contaminated by him... But Dora’s dream is quite explicit: the danger is in the feminine, and the only way to explain this is to interpret this «*wegen*», «because», as the way the dreamer had at her disposal to try and explain her father’s impotence (and VD): it came from the mother in the first place, from the mother’s jewel-box.

«Burn» can here be given a secondary meaning and understood as referring to genital pain. (Dora, as we have learnt from Freud, knew about her father’s sickness.) We know this well: what is conscious stands sometimes at a considerable distance from what is unconscious. Dora inverts the real situation and unconsciously condemns her mother instead of her father. But why would she do this? It must be because she wants to rescue him from impotence/illness/castration. And this has brought us to one of the crucial questions her first dream raises: with whom, in this particular dream, is Dora identifying? Which of the two parents is she taking for model? Both probably, but with a difference, for one of the two, *for the time being*, is carrying more weight for her. If we turn to her first dream only – for this will not last –, we come to the temporary conclusion that her identification is with her father or, at least, that for the moment she sides with him. In her first dream, indeed, she is saved *by him*, and it is *with him* that she runs out of the house; «three» (father and children) seems to have been chosen preferably to the jewel-box.

Beyond an obvious and simple oedipal desire, how can we account for such an unconscious «choice»?

We saw how the long central sentence of Dora’s text was, among other things, the representation of a primal scene. And we also saw that it was no ordinary primal scene, but one in which the mother appeared as a menace for the father: an inverted primal scene in fact. The problem for us, then, is to find out the reason for this preference for the father, why his rescue, and why, in terms of *parole*, this choice of the 3 of masculinity against the 2 of femininity. My hypothesis is that Dora not only saved her father from destruction, but identified with him, chose him as a model. In this perspective, the child can be described as what symbolically «completes» the parent; we know the formula: the child as the parent’s phallus.

We could stop here and be satisfied with this hypothesis, which Dora’s first dream verifies, I think. But at this point, we have two problems:

1. First, shouldn’t we make a distinction between «love object» (Dora loves and saves her father) and object of identification? Because I have been given the (unconscious) task of completing a parent, does it mean that I should also choose him or her as an identification

model? What is the child to be: an object of the parent's unconscious desire, what *imaginairement* completes the parent? Or do we simply imply that the child has to be like the parent? As we can see, the question is related to gender also. In the first case, we are only speaking of the role that is imparted to the child, the mission he will have to unconsciously fulfill; in the second case, and here the problem is much more complex, we are speaking of a founding relationship with an image or model. Is it the same thing or are there two different processes here? This is our first problem.

What strikes me, in any case, is that Dora, in her first dream, turned down the possibility of a feminine identification – Frau K. notwithstanding for the moment –, for her mother's jewel-case is obviously imagined as representing a danger. (What I have termed her «fear» could of course be a fear of the «devouring mother» of infancy, but we cannot help noticing the insistence on gender in her dream.) It is of course possible that dreaming she was saving her father from castration – and this could, yes, imply devoration – she was also dreaming she was saving herself.

What seems to have taken place in this first dream (which may have been a dream of transition brought about by the analytic situation) is a movement from burning with feminine desire to the representation of this *jouissance* as dangerous, destruction-castration in other words, a menace to burn in Hell (with V.D.), which all leads to the final «choice» here of male genitality in a flight with father. As her father's temporary phallus, she saves him and saves herself, and the question is: is she her father's object because this is what her Other is requiring of her?

2. I mentioned two problems, here is the second one (which cannot be dealt with today): in her second dream, which will be produced a few weeks after the first one, she definitely seems to abandon her father as model and sides with her mother. Indeed, she receives a letter from her, learns from her that her father is dead, reaches home safely (she no longer runs away to escape a danger) and finally joins everybody in the cemetery. How can we account for such a change? Although Frau K. does not appear in any of the two dreams, we cannot conclude that she didn't have a role to play in reality, but this cannot be inferred from the dreams.

Yes, if the study of the second dream verifies that there was a modification in Dora's identification, how can we explain the relationship between the two dreams? Are they to be considered a symmetrical diptych retracing, as it were, the «evolution» that took place in those eleven weeks with Freud? And in this case, can we give an opinion, or form an hypothesis, on Freud's influence over his patient and on the case?

# The willing suspension of disbelief: A neuro-psychoanalytic view

NORMAN N. HOLLAND (\*)

Coleridge invented the term. In 1798 he and Wordsworth published *Lyrical Ballads*, which literary historians take to be the opening salvo in the British Romantic movement. Coleridge commented that Wordsworth was publishing realistic poems about ordinary people, but he, Coleridge, was writing more fantastic things: «Kubla Khan», «Rime of the Ancient Mariner», or «Christabel». He asked from his readers «that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith» (Coleridge ch. xiv). Momentarily, for brief periods, we are not to disbelieve the improbabilities we will read, and that un-disbelief constitutes a kind of imaginative or empathic belief.

Coleridge's term has stuck, probably because it describes what we feel is happening in a lot of situations Coleridge could never have imagined. When we see Spider-Man firing his webs and swinging himself over skyscrapers, we respond with «Uh-huh, yes, ok, what's next?» When we see The Terminator melt into a pool of mercury and then re-constitute himself, we don't say, that's not possible. We hunger for what's coming next. Why?

As I see the problem, we can divide it into four parts. When we suspend disbelief in a literary text,

1. we no longer perceive our bodies;
2. we no longer perceive our environment;
3. we no longer judge probability or reality-test;
4. we respond emotionally to the fiction as though it were real.

That last is, to me, the most puzzling of the four.

Do you remember that fine old tearjerker from 1970, *Love Story*? As it happens, I saw that film in Panama City, Florida, a town that describes itself as the capital of the Redneck Riviera. It was in a small movie theater on the main street that ordinarily showed only John Wayne movies, but *Love Story* was immensely popular at the time, and theater manager may have felt he need to fill a need. I had to pick my way through motorcycles to get into the theater. And there I was, with my Ph.D. in English Literature, surrounded by rednecks and hillbillies and bikers, all of us watching Jenny Cavalieri, Radcliffe girl, who has just married the rich Harvard boy, as she dies of

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leukemia. And the tears are running down our cheeks, the rednecks and the Ph.D., all of us. Why? What do any of us care about Jenny Cavalieri, fictional college girl?

Back in 1968, I offered a psychoanalytic explanation of the phenomenon, one that I think still holds good (Holland ch. 3). I asked a variety of people how they felt when they were engrossed in an «entertainment», book, movie, or play. They said they were «rapt», «absorbed», «[in] motion with the work». «I lose track of time.» «A feeling of joyful unreality.» «I am gathered up, carried along, and unaware of being a reader, viewer, etc.» «I am ... unaware of surroundings except those in the book or show.» «Total anesthesia.»

I took their phrasings to describe a regression to the stage in infancy when, according to psychoanalytic theory, the child feels the boundaries between itself and mother as blurred, uncertain, and permeable. Here, these readers and spectators did not feel separate from the movie or book that was giving them satisfaction. We could say they were perceiving the book or play or movie in a Winnicottian potential space (Schwartz).

I also noticed how they used what a psychoanalyst would call «oral» imagery when they described the experience. They would «take in» a movie, or a certain book was a «treat», «delicious». A comedy would be a «piece of cake». In classic texts like the Book of Common Prayer or Bacon's *Essays*, we find frequent references to books that are to be «digested». Oral imagery fits the regression to an undifferentiated union of mother and child.

That explanation I put forward in 1968. In 2002 I would like to add what neurology can tell us about the four aspects of the phenomenon: body neglect; neglect of surroundings; ceasing to reality-check; responding with real emotions to unreal situations.

Neurology offers an easy explanation for body neglect: habituation. Think about your shoes. You put your shoes on in the morning and for a few seconds you are aware of them. You can feel them on your feet. After a few seconds, you cease to be aware of them, and you don't become aware of your shoes again until you take them off at night – unless you get a blister or a pebble.

This is what's happening. When you put your shoes on, they are a novel stimulus, and the neurons that carry information about the state of your feet up your spinal cord start firing rapidly: 'Something new is happening down here.' But as the stimulus continues unchanged, the neurons slow down to their normal firing rate, and no new information goes up to the brain. You simply become unaware of your shoes unless and until something new happens.

In the same way, when you sit in your armchair reading or in a theater seat watching, your body is giving you no new signals. All the novel stimuli are coming from the page or stage or screen in front of you. You therefore pay attention to the literary work, and you cease to be aware of your body.

But I think that explanation is a bit too simple. I think something more complicated and pervasive is going on, something that comes from our basic stance toward the arts. We don't act as a result of art. Kant called it «disinterestedness», and the term *Interesselosigkeit* has passed into the lexicon of German aesthetics (Kant Part I, bk 1.2). We don't plan to do anything in the world as a result of what we are reading or watching. We may cry or laugh in response to what we are reading or watching, but we don't plan to act on the world outside the work of art. And that takes us to the basic purpose of a brain.

Why do we have brains at all? Some animals like polyps and sponges and indeed the whole plant kingdom get along fine without brains. What are brains for? Brains serve one overarching purpose. A brain serves to move a body (Kalat 224).

We can think of our human brains as divided into fore and aft along the central sulcus, a groove running from just in front of one ear across the top of our heads to the other ear. The back part of the brain, by and large, is devoted to collecting sensory information and integrating it into a three-dimensional motion picture of the world, complete with sound and feel. The occipital lobe at the back of our heads processes vision. The parietal lobe at the top of our heads, just behind the central sulcus and in front of the occipital lobe, processes tactile and motor information. The temporal lobe alongside our temples deals with auditory information.

In front of the central sulcus, we have the parts of our brains devoted to moving the body, and the further forward we go, the more complex the planning. The parts closest to the central sulcus deal directly with movements, the parts forward from there deal with increasingly more abstract planning of movements. These frontal parts of the brain reach back, as it were, or filter the sensory information from the posterior half of the brain to pull forward only the information relevant to movement. There are key points in the systems of the brain where all this irrelevant information might be refused passage: the posterior superior parietal lobe or the posterior thalamic nuclei. That neglected sensory information remains unused and unconscious, called up only if it is relevant to movement.

Now what is happening as we are absorbed in a movie or play or book? *We are not planning to move*. As soon as we do plan to move, to get up and fetch a glass of wine or to find the buttery part of the popcorn or turn to our neighbor, we lose our concentration. We are no longer at one with the book or drama, we are no longer rapt, absorbed, taken in – however you choose to phrase it. We have broken the willing suspension of disbelief.

Our not acting, then, will explain the first two of the four aspects of Coleridge's phenomenon, neglect of one's body and neglect of the environment. It will also explain the third, the failure to check on realism and probability. Reality-testing, it turns out, is also related to planning movement and action.

To intend to act, to plan a movement, we imagine the outcome. If I plan to move that glass of water on the table, I have to imagine where it is going to be after I have moved it. I have to imagine what is not now true – a contrafactual. I understand where the glass now is – the reality of the glass – by noting where it is not. Having moved the glass, I know where it is by remembering where it was, again something no longer the fact. We test reality by relating to it, by planning to move within it. And to move, we have to imagine a future and a past for an object, neither of which is true now. We test reality by imagining contrafactuals (Knight and Grabowecy 1358-59). And as long as we do not plan to move while reading a book or watching a play or movie, we do not test the reality of what we are perceiving. Thus, we willingly suspend disbelief. The minute we do plan to move, we, as we say, break the spell. We are no longer rapt and absorbed. We restore what we are watching or reading to the real world in which we reality-test.

We come then to the fourth aspect of the willing suspension of disbelief, to me the most puzzling of all. Why do we feel real an emotion toward what we know perfectly well is a fiction? Why do I cry for Jenny Cavalieri's imaginary death?

Emotions are a difficult problem for the neuroscientist. No one has quite settled on the relation between the physical signs of emotion and the conscious feeling associated with those physical signs. There is the quickened pulse and rise in temperature physically associated with anger and there is the psychological feeling of rage. There are the tears I outwardly shed for Ms. Cavalieri, and there is the inner feeling I have of sadness, grief, a feeling like that I would feel at a real loss. But what the relation is between the physical emotion and the mental feeling no one can say for sure.

There is also no general agreement on what are the basic emotions. Some say there are five, some say eight, and so on. Perhaps the one thing everyone would agree on is that there are two broad categories of emotion, and they are tied, like reality-testing, to action. There are emotions that make us want to approach an object, like lust or rage, and there are emotions that make us want to avoid an object, like fear or disgust. But beyond that simple classification, there is uncertainty.

But we can say one thing for sure. Our emotions arise in the limbic system and from there, by means of corticolimbic projections, influence and modulate our thinking and planning of actions in the prefrontal cortex.

To think about emotions toward fictions, this fourth and most puzzling aspect of the willing suspension of disbelief, we can draw on an idea put forward by Paul MacLean in the 1970s. While today neurologists would not regard MacLean's idea as either totally accurate or totally acceptable,

it gives us a starting-point for thinking about the emotional part of the willing suspension of disbelief. He argued that we have a «triple brain». Our human brains consist of three evolutionarily earlier brains connected together.

The earliest of these brains is the reptilian. Think about lizards. Every time I step out the front door of my house in Florida, a lot of little lizards scurry away. These little fellows are only a couple of inches long, yet they are doing very well in the game of life. In terms of the famous four Fs of the medical students, they are feeding, fighting, fleeing and sexually reproducing. They do all four with a brain little bigger than the head of a match. In us, the part of the brain that manages these basic functions is our brain stem, about the size of your thumb, running up your spinal cord into the center of the brain. It manages things like body temperature, blood pressure, some basic patterns of movement, and some basic synthesis of sensory information.

Now what is added to this when the lizards (or dinosaurs, really) evolve into mammals? Live birth. Lizards just lay eggs and walk away, but mammals give birth to live infants and suckle them, and thus is born an emotional relationship. Mammals – the mammalian brain – feels emotions like fear and rage and lust and perhaps sadness, as when you have seen a dog or a cat miss its young. The mammalian brain also allows for play, as you can see in the nature movies on public television of, say, lion cubs at play. They rough each other up, jumping onto one another and tumbling over one another, pretending to bite, but not biting so as to hurt each other. They can pretend and surely pretending is the beginning of literature. The mammalian brain occurs in us (approximately!) as the limbic system, a series of nuclei and other structures at the top of the brain stem, and this limbic system plays a central role in giving us emotions.

And what happens in the third of our three brains, the primate or neo-mammalian brain? It relies now on sight more than on smell. Otherwise, it differs from the earlier brains only in degree rather than kind. Evolutionarily, there has been a great expansion of the so-called association areas, the parts of the brain between the primary areas behind the central sulcus for sensory information and the frontal areas for motion. In humans, a physical spread evolved between areas involved in the immediate perception of a stimulus and the response. In other words, we primates gained a more complex picture of the world, and primates are capable of inhibiting our response and can plan more complexly for action. Primates can understand and manipulate not only tools but the complex social groupings we see among troupes of chimpanzees and gorillas.

The human brain differs from the brains of the other primates in one thing only: language. We evolved the language centers without which we would not have literature. But for understanding the willing suspension of disbelief, what matters is the great expansion of the prefrontal cortex, evolutionarily the last part of our brains to develop, the part just above our eyebrows and up into our foreheads. I weigh about as much as an orang-utan, but I have five times the amount of prefrontal cortex. It is in that region that we do our most complex planning, and most importantly, it is there that we inhibit actions. When we say we do not act in reaction to works of art, when we demonstrate Kant's *Interesselosigkeit*, it is our prefrontal cortex that is shutting down our propensity to act and with it our awareness of body and environment and our testing of reality.

But what is not shut down are those earlier reptilian and mammalian brains, that limbic system, which is generating emotions. In short, we can feel real emotions toward unreal fictions, because two different brain systems are at work. One, the prefrontal cortex's inhibiting system is at work because we know we are not supposed to act in response to the fiction we are reading or the drama we are watching. We therefore cease to test reality and we do not disbelieve the fiction. But our corticolimbic system remains at work, and through it we feel the emotions we would ordinarily feel at the human situations we are watching, at, say, Jenny Cavalieri's love and death. «Fictional worlds», write Tooby and Cosmides (p. 8), «engage emotion systems while disengaging action systems». We experience this astonishing phenomenon of real emotions toward fictional people and situations.

Q.E.D., I am tempted to say. We have arrived at a neurological explanation of the psychological

phenomenon Coleridge posited. But I would like to go one step further, toward a neuro-psychoanalytic explanation. This is, for me, the liveliest area in psychoanalysis today, the effort to combine psychoanalytic theory with the neurological discoveries of, especially, the last thirty years or so. This is a movement represented, for example, by the new journal now in its fifth volume, *Neuro-Psychoanalysis*.

Although we were looking only at the specifically aesthetic question of the suspension of disbelief, we have arrived, I think, at a neuro-psychoanalytic explanation of what the psychoanalysts call regression. In psychoanalytic terms, Coleridge's willing suspension of disbelief is a regression to an oral merger of infant and nurturing other in a potential space. In neurological terms, we could say that regression means shutting down some «higher» system that modulates «lower» systems. In the case of the willing suspension of disbelief, the prefrontal cortex inhibits action and the planning of actions so that we no longer are aware of the unreality of the fictions we are dealing with, but it does not – cannot – inhibit the corticolimbic systems that give rise to our emotions. They run freely on, busily prompting us to actions, that is, to approaches and avoidances, we never perform, but the psychological feelings and the physical signs of emotion persist. I cry and my fellow-spectators, the bikers and rednecks, cry for Jenny Cavalieri.

It is accurate to speak of this as a regression. Regression in the psychoanalytic sense involves two things: a return to an earlier time in development and the re-using of a more primitive mode of functioning. The willing suspension of disbelief takes us back to a time when our limbic systems had begun to function, infancy, but our prefrontal cortices had not – they do not fully develop until we are about twenty-five (which is why teenagers are the way they are). And we adopt a more primitive mode of functioning, emoting without regard to the realities.

So too the oral imagery is appropriate. We believe now that the first emotional regulatory systems, those that regulate the positive emotions of joy and elation, arise from the infant's experiences of separation and reunion with mother, which surely occur around feeding. (Schore).

I have one final point to make. Coleridge innocently pointed to a purely literary phenomenon, but that same phenomenon instances what most of us would agree is the profoundest threat to our human species. We humans have these wonderful primate brains, these prefrontal cortices, that enable us to devise comedies and concertos and computers and all the wonderful things of our human environment. These same prefrontal cortices enable us to devise nuclear arms and bioweapons and terrorist attacks. And how do we decide whether or not to use these things? What tells us what feels right, what feels good and desirable? Our emotions. We are trying to decide on the actions our primate brains make us capable of with emotions that come from the parts of our brains we share with lions and sheep and cats and dogs.

As Coleridge recognized, you or I sit in a movie and idly believe in Spider-Man's gymnastics, or we cry for Jenny Cavalieri. We feel the agonies of Hamlet, or we share the sexual joy of Molly Bloom's «Yes I said yes I will Yes». Every time we do this, every time we lose ourselves in the wonders of literature, every time we demonstrate the phenomenon Coleridge pointed to, we are enacting the tragic predicament that will determine whether our species can survive – or not. Think about it – with that prefrontal cortex.

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# Gottfried Benn and American poetry

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My paper is part of a larger analysis that will trace the influence of American poets on Gottfried Benn on the one hand, and find out how Benn's poetry was received by American writers on the other. I am focusing on Benn's late poetry in which he seems to have developed a new lyrical style; the question I am interested in, is whether this style was influenced by American patterns. Since the studies by Hohendahl on the «Benn-Rezeption» (1967, 1971)<sup>1</sup> little has been published on the subject, and, Benn's late a-metrical, «parlando» type of poetry was not appreciated until the late 80's.<sup>2</sup> My paper also belongs with the history of psychoanalysis and its reception by literary authors: Benn took pride in being a trained psychiatrist, he numerously refers to Freud, and was eager to keep abreast of the development in the medical and psychological sciences. Evidently, he studied Heinz Hartmann's *Grundlagen der Psychoanalyse*, when he wrote his great essays in the 30's.<sup>3</sup> Last but not least, I am interested in the way *artistic narcissism* may function as a protective psychic factor. After World War II, when Benn was pleased to experience a come-back as an author, he had to be careful at the same time to not be seduced by the approval of a public, whose literary taste was rather backward-looking. He therefore made great efforts to keep up with the international poetry scene. «I read American literature with great interest now, inasmuch as it is made accessible to us by our newspapers. Faulkner's *Light in August* was my last and strongest impression before the war», he wrote to Gertrud Zenzes, a Jewish friend of his who had emigrated to New York, in 1946.<sup>4</sup> The artistic necessity to turn to reality after the isolation of «*Innere Emigration*» made him develop a more relaxed lyrical diction which, in turn, enabled him to dissolve some of his fixations and lead to new poetological insights, indicated in his late essay

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Uwe Hohendahl: «Die Rezeption Gottfried Benns in den Vereinigten Staaten und Frankreich», *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift fuer Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 41 (1967), pp. 233-257. – Peter Uwe Hohendahl (ed., with introduction and commentary): Benn – *Wirkung wider Willen. Dokumente zur Wirkungsgeschichte Benns*, Frankfurt am Main: Athenaenum, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Anton Reininger: «*Die Leere und das gezeichnete Ich*». *Gottfried Benns Lyrik*, Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Heinz Hartmann: *Die Grundlagen der Psychoanalyse*, Leipzig: Thieme, 1927. See Gottfried Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe, ed. by Gerhard Schuster [vol. I-IV] and Holger Hof [vol. VI], Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986 ff.; vol. III: *Prosa I* [1987], p. 529.

<sup>4</sup> Gottfried Benn: *Ausgewaehlte Briefe*. With an Essay by Max Rychner, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986, p. 90 (my translation, A. L.-K.).

«Altern als Problem fuer Kuenstler»/ «Artists and Old Age» (1955),<sup>5</sup> for example. In this perspective, Benn's famous lecture on «Probleme der Lyrik»/ «Problems of Lyric Poetry» (1951)<sup>6</sup> looks like a rather retrograde and self-contradictory conglomeration of various conventional theories: it is the construction of the façade of the *poeta doctus* and *laureatus*; but behind this academic façade Benn was experimenting with the down-to-earth colloquialism of his poems «[im] journalistischen Stil.»<sup>7</sup>

Four phases can be distinguished in Benn's poetry: the Appendix of my article shows one example of each of them. From his expressionist phase we know his «juvenile shockers»<sup>8</sup>, aggressive poems in a bald, unrhymed, ametrical language (cf. «Schoene Jugend», the second poem of the «Morgue»-cycle<sup>9</sup>); after this deliberate destruction of traditional poetic form, however, Benn turns to the «re-construction of form» during the twenties: he invents his own special type of poem which consists of a number of 8-line stanzas, three stresses each line, mostly trochaic in rhythm and with alternating rhyme. Of these poems only a few have been rendered in English, the unusual, yet fascinatingly innovative rhymes being the main obstacle for translation (cf. «Qui sait»<sup>10</sup>). When in the thirties, after his blind participation in the Nazi movement, Benn finally was forbidden to publish he developed a cult of the poetic form which was conceived in classical terms: large blank verse stanzas consisting of 7 to 12 lines deal with the theme of poetic form itself and become reminiscent of Goethes «Weltanschauliche Gedichte» (cf. «Unanwendbar»<sup>11</sup>). These poems could only be published privately. With the defeat of the Germans drawing near, Benn began to experiment with the prose poem again, which became the most innovative form of his final years (cf. «Chopin»<sup>12</sup>).

With respect to form, then, the prose-like type of poetry of the late Benn is reminiscent of his beginnings, of the free verse of the «Morgue»-cycle. Although he continued to write poems containing rhyme and regular metre even late in life – he stated that «there will always be a longing for the rhyme»<sup>13</sup> –, and although in his «Problems of Lyric Poetry» he had proclaimed the «absolute poem», for which an almost classical perfection of form is vital, he started to abandon this «Pour-le-mérite-Appreciation» type of poem around 1943.<sup>14</sup> Metaphors taken from architecture – the column or the statue of classical antiquity – had had to prove the timelessness of poetry. In retrospect – with respect to the time of war and to Benn's «inner emigration» – the function of rigid form becomes evident: The poem had to be the fortress and the bulwark of value amidst an inimical world. When the situation changed – Benn foresaw the defeat of the Germans as early as 1941 – a loosened, though deeply melancholic poetic diction came into being.

Let us turn to the early Benn for a while, in order to show how his relationship with American writers of the 20th century was established. It was not his lyrical poetry but his prose work that gained him international renown. Eugène Jolas, editor of the «Little Magazine», *transition*, an American journal dedicated to avantgarde literature and critique, published three of Benn's prose

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<sup>5</sup> For a translation see E. B. Ashton (ed.): *Primal Vision. Selected Writings of Gottfried Benn*, Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1960, pp. 183–208.

<sup>6</sup> Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. VI: *Prosa 4* [2001], pp. 9–44.

<sup>7</sup> Gottfried Benn: *Briefe an F. W. Oelze* [1932–1956], ed. by Harald Steinhagen und Juergen Schroeder, 3 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979–1982; vol. 3 [Briefe 1950–1956], p. 142 (date of letter: 7/26/1952).

<sup>8</sup> See Ashton, *Primal Vision*, p. xii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212–215.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> Gottfried Benn: «Inapplicable» [«Unanwendbar»], translated by Edgar Lohner and Cid Corman, *Shenandoah* 5,1 (Winter 1953), p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> Ashton, *Primal Vision*, p. 265.

<sup>13</sup> Benn: *Briefe an F. W. Oelze*, vol. 3 [Briefe 1950–1956], p. 52 (date of letter: 7/22/1950).

<sup>14</sup> See Benn's letter to Hans Paeschke, Gottfried Benn: *Ausgewahlte Briefe*, p. 153.

texts, which were written in the manner of his «Roenne»-novellas.<sup>15</sup> The tri-lingual Jolas did not only translate Benn himself but also devoted an article to him to introduce him to the readers of *transition*. Jolas visited Benn in Berlin in 1929, and Benn went to see him in Paris.<sup>16</sup> As Jolas started numerous inquiries among the international group of contributors to *transition*, Benn's answers to the *Inquiry among European Writers into the Spirit of America*<sup>17</sup> and to the *Inquiry on the Malady of the English Language*<sup>18</sup> have survived. Thus, this *avantgarde* cultural journal of high reputation published the author Benn side by side with Beckett, Joyce, Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Hans Arp, Henry Michaux, C. G. Jung.<sup>19</sup>

Besides being impressed by the visionary nature of Benn's stories, Jolas took a decidedly neurological interest as far as human creativity was concerned. He therefore included Benn's essay «The Structure of the Personality. (Outline of a geology of the «I»» [«Der Aufbau der Persoenlichkeit. Grundriss einer Geologie des Ich» (1930)] in *transition*, number 21, in 1932. As late as 1975, Dougald McMillan, the historiographer of *transition*, calls Benn's essay «the most thorough discussion of scientific discoveries and theories concerning the unconscious ever printed in *transition*».<sup>20</sup> «The basis of Benn's essay is an examination of the evolution of the human brain» (ibid.). Although the title refers to Freud's introductory lecture: «Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persoenlichkeit» (in his *Vorlesungen zur Einfuehrung in die Psychoanalyse*<sup>21</sup>) Benn is not interested in thorough scientific analysis. Instead, he is ruled by aggressive and regressive affects caused by «culture and its discontents», so to speak. There is an intense desire for a big change, a «Verwandlung», even some sort of knowledge, that the wished-for mutation is already taking place. Here, with Benn, biology and geology become the leading sciences («Leitwissenschaften»). Psychology, sociology or history, are of no interest. The human personality is made a mirror of geology, and geology means a global and totalizing view of the evolution of life on earth. At present, according to Benn, mankind lives in the *Quarternary* («Quartaer»), a geo-historical epoch dominated by the supremacy of the cerebrum («Grosshirn», «big brain») or, to be more exact, of the cerebral cortex («Grosshirnrinde»). This «Leitorgan» is equivalent to the prevalence of intellect and consciousness and causes the negative state of «Verhirnung» (cerebration). Employing hierarchical strata models as well as the biogenetic law as developed by Ernst Haeckel, Benn maintains that the experiences of former eras are stored in the body, in the soma. They can be reactivated in dreams, in states of creativity, disease, and insanity. Benn, tired of the destructive state of civilization (caused by *Verhirnung*) turns to the «Ur», to the «Primaere» (the primeval states) for salvation: the early phases of the evolution and of the beginning of the human race, are evoked by the «Urwort», the «Urmythos», the «Ursagen», the «Urepos», the «Urspruenge» (these are Benn's key-words). Notions like regression, pre-logical mentality, the primitive are associated with disorder and the abnormal and become highly valued concepts. It is the «parietal organ» or «pineal eye», called the *Third Eye* (it still exists in a rudimentary form as the pineal gland) that is endowed with a very special aura; it was responsible for the *Tertiary* man's ability to use magic feeling («magisches Gefuehl»), to employ telepathy and telekinesis. Benn names these abilities *Natursichtigkeit* and he classifies them as the highest category of genius. Benn's conviction that inconceivable mutations were in the wake and that new leading organs («Leitorgane») were forthcoming, can therefore be translated into the desire to end the supremacy of the «big brain», in

<sup>15</sup> Gottfried Benn «The Island» [«Die Insel»], *transition* 2 (1927); «The Birthday» [«Der Geburtstag»], *transition* 5 (1927); «Primal Vision» [«Urgesicht»], *transition* 16/17 (1929).

<sup>16</sup> For further details see the autobiography of Eugène Jolas: *Man from Babel*, ed., annotated and introduced by Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 124-128.

<sup>17</sup> *transition* 13 (1928); Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. III: *Prosa 1* [1987], p. 194 f.

<sup>18</sup> *transition* 23 (1935); Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. IV: *Prosa 2* [1989], p. 213 f.

<sup>19</sup> See Dougald McMillan: *transition. The History of a Literary Era. 1927-1938*, London: Calder and Boyars, 1975.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> 2nd edition, Leipzig/ Wien/ Zuerich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1920. Benn had a copy in his library.

order to return to the reign of the «truncus cerebri» («Hirnstamm»). The diction of the essay culminates in a kind of hymnical prose:

We carry the ancient peoples in our souls and when the later acquired reason is relaxed, as in the dream or in drunkenness, they emerge with their rites, their pre-logical mentality, and grant us an hour of mystic participation. When the logical superstructure is loosened, when the scalp, tired of the onslaught of the prelunar states, opens the frontier of consciousness about which there is always a struggle, then there appears the old, the unconscious, in the magical transmutation and identification of the «I», in the early experience of the everywhere and the eternal. The hereditary patrimony of the middle brain lies still deeper and is eager for expression: if the covering is destroyed in the psychosis there emerges, driven upward by the primal instincts, from out the primitive-schizoid sub-structure, the gigantic archaic instinctive «I», unfolding itself limitlessly through the tattered psychological subject.<sup>22</sup>

There are two witnesses testifying to the fascinating power of this kind of prose. Jolas was inspired to write his own essay on «The Primal Personality». In addition, he composed a piece of lyrical prose, titled «The Third Eye». Here, the totalizing aspect of the pineal eye manifests itself in the ability to master a multilingual idiom. English, French, Spanish and German words and phrases are concocted to a polyglot mix. This language mutation is symbolic of the longed-for mutation of the human race. I quote from the end of «The Third Eye»:

We hear news from ungeheuren epochen da die scheidelaegler sternsuechtig in das weltall sannen the moundbuilders are here and the skystorming aztecs  
Go obsidian-swinging into the migratory march we join a skyworld without horizon we  
dream one tongue from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego  
We dream a new race visionary with the logos of God.<sup>23</sup>

The second witness is Henry Miller. In his novel *Plexus* (1949), he himself, as the writer Henry Miller, recites just the part of Benn's *transition* essay on «The Structure of the Personality» that I quoted above. His friend Ulric, who is among his listeners, interrupts the lecture again and again with exclamations such as «Golly! What language!» or «Jesus, Henry, what a line».<sup>24</sup> Ulric calls Gottfried Benn «A rum one, that bird», whose prose he would like to read more of. He is impressed by Henry Miller's thorough, extensive education, by his knowledge of «that sort of pabulum». The encomium reaches its summit with the following: «You know, Henry, [...] a passage like that could have been written by you, don't you think? Maybe that's why I like Gottfried Benn so much».<sup>25</sup>

Participating in Benn's incantations of the primitive both Jolas and Henry Miller share the feeling of discomfort with modern civilization. This irrational belief in the change of the white man by mutation, borders on Nazi ideology and was probably regarded as a threat to the reputation of *transition*. When, in 1949, Jolas prepared an anthology of texts from the 27 numbers of *transition* he included none of Gottfried Benn's. Thus, Jolas denied his own entanglement.

I am now going to discuss how Gottfried Benn was influenced by American novelists, before turning to the question whether he was acquainted with William C. Williams's poetry. Finally, I will take a look at Frank O'Hara's poetic reply «To Gottfried Benn» of 1958.

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<sup>22</sup> Gottfried Benn: «The Structure of the Personality (Outline of a geology of the «I»)», *transition. An International Workshop for Orphic Creation*, ed. by Eugène Jolas, No. 21, March 1932 [Paris], New York: Kraus Reprint, 1967, pp. 195-205, p. 200. Cf. Gottfried Benn: «Der Aufbau der Persoenlichkeit [1930]», *Benn: Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. III: *Prosa I* [1987], pp. 263-277, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> *transition*, No. 26, see Eugène Jolas (ed.): *transition workshop*, New York: The Vanguard Press, 1949, pp. 387-391, p. 391.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Miller: *The Rosy Crucifixion. Plexus*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963, p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

Around 1950 Benn attacks post-war German poets who produced so-called «Naturlyrik» (poetry of nature); he disparagingly calls them «aesthetes» and praises foreign poets instead. «I admire the unscrupulous way in which they, be it Mallarmé or Henry Miller, start off their poetry, not considering whether it might be suitable for schoolbooks, presidential addresses, for the awards or the censorship of academies. I cannot regard these German whisperers on grass, nuts and flies as the sole representatives of our poetry of today».<sup>26</sup>

Benn discovers the poetic quality of the prose work of American writers as early as 1937 when he writes a review of a *Collection of Short Stories* by Thomas Wolfe.

Faulkner, Dos Passos, Wolfe: every one of their pages gathers up the earth, the tissue of earth, and pulverizes it under pressure, sends it flying up in high fountains, to float down again over graves, over moments of happiness, into the shadows.

Peculiar, how poetry springs into existence in these novelists' work! In these novels with their urge towards norm and type, big-city novels, amid concentrated asphalt scenes, city realisms, matter-of-fact relations, virtually statistically –: suddenly a sentence soars, becomes airborne, frees itself, floats, fades into silence and breathless profundity. Sentences of pure poetry!<sup>27</sup>

Strangely contradicting his own concept of «static poetry», Benn, here, speaks of poetry resembling statistics. I quote from a letter to Oelze of 1945: «With American novelists you might encounter the following: suddenly, right within the text, a sketch of a life appears, all by itself, solely an expression and a curve – a tendril. One could even say «a statistical poem»».<sup>28</sup> It is the concept of the curve that makes Benn think of statistics. In his free-verse poem «Statische Gedichte»<sup>29</sup> the curve is reproduced graphically by the difference in length of the individual lines. Stressing the graphical, Benn participates in a specific tendency of modern poetry that can be termed «from the auditory to the visual». Since the late 30's Benn has thus been conceiving a new type of poem, which, in 1945, he calls the factual, the sober poem [das «sachliche Gedicht»], that may have its place even in a book of essays. This is what he terms «poetry of today». His intention is to introduce «new themes, new realities into the dull German poetry, away from moods and *sentiments*».<sup>30</sup>

With the Re-education program following World War II, a great number of journals were founded and sponsored in Germany by the Americans. Here, Benn came across the newest specimens of American poetry, in *Der Monat*, for instance, or in the quarterly journal *Perspektiven* (edited by James Laughlin from *New Directions*). In his lecture on «Problems of Lyric Poetry» (1951) Benn quotes from Stephen Spender's review of John Ciardi's anthology *Mid-century American Poets*;<sup>31</sup> a translation of the review had appeared in *Der Monat* in 1951.<sup>32</sup> The quotation is taken from David Wilbur's answers to the questionnaire Ciardi had sent to each of the poets collected in the anthology. It contained 12 questions, among them: «What is your attitude to 1) The oral quality of the poem, and 2) The audience of the poem?» (p. xxvii). By citing Wilbur – although not quite correctly – Benn makes him a supporter of his own theory of the «absolute

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<sup>26</sup> «Fruehe Lyrik und Dramen. Vorbemerkung (1952)», Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. VI: *Prosa 4* [2001], pp. 69-71, p. 71 (my translation, A. L.-K.).

<sup>27</sup> Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. IV: *Prosa 2* [1989] p. 218. Translation (slightly modified by myself, A. L.-K.): Ashton, *Primal Vision*, p. 110.

<sup>28</sup> Benn: *Briefe an F. W. Oelze*, vol. 1 [Briefe 1932–1945], p. 377 (date of letter: 1/18/1945, my translation, A. L.-K.).

<sup>29</sup> Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. I: *Gedichte I* [1986], p. 224.

<sup>30</sup> *Briefe an F. W. Oelze*, vol. 1 [1932–1945], p. 377 f. (date of letter: 1/18/1945).

<sup>31</sup> John Ciardi (Ed.): *Mid-century American Poets*, Boston: Twayne, 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Spender: «Der Poet auf dem Lehrstuhl. Bemerkungen zur neuesten amerikanischen Lyrik», *Der Monat* 3, H. 32 (1951), pp. 176-187, p. 178 f.

poem», «the poem without faith, the poem without hope, the poem addressed to nobody, the poem made out of words».<sup>33</sup>

In 1952, a larger group of German readers was made familiar with Williams for the first time, when a great number of poems by W. C. Williams were published – an original as well as a translated version – in the first issue of the *Perspektiven*. Several years earlier, the literary critic, translator and publisher to-be, Rainer Maria Gerhardt from Freiburg, had started out on his project to introduce American poets to German writers and intellectuals, in order to «renew German poetry» via international contacts. Gerhardt criticized Benn severely, because – in his collection of *Statische Gedichte* (1949) – Benn had published poetry in the manner of the 20's and 30's and thus fallen short of his own concept of the «factual poem». Gerhardt knew Robert Creeley from the *Black Mountain Group* of poets personally and he translated poems by Charles Olson in his own journal, called *fragmente. an international review of modern poetry*, in 1951.<sup>34</sup> W. C. Williams's «RR Bums» and his «Choral: The Pink Church», again translated by Gerhardt, also appeared in *fragmente* (1951). Benn was well aware of the Freiburg group of poets and of course read *fragmente*, but was severely hurt by Gerhardt's critical comments, which were, nevertheless, quite to the point.

Benn must have come into contact with imagist techniques and the «objectivist» style of poetry even earlier than the post-war years, for they are clearly detectable in his poem «Nasse Zaeune»/ «Wet Fences» of 1944. F. W. Oelze, who had an excellent knowledge of the English language, might have acted as a mediator. He admired Ezra Pound and had written a large essay on him, which, unfortunately, still remains unpublished. Benn himself was hesitant to include the poem «Nasse Zaeune» in his collection *Statische Gedichte* because of its novelty. Even to Oelze, «the wonderful poem» disclosed itself «only at second sight», then, however, it happened like lightning: «especially the last 8 lines are a miracle», he wrote to Benn. To me, this description of the poem's effects establishes an analogy with the epiphany. Moreover, there are elements of the Haiku, especially in the first five lines of the poem.<sup>35</sup>

#### NASSE ZAEUNE

Nasse Zaeune  
ueber Land geweht,  
dunkelgruene Stakete,  
Kraehenunruhe und Pappelentbluetterung  
als Umwelt.

Nasse Zaeune,  
Gartenabgrenzung,  
doch nicht fuer Abkoemmlinge  
der beruehmten Tulpe Semper Augustus,  
die Paris im 17. Jahrhundert mit unerhoerten Preisen

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<sup>33</sup> «Probleme der Lyrik», Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. VI: *Prosa 4* [2001], p. 36 (my translation, A. L.-K.).

<sup>34</sup> *fragmente. eine internationale revue fuer moderne dichtung* was published at Karlsruhe, unfortunately there were only two numbers of the journal (1951 and 1952). For further details concerning the role of Gerhardt as a mediator see *Charles Olson and Robert Creeley: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. by George F. Butterick and Richard Blevins, 9 vols., Santa Barbara, California: Black Sparrow, 1980–1990. See also Gregory Divers: *The Image and Influence of America in German Poetry since 1945*, Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2002, pp. 41–44.

<sup>35</sup> In a letter to Oelze, Benn later acknowledged: «Ich merke, dass ich zur Zeit im japanischen Stil dichte» [»I realize that at the moment I am writing in Japanese style«], Benn: *Briefe an F. W. Oelze* (see above, note 7), vol. 3 [Briefe 1950–1956], p. 45 (date of letter: 7/2/1950).

bezahlte,  
oder die Hyazinthe «Bleu Passe»  
(1600 fl. anno 1734),  
man trug seinen Namen in ein Buch ein,  
erst mehrere Tage spaeter  
fuehrte einen ein Gartendirektor vorbei –,  
vielmehr fuer die alten bewaehrten Ranunkeln Ostades.

Nasse Zaeune,  
Holzfaeulnis und Moosansatz  
in der Stille der Doerfer,  
kleine Ordnungszeile  
ueber Land geweht,  
doch Schnee und Salze sammeln sich,  
rinnen Verfall –  
die alten Laute.<sup>36</sup>

#### WET FENCES<sup>37</sup>

Wet fences  
blown across the land,  
dark green pickets,  
the restlessness of crows and the falling of poplar leaves  
as surroundings.

Wet fences,  
demarcations of gardens,  
not, however, for the descendants  
of the famous tulip *Semper Augustus*,  
for which, in the 17th century, Paris paid prices  
unheard of,  
or the hyacinth *Bleu Passe*  
(1600 fl. anno 1734),  
one had to enter one's name into a book,  
only several days later  
the manager of the garden guided one past it –,  
but rather for the good old ranunculi of Ostade's.

Wet fences,  
rotting wood and first signs of moss  
in the silence of the villages,  
a small line of ordering  
blown across the land,  
but snow and salt gather,  
trickle decay –  
the old sounds.

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<sup>36</sup> Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. II: *Gedichte 2* [1986], p. 125.

<sup>37</sup> Translation mine, A. L.-K.

In his self-commentary Benn demanded to keep «away from moods and *sentiments*, turn to the objects». And, as with Williams's, these objects are those of everyday life. «There is a fence in front of my window in Lehmannstrasse, and I look at it every day» – Benn tells Oelze in a letter in 1945.<sup>38</sup> Who would not think of Williams's here, notably his: «no ideas, but in things». With respect to technique, the turn «from the auditory to the visual» is worth noticing once again. Benn decidedly refrains from making «the old sounds trickling decay» audible, by using the rhyme, for instance. Instead, the optical contours are stressed, their visuality intensified by the wetness. Who would not think of Williams's «Red Wheelbarrow» here? Finally, by calling the fence «a line of ordering», Benn gently shifts the focus towards «the ideas», towards the scriptural line, the poetic line itself. The second stanza adds the historic *exempla* to the *realia* and introduces the self-referential aspect, the theme of art and artistry, by introducing the book and the painting. The allusion to Ostade, the Dutch painter of small farmers and ordinary people, belongs with the poem's low style diction and the objects of everyday life.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, the most prominent translator of Williams's poetry,<sup>39</sup> also noticed the astonishing similarities between Gottfried Benn and William C. Williams. When Williams died in 1963, Enzensberger wrote a poem in the manner of pen-portraiture for him. And this poem, is modeled on Benn's poem on «Chopin» (1944), one of the first examples of the new free verse type of the «factual» or «journalistic» poem.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

*Envoi*

fuer William Carlos Williams,  
gestorben am 6. Maerz 1963

In seinem letzten Jahr war er fast blind,  
heiter und sonderbar,  
vertrat keine Ansichten, sah  
nicht in die Roehre, las  
keine Rezensionen,  
weder *Look* noch *Life*.

Keine «repraesentative Figur»:  
Landarzt in Rutherford, New Jersey.  
Keine Galadiners chez Kennedy:  
eine Holzveranda,  
«mit einem Blaugruen bemalt, das mir,  
verwaschen, vergilbt, besser gefaellt  
als alle anderen Farben.»

Fuer die Stockholmer Akademie  
nicht ganz das Richtige,  
fuer die Reporter unergiebig,  
fuer *Look* nicht blind genug,  
fuer *Life* zu lebendig  
mit seinen achtzig Jahren,

<sup>38</sup> *Briefe an F. W. Oelze*, vol. 3 [1950-1956], p. 377 f. (date of letter: 1/18/1945).

<sup>39</sup> For details see Margit Peterfy: *William Carlos Williams in deutscher Sprache. Aspekte der uebersetzerischen Vermittlung 1951-1970*, Wuerzburg: Koenigshausen & Neumann, 1999.

sah er in seinem Hinterhof mehr  
als ganz New York ueber zwoelf Kanaele:  
Huehner und kranke Leute,  
das Licht und die Finsternis.

Nahm die Brille ab:  
«Die Pflaumen im Kuehlschrank so suess und so kalt» und  
«Der Schritt des Alten, der Duenger sammelt,  
ist majestaetischer  
als der von Hochwuerden am Sonntag.»

Sah die Finsternis und das Licht,  
vergass die Huehner nicht,  
war genau  
und sonderbar heiter.<sup>40</sup>

As far as I know, Frank O'Hara is the only American poet publishing after World War II, who occasionally refers to Gottfried Benn. When touring Europe for the first time, he came to Berlin in 1958. Here, being an assistant of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, he worked on the installation of «The New American Painting» and Jackson Pollock's travelling shows simultaneously. He is said to have bought several books of Benn's poems.<sup>41</sup> O'Hara may have come across Gottfried Benn's writing even earlier. Between 1952 and 1954 several of his poems were translated by Americans, especially by Cid Corman, who was the editor of the «Little Magazine» of the *Black Mountain School* of poets, a magazine called *Origin*. The translations were done in cooperation with Edgar Lohner, who also inaugurated a study on Gottfried Benn by Corman, which is as yet unpublished. Lohner, a German emigrant and professor of Comparative Literature, had visited Benn after the war in Berlin and, on several occasions, stayed at F. W. Oelze's «Benn-archive» at Bremen to do research (preparing a bibliography, writing analyses of Benn's poetry etc.).

Frank O'Hara

#### TO GOTTFRIED BENN

Poetry is not instruments  
that work at times  
then walk out on you  
laugh at you old  
get drunk on you young  
poetry's part of yourself

like the passion of a nation  
at war it moves quickly  
provoked to defense or aggression  
unreasoning power  
an instinct for self-declaration

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<sup>40</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Ed.): *William Carlos Williams: Die Worte, die Worte, die Worte*. Gedichte. Amerikanisch und Deutsch. Uebersetzt und herausgegeben von Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963, p. 172.

<sup>41</sup> Brad Gooch: *City Poet. The Life and Times of Frank O'Hara*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, pp. 312-314.

like nations its faults are absorbed  
in the heat of sides and angles  
combatting the void of rounds  
a solid of imperfect placement  
nations get worse and worse

but not wrongly revealed  
in the universal light of tragedy<sup>42</sup>

[9/6/1958]

With «Poetry is not instruments» O'Hara turns against poetic concepts that take technology and the natural sciences as their model. The poet working with a microscope in a laboratory, and the poet as an engineer – these are models we find even with the late Benn. In *Double Life* he postulates that the lyrical style of the future will be a «Robot style. The art of montage [...] the creation of centres of gravity [...] the constitution of fulcra. It won't even matter if this kind of «technique» is visible in the work of art».<sup>43</sup> O'Hara's critique also aims at the «absolute poem» that is not absolute at all but, if radically severed from the author, becomes the mechanical reflector of his subconscious projective activity. The poem as part of the author's self is a work of passion. By comparing it to «the passion of a nation at war» O'Hara appropriately stresses the metaphor of fight so ubiquitous in Benn's poetry and discourse. He constantly imagined himself as someone «with his back to the wall» («Relentless is the battle» and «the world is full of spears» – Benn makes his «Young Hebbel» say as early as 1913).<sup>44</sup> The violence of his metaphors reveal an aggressiveness which may be responsible for him being easy prey to Nazi-ideology. Nevertheless, O'Hara's critique of Benn is basically a statement on poetry in general. If we take the comparison between poetry and the nations seriously, the poem becomes a solid of imperfect placement; the void refers to the paper's whiteness, again and again filled with the lines of poems, in ever repeated rounds. Thus, the poem is a thing of imperfection, its faults are a result of human nature and the historicity of man's situation. Benn's imperative from his novel *The Ptolemean*: «Erkenne die Lage!» – «Realize the state of affairs!» can therefore never be met properly.<sup>45</sup>

With «Poetry is not instruments» O'Hara also disputes poetic concepts of William C. Williams. In 1944 – here the background of the war is an additional parallel –, Williams defined the poem as a «machine», and called the poet a maker in the same way Benn had done it. «A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words. When I say there's nothing sentimental [!] about a poem I mean that there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant». Here again the perfect formal construction is at the centre of poetry: «for it is in the intimate form [in which works of art] most resemble the machine».<sup>46</sup> William C. Williams's theorizing as well as Gottfried Benn's shows that at this special moment in political and literary history, both poets were not able to conceive of the poem as «a solid of imperfect placement». In practice, however, Benn is abandoning the idea of the «absolute poem»: in the forties the open, fragmentary lyrical form is well on its way.

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<sup>42</sup> Donald Allen (Ed.): *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*. With an Introduction by John Ashbery, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995, p. 309 f.

<sup>43</sup> *Doppelleben*, Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. V: *Prosa 3* [1991], p. 168 (my translation, A. L.-K.).

<sup>44</sup> «Unerbittlich ist der Kampf/ und die Welt startt von Schwertspitzen» – «Der junge Hebbel», Benn: *Saemtliche Werke* (Stuttgarter Ausgabe), vol. I: *Gedichte 1* [1986], p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Der Ptolemaeer*, *ibid.*, vol. V: *Prosa 3* [1991], p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> William C. Williams: *The Collected Later Poems*, London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1965, p. 4 f.

Moreover it is evident from a number of self-contradictions in Benn's work that the concept of perfect, «static», form served as a defense, almost as a fetish: several times his own entanglements show up by way of imperfect formal structure and incomplete reasoning. To name an example: he collected a group of poems under the title of *Statische Gedichte* that had previously been named *Biographical Poems*. These poems were composed when Benn – because of the Nazi interdiction – was not allowed to publish. Strangely enough, the sole subject of these poems is poetry itself. Biography here is masked by abstract artistic discourse and vice versa. O'Hara shows that Benn is wrong in believing that he could escape from his biography into the absoluteness of art. The transcendent existence of the poem – to use Benn's words: poems are «Gebilde, die ewig sind und nie zu spaet» – is thoroughly demystified by O'Hara. According to him, Benn's poems are as much biographical as they are «static». About a decade later, in his anthology of *New American Poetry* called *Silverscreen*, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann concluded that with O'Hara the dissolution of the poem as a complete and perfect being of artistry, composed of highbrow metaphor and discourse was initiated; instead, the poem became a subjective and casual means of utterance.<sup>47</sup>

His critique of Benn, however, shows clearly that O'Hara did not pay attention to Benn's «journalistic poems». These pieces did not come under the «trademark Gottfried Benn» that in 1958 still meant: regular metre and flawlessly rhymed lines of bewitching musicality. Taking his poetry of the 20's and 30's as a model, literary critics passed the verdict of «loss of quality» on his new prose-like poems. Michael Hamburger spoke of the «feebleness» of these pieces and called them «grossly inferior to his best work, [...] simply unformed – cerebral jottings in loose free verse [...] that all too clearly communicate something: Benn's preoccupation with himself and with ideas that are not realised poetically. [...] What is lacking in such pieces is the true creative flash.»<sup>48</sup> In 1990, however, the same Michael Hamburger calls them «extraordinary poems», because they make use of the spoken idiom at a time, when, except for Brecht, this was by no means the norm yet. «It came in really with the younger generation, who, then also cultivated the colloquial kind of German for use in poems.»<sup>49</sup> And this is the reason why Benn became a model for Peter Ruehmorf<sup>50</sup> and, later, for Rolf Dieter Brinkmann who claimed Benn to be a precursor of the American Beat and Pop Art poetry.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Silverscreen. Neue amerikanische Lyrik*, ed. by Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, Koeln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969, p. 18 (my translation, A. L.-K.).

<sup>48</sup> Michael Hamburger: «Art and Nihilism: The Poetry of Gottfried Benn», *Encounter*, October 1954, pp. 49-59, quoted by Hohendahl, *Benn – Wirkung wider Willen* (see above, note 1), pp. 417-419, p. 417.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Hamburger: «On Translating Gottfried Benn», Paul Foley Casey and Timothy John Casey (Eds.): *Gottfried Benn. The Galway Symposium*, Galway: Galway University Press, 1990, p. 175-187, p. 184.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Ruehmorf: «Das lyrische Weltbild der Nachkriegsdeutschen», P. Ruehmorf: *Die Jahre, die ihr kennt. Anfaelle und Erinnerungen*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1972, pp. 88-110; according to Ruehmorf Benn inaugurated «Grossstadt- und Bewusstseinspoesie», that is the poetry of the city and the brain, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>51</sup> Brinkmann: *Silverscreen*, p. 19, p. 26.

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## Phase 2 (1920-1930)

### QUI SAIT

Aber der Mensch wird trauern –  
solange Gott, falls es das gibt,  
immer neue Schauern  
von Gehirnen schiebt  
von den Hellesponton  
zum Hobokenquai,  
immer neue Fronten –  
wozu, qui sait?

Spurii: die Gesaeten  
war einst der Maenner Los,  
Frauen streiften und maechten  
den Samen in ihren Schoss;  
dann eine Insel voll Tauben  
und Werften: Schiffe fuers Meer,  
und so begann der Glauben  
an Handel und Verkehr.

Aber der Mensch wird trauern –  
Masse, muskelstark,  
Cowboy und Zentauern,  
Nurmi als Jeanne d'Arc –:  
Stadionsakrale  
mit Khasanaspray,  
Zuechtungspastorale,  
wozu, qui sait?

Aber der Mensch wird trauern –  
kosmopoler Chic  
neue Tempelmauern  
Kraftwerk Pazifik:  
die Meere ausgeweidet,  
Kalorien-Avalun:  
Meer, das waermt, Meer, das kleidet –  
neue Mythe des Neptun.

Bis nach tausend Jahren  
einbricht in das Wrack  
Geisslerscharen,  
zementiertes Pack  
mit Orang-Utanhuern  
oder Kaiser Henry Clay –  
wer wird das ueberdauern,  
welch Pack – qui sait?

(1927)

### QUI SAIT

Yet mankind shall mourn  
while God – if that exists –  
moves ever newly born  
brain waves into the lists  
from the Hellespontos  
to Hoboken's quay,  
opens ever new fronts –  
what for? *Qui sait?*

*Spurii*: being sowed  
used to be men's meed;  
women stripped and mowed,  
into their womb the seed;  
then came an isleful of pigeons  
and wharves: ships for the sea,  
and thus began the religions  
of commerce and industry.

Yet mankind shall mourn –  
masses; muscular mark;  
cowboy, Centaur reborn;  
Nurmi as Joan of Arc –.  
sacred arenas of speeding  
with DeVilbiss spray;  
pastorals of breeding –  
what for? *Qui sait?*

Yet mankind shall mourn –  
cosmopolitan styles,  
temple walls adorn  
Pacific power piles;  
eviscerated oceans,  
calorific Avalon:  
sea heat, costuming lotions –  
Neptune's new pantheon.

Until a thousand years later  
rabidly penitent  
gangs invade the crater,  
rabble cast in cement,  
ape fangs dripping saliva  
or Emperor Henry Clay –  
and who'll be the survivor?  
Which gang – *qui sait?*

(translated by E. B. Ashton)

### Phase 3 (1930-1944)

#### UNANWENDBAR

Du wolltest nichts, als das Gebot vollenden,  
zu dem zwei Voelker sich in dir vereint;  
aus fernen Stunden, Gipfeln und Gelaenden,  
Hirtengeräeten, Jagdzeug, Saeerhaenden,  
stieg eine Sehnsucht, die die Tat verneint –:  
«zurueck, zurueck, wo still die Wasser stehn  
und Glueck um Glueck die Rosen wehn.»

Anschauen, Pruefen, Bildersammeln –: Worte,  
darin Zusammenhang, erfahrener Sinn;  
ordnendes Sein: Gedichte –: reine Horte  
gross unanwendbaren Gebluets, die Pforte  
in die Erinnerung, den Anbeginn –:  
«zurueck, zurueck, wo still die Wasser stehn,  
du bist Erinnerung an Urgesehn.»

Die Jaeger, Saeer, Hirten droehnen  
mit ihrem Ahnennotgeraet,  
du hoerst hinweg, du siehst die schoenen  
Gebilde, die die Welt versoehnen,  
die ewig sind und nie zu spaet –:  
«doch noch nach Jahren buesst du fuer die Stunden,  
darin du sie empfangen und empfunden.»

Krank, kunstbeduerftig, im Verfall erhalten,  
da ein Zusammenhang sich hebt und weckt;  
entartet –, doch im Hauch der Weltgewalten,  
du siehst ja in den herrlichsten Gestalten  
den Tod von Zweig und Blueten zugedeckt –:  
wer die Zerstoerung flieht, wird niemals stehn,  
«wo Glueck um Glueck zum Strand die Rosen wehn.»

(1939)

#### INAPPLICABLE

You only wanted to fulfill the mandate  
by which two peoples were made one in you;  
from distant moments, summits and broad fields,  
shepherd effects, hunting tools, farmer's hands,  
rose a desire to contradict the fact –:  
«far back, far back, where water stands at rest  
and fatefully the roses drift ashore.»

Observing, testing, picture-collecting –: words,  
wherein coherence, experiential sense;  
construing life: poems –: pure hoards  
of great inapplicable bloodlines, the portal  
into memory, the very beginning –:  
«far back, far back, where water stands at rest  
you are the memory of first events.»

The hunters, farmers, herdsman, drone on  
with their ancestrally-needed tools,  
you hear afar, you see the beautiful  
creations that appease the world,  
eternal and never too late –:  
«but yet, years after, you suffer for the moments  
wherein you welcomed them and felt them fully.»

Sick, wanting art, continuing decaying,  
there a coherence rises and awakes;  
degenerates –, and in the breath of power  
you see within the most majestic figures  
the death concealed by blossoms and by boughs –:  
he who flees destruction will never stand  
«where fatefully the roses drift ashore.»

(translated by Edgar Lohner and Cid Corman)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gottfried Benn: «Inapplicable» [«Unanwendbar»], translated by Edgar Lohner and Cid Corman, *Shenandoah* 5,1 (Winter 1953), p. 55.

#### Phase 4 (1944-1956)

CHOPIN

Nicht sehr ergiebig im Gespraech,  
Ansichten waren nicht seine Staerke,  
Ansichten reden drum herum,  
wenn Delacroix Theorien entwickelte,  
wurde er unruhig, er seinerseits konnte  
die Nottornos nicht begruenden.

Schwacher Liebhaber;  
Schatten in Nohant,  
wo George Sands Kinder  
keine erzieherischen Ratschlaege  
von ihm annahmen.

Brustkrank in jener Form  
Mit Blutungen und Narbenbildung,  
die sich lange hinzieht;  
stiller Tod  
im Gegensatz zu einem  
mit Schmerzparoxysmen  
oder durch Gewehrsalven:  
man rueckte den Fluegel (Erard) an die Tuer  
und Delphine Potocka  
sang ihm in der letzten Stunde  
ein Veilchenlied.

Nach England reiste er mit drei Fluegeln:  
Pleyel, Erard, Broadwood,  
spielte fuer 20 Guineen abends  
eine Viertelstunde  
bei Rothschilds, Wellingtons, im Strafford House  
und vor zahllosen Hosenbaendern;  
verdunkelt von Muedigkeit und Todesnaehe  
kehrte er heim  
auf den Square d'Orléans.

Dann verbrennt er seine Skizzen  
und Manuskripte  
nur keine Restbestaende, Fragmente, Notizen,  
diese verraeterischen Einblicke –  
sagte zum Schluss:  
«meine Versuche sind nach Massgabe dessen vollendet,  
was mir zu erreichen moeglich war.»

Spielen sollte jeder Finger  
mit der seinem Bau entsprechenden Kraft,  
der vierte ist der schwaechste  
(nur siamesisch zum Mittelfinger).  
Wenn er begann, lagen sie  
auf e, fis, gis, h, c.

Wer je bestimmte Praeludien  
von ihm hoerte,  
sei es in Landhaeusern oder  
in einem Hoehengelaende  
oder aus offenen Terrassentueren  
beispielsweise aus einem Sanatorium,  
wird es schwer vergessen.

Nie eine Oper komponiert,  
keine Symphonie,  
nur diese tragischen Progressionen  
aus artistischer Ueberzeugung  
und mit einer kleinen Hand.

(1944)

CHOPIN

Not very forthcoming in conversation,  
opinions were not his forte,  
opinions don't get to the center;  
when Delacroix expounded a theory  
he became restive, he for his part was unable  
to explicate his Nocturnes.

Weak as a lover;  
shadows at Nohant,  
where George Sand's children  
would not accept  
his pedagogic advice.

Consumptive, of the kind  
with hemorrhages and cicatrization,  
the kind that drags on for years;  
quiet death  
as opposed to one  
with paroxysms of pain  
or one by the firing-squad:  
They moved his grand piano (Erard) up to the door  
and Delphine Potocka  
sang for him at his dying hour  
a violet song.

To England he went with three pianos:  
Pleyel, Erard, Broadwood,  
played for twenty minutes  
at Rothschild's, the Wellingtons, at Stratford House,  
and to countless garters;  
darkened by weariness and approaching death,  
he went home  
to the Square d'Orleans.

Then he burnt his sketches  
and manuscripts;  
no residues please, no fragments or notes,  
they grant such revealing insights –  
and said at the end:  
«My endeavors are as complete  
as it was in my power to make them.»

Every finger was to play  
with the force appropriate to its structure;  
the fourth is the weakest  
(mere siamese twin to the middle finger).  
When he began they rested  
on E, F sharp, G sharp, B, C.

The man who has ever heard  
certain Preludes by him,  
whether in country houses or  
in a mountain landscape  
or on a terrace, through open doors,  
a sanatorium's for instance,  
will hardly forget it.

Never composed an opera,  
no symphony,  
only these tragic progressions  
out of artistic conviction  
and with a slender hand.

(translated by Michael Hamburger)