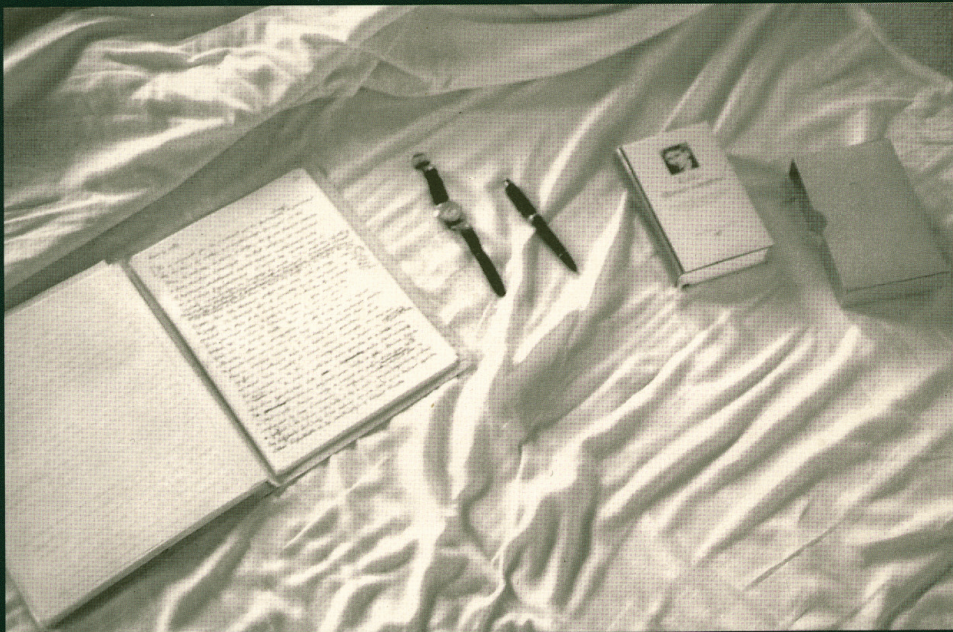


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P A P E R S

Self and Cultural: «Folktale»: Levels in a Cross-cultural Reader Response Study

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In this article we shall discuss the thinking behind the «Folktale»-project and focus especially on the different layers in the literary response.

The «Folktale»-project is interdisciplinary and combines methods from psychology, literary criticism, statistics, and translation studies.

It is our basic assumption that in any culture, the response to literature comprises three layers:

- one referring primarily to the reader's personality (individuality)
- one referring primarily to the reader's culture (in a broad sense and including religion, education, financial status etc.), and
- a cross-cultural layer.

These layers overlap, but we also think that by careful planning and detailed questioning in a systematic fashion, that is, by means of a questionnaire, it is indeed possible to probe the nature of the complex individual literary response and, by means of subsequent statistical analyses, to identify factors which determine the literary response both at the personal as well as at the intersubjective level.

In planning the project, we decided to make a study which could be carried through to a successful end within a reasonable time limit, that is, ten years. Furthermore, participation for individual readers must be limited to two hours or less, because we have previously found that this is a manageable time period.¹ We decided to have a set-up comprising

- a) three literary texts (in rotated order), each with a questionnaire;
- b) a questionnaire on the general background of all readers in terms of societal background, education, and literary schooling;
- c) and one questionnaire in which we probed their personality.

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¹ This finding goes back to our work with the «Tension»-study (Dollerup, 1970).

Our cooperation in the field of reader response has been going on for more than 25 years, but the «Folktale»-project is the first one which attempts to take into account personality features. In a volume which is concerned with mostly psychoanalytic approaches to literature and Norman Holland's achievements, it is appropriate to mention that it was a visit by Norman Holland (in 1981) where he discussed another study with us, that we started to consider the possibility to chart reader personality.

SELECTION OF TEXTS

The literary genre chosen was the folktale. The folktale is an old type of simple prose narrative found in virtually all cultures. Unlike «literature» with capital letters, the folktale is not tied up with specific elitist social mores in the societies in which it is told. It adapts to the time and space in which it is narrated, it is part of the «collective narrative tradition» in a culture and reinforces the cultural norms of the societies whose indelible imprint it bears. (Dollerup, Holbek, Reventlow & Rosenberg Hansen, 1984). In addition, its «adaptability» allows narrators to change a folktale to suit their own personality and their perception of the wishes of specific audiences. In terms of methodology, these last features were important for setting up the folktales in the «same» form in different languages.

It was unexpectedly hard to find authentic folktales.² Yet we did succeed in identifying short folktales recorded by acknowledged and reliable collectors from narrators known as «good tellers» in their own societies. The folktale collections finally identified were from Greenland (= an Arctic (Inuit) hunting culture with shamanism), from Denmark (= a European, largely irreligious, peasant culture), and from Turkey (= a Muslim culture). We finally ended up with 3 tales from Denmark and Turkey - and with 4 stories from Greenland - for we were uneasy with the Greenlandic stories: they seemed too alien to us.³

READER RESPONSES AND SELECTION

These stories were handed out to two classes of Danish college students. At this level 25 readers suffice for reliable information, but in fact there were nearly 40 readers in each group. Classes at different institutions were given the stories from one country/culture and asked to prepare them for class one week later. At the day appointed, the students had to answer five questions in writing, such as «Which story did you like best?» and «Does one or more of them have any “deeper meaning”?»⁴ Of course we did not expect all legitimate responses to be generated in such a simple set-up. Even so, the responses might be complicated in so far as readers might refer to all stories, compare them and distill a common lesson:

Thus one reader found that all the Greenlandic tales were found to «deal with ethics» and another reader that these stories were about «crises between men and women at a very primitive level». About one third of the readers had discussed stories, but few had changed their minds. Our misgivings about the Greenlandic tales proved unfounded: one of the four Greenlandic tales generated substantially more legitimate aspects in responses than the others, and although many readers

² Most collections of folktales, including those of the brothers Grimm (German: originally 1812-15), Asbjornsen and Moe (Norwegian: originally 1841-1871), and Afanás'ev (Russian: originally 1855-1864), have been edited by the collectors and are therefore, strictly speaking, not authentic.

³ Another demand was that no story must be of more than 3,000 words - another limitation imposed by our wish to carry through the experiment in the course of two hours.

⁴ One question was «Have you discussed the story with others?».

did find these Greenlandic stories strange, odd, alien, macabre and the like, only five out of 41 readers did not like any of them.

The response to the best Turkish story gives an impression of the breadth:

- You should not take everything you are told seriously
- Women are not inferior to me, better than men, etc.
- The fair sex proves its strength
- It pays to be good to one's parents
- One should honour one's parents
- Wise men deceive fools
- Don't judge by appearances
- The last laugh is the best
- If you mock others, things will take a bad turn for you.

Conversely, one of the two other Turkish stories had generated only two responses:

- It is not far from poor to riches. And
- It is not always bad to act on instinct.

The last response actually borders on being «illegitimate», that is a response which can by no means be found intersubjectively acceptable with reference to the text. This operative definition was introduced at this stage and is – we suggest – crucial to reader response research with pretensions to be taken seriously by literary people.

READER RESPONSES AND TALES

At all events, we had identified three good texts for our work from then on:

The Greenlandic story deals with a woman who, after having been beaten up by her husband, is given refuge by a polar bear. She returns to her husband, and reveals the bear's proximity, thus making the men go hunting and causing the death of the bear cubs. A polar bear comes and kills her, and her head is flung unto the sky.

The Danish tale is about an old man at an estate who is cuckolded by the steward of the manor who tries to make him run away by setting him impossible tasks. Helped by an old woman and magic that makes people stick together, the old man is righted.

The Turkish narrative is about a girl who, disguised a boy, goes in quest of a golden apple for her father in order to defend the family honour. Thanks to some protective gifts, she vanquishes difficulties and eventually finds the owner of the apple: a handsome young man who falls in love with her. After she has thwarted various traps to have her reveal if she is a girl, she succeeds in bringing the apple home to her father. But in sleep she herself is taken back to the young man who marries her.

In this discussion, we shall limit our examples to the Turkish story.

In a dynamic translation process involving 3 translators, editing and intensive collations, we set up «identical» versions of the three stories in Danish and in English (Dollerup, Reventlow & Hansen, 1993).

University graduates did literary interpretations of the stories. These were mostly structural although there were also Freudian features in some of them.

We succeeded in rounding up ten Danish-speaking and eleven English-speaking undergraduates or graduates (all told: seven Danes, three Greenlanders; 8 Americans, 1 Australian, Welshman, and 1 Australian). They were asked to read the stories, and in the course of the reading process, to report on their response.

At the same time, the stories were also given to groups of readers in Greenland, Denmark, England, Nigeria and India. Each reader was given only one story, but all stories were handed out in all groups, thus securing an equal distribution. The students were asked to answer six set questions in writing. The groups interviewed varied from 17 Greenlanders to 132 Indians.

In order to give an impression of the data we got, we may follow, in the barest (and highly edited) outline, respectively, a Danish and an American reading of the Turkish story, The Golden Apple:

A Danish male reader (1M) goes

(The title:) «There are gold apples in folktale and mythology» –

(Two fathers refer to one another's female and male children as «bitches» and «curs», respectively:) «The real problem is marriage» –

«The youngest child is always the one to give advice.» –

«They believe in Allah.» –

(The youngest girl disguises herself as a man at the outset:) «Bright girl» –

(She is about to meet the owner of the apple: following European folktale ideas, the reader thinks this is an ogre:) «I have never seen similarly liberal treatment of old men's lust for young people.» –

(The disguised girl buys a knife:) «She “proves” that she is a boy. She gets a weapon.» –

(The young man feels he may have treated the girl badly:) «Perhaps he feels embarrassed» –

(After the end:) «She really wanted to marry him.» - «A typical folktale. The story has several plots. It is a family feud and involves romance and love.»

An American female reader (107F) reports

«It is a non-Danish setting» –

«(Girls are equated with bitches:) It is an insult.» –

«Perhaps marriage is different in that part of the world» –

(«Curs»:) «Curs is an unfamiliar word.» –

(It is decided that the ability to steal the apple will prove whether girls are inferior to men or not) «Surprising. What has this got to do with the story?» - («A call of nature») «This is an old-fashioned expression.» –

(A horse is beaten to death:) «This is not fairy-tale stuff.» –

(The girl is given some yeast for her travels:) «Is she to make bread?» –

(It is used for parting waters:) «It must be a strong variety.» –

(The reader notes that the young man falls in love with the girl.) –

(Rose petals wither if a girl sleeps on them) «I never heard of that: the story has its own laws.» –

(The young man knocks out a tooth on the girl to test her boyhood:) «He really knocks out a tooth!» –

(The girl outsmarts the young man by claiming her dress is tight:) «How did she get the coat on in the first place?» –

(Back home she is received by a music band:) «“Bands” sounds anachronistic.» – «This is the ending of the story with the father of the girls.» –

(The girl's message to the boy:) «Now he knows she is a girl.» –

(A witch riding on a water-jar helps the boy:) «It is magic. I would have expected a broomstick.» –

(The girl is given a prohibition:) «A strange order.» –

(She is taken back to the young man who has procured «priests») «He is smart.» – (The young newly-weds are given a «shop») «Funny change of style.» –

(After the end:) «I found her use of disguise, the sorceress, the jar, and the apple strange. The characters are not developed, although the young man needs his mother for help. The rose petals have a symbolic meaning, and the apple is a means of mediation. There is a confused moral, namely that

happiness comes to you when you work sufficiently hard for it. I liked the story because in small ways it was different from the usual fairytales.»

In these introspection responses during the reading process, there are comments on the language, we also find evaluative comments referring to «genre», to «realism», and there are also anticipations as well as information about the immediate response. But it is much too close to allow us to distinguish any cultural features.

Conversely, in the responses in writing, participants would read the stories before they answered the six questions. So here we used retrospection and a holistic response. There are cultural dissimilarities. As far as «the moral in the story» was concerned there were culture-specific statements like the following ones: «Money brings happiness» (from Denmark) – «Listen to people in authority» (UK) – «“Modesty prevails”» (Numerous readers in India) – «A parent cannot speak up for a child’s attitude or behaviour.» (Nigeria). On the other hand, statements like: «Don’t underestimate girls» and «Boys are not superior to girls» are found in all cultures, as is the moral «Don’t boast».

CONSTRUCTING THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The literary interpretations and the reader responses just described were edited by assistants. Subsequently we used them for our questionnaires. One for each story and then a series of questions covering the response to the three stories.⁵

We also developed a questionnaire on reader backgrounds and tested it in two rounds in which readers were exhorted to point out ambiguities and inaccuracies (in Denmark, the USA, England, India, and Nigeria).

And finally, we constructed an attitude test. As mentioned it was ultimately inspired by criticism by Norman Holland. We took the criticism into account, but, at least originally, thought that it would be impossible to include traditional tests (Rorschach, the Minnesota test, etc.) in our set-up, both because of their comprehensiveness (they would take up more questions than our real objective) or could not be collected in a way which was easy to systematise. We finally settled on a modification of the Eysenck questionnaire which was limited to parameters which we considered relevant, namely:

Extraversion – Introversion

1. Impulsiveness
2. Risk-taking
3. Inhibition

Toughmindedness – Tenderness

1. Aggressiveness
2. Assertiveness
3. Dogmatism

Emotional instability – Adjustment

1. Feeling of inferiority
2. Emotional lability
3. Autonomy
4. Feeling of guilt/ self reproach

⁵ We deliberately made far too many questions so that we could discard all questions that turned out to be doubtful in a selection round under field conditions.

- 5. Authoritarianism
- 6. Attitude to cruelty to animals
- 7. The question of grown-ups' authority over children.

Like all the others, this questionnaire was tested out separately in Denmark and the USA.

The component questionnaires were checked one by one – including for time – and the number of questions reduced before the questionnaires were joined together and tested out under field conditions.

EXPERIMENTAL SET-UP

In the experimental set-up, readers were given a little booklet of 42 pages and with a total of 480 questions. After the instruction, participants read the first story, the questions concerning the response to it, proceeded to the next stories. The readers answered questions about all stories, their own background, and finished with the attitude questions.

THE QUESTIONS

The questions on the responses immediately after the reading of each story, take up many of the issues raised in the above discussion, and there are, as it were, usually not one «right» answer to them, except for three questions at the end of each story questionnaire which are used to check on whether readers have actually read the stories:

24. Finally we would like you to answer some factual questions about the story:

Who or what helps the girl get through the water?

- a. the little dog
- b. the yeast
- c. the boy
- d. the doves
- e. I don't remember

Some questions probe the evaluative factors in the literary response, e.g.:

4. Did you find the story (one mark for each pair)

	1	2	3	4	5	
entertaining	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	boring
repulsive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	pleasant
very poetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	not at all poetic

We have asked readers about their views on the characters - as we met with it in the American introspection report quoted.

9. What is your attitude DON'T KNOW
 ... to Beyoglu's mother

1 2 3 4 5

sympathy antipathy

... to the father of the sons

antipathy sympathy

... to Beyoglu

sympathy antipathy

... to the father of the girls

antipathy sympathy

... to the girl «Ali»

sympathy antipathy

Was there anyone with whom you could identify – even for a brief moment.
 Please write who: _____

We have tried to assess the immediate response during the reading process, for instance in the following questions on the recreation of the owner of the «golden apple»:

11. What did you think Beyoglu was when first mentioned?

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
a. evil	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. old	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. young	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. a man	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. a woman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. a supernatural being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. a rich person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. a powerful person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. I don't remember	<input type="checkbox"/>		

We also checked the views of our literary interpreters that the narratives are concerned with culture-nature oppositions:

7. How would you place this story on the following axes:

nature 1 2 3 4 5 DON'T KNOW
 culture

	1 2 3 4 5		DON'T KNOW				
the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	the present	<input type="checkbox"/>
humaneness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	inhumanity	<input type="checkbox"/>

And the responses from the introspection and retrospection studies which could not be phrased into more detailed questions were posed as direct questions:

22. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the story?

		AGREE	DISAGREE	MAYBE	DON'T
KNOW					
a. Children must show respect of their parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. It is about self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Children may give parents advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Girls/women are more competent than boys/men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. It is about intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. It is about family feeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The questions on the readers' backgrounds are more or less like those of other sociologically oriented studies and need hardly bother us. But those on the reader attitude deserve mention. The following questions (to be answered «Very much»/«Somewhat»/«Not much»/«Not at all») are typical:

Extraversion-Introversion
«I often suppress my views in a discussion»

Toughmindedness-Tenderness
«The sight of blood makes me sick»

Emotional instability-Adjustment
«I become nervous easily».

Partly because we believed that our readers could handle direct questions, and partly because we feared they might not have the time to answer all question, we decided to supplement these questions with point-blank ones: e.g.

29. How would you characterize yourself?

	1 2 3 4 5		DON'T KNOW				
very aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very peaceable	<input type="checkbox"/>
very introverted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very extroverted	<input type="checkbox"/>
very weak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very firm	<input type="checkbox"/>
very daring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	very cautious	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. Which child would you like to have?

a girl	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
a boy	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
It would make no difference	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
I don't want to have children	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
both boys and girls	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

Let me add that in the final experiment many readers were obviously absorbed with these questions, and that quite a few have thanked us for illuminating their own personality.

CONCLUSION

We suggest that the study does indeed explore culture and self as part of the response to literature. There are already indications that there are fairly universal aspects in the literary response. There are strong indications that culture is a major determinant. All our findings so far substantiate that gender is by far the most important divide between humans, and yet there are also other intimations that there are other aspects individual and personal.

We can predict that our definition of «universal» vs. «individual» aspects of the response to literature must necessarily be pragmatic, situational, and based on our judgement of how specific figures are to be interpreted: after all, we are those who best know the implications – or non-implications – of our findings. And if we do not make interpretations, it will be hard for others to see what we have found.

Did we end up with the perfect experiment? The answer is «no» – and yet still a cautious «Perhaps yes»: We have not got the «ideal» 200 readers in each square – but the approximations are not bad: 126 Americans, 199 Irishmen, 205 Indians, and 446 Danish readers (The latter reading the stories in either Danish or in English to allow us to study the influence of the use of non-native languages). Of course there have been disasters on the way: the worst one being that after we had proofread the whole questionnaire and joined all components, the assistant in charge of this operation did not know that all files imported on the university computers were deleted once a month. So the questionnaire was lost and, in the process of gluing together whatever remains we had under time pressure because the questionnaires must be sent to India, 5 misprints were introduced, making, presumably for so many lost questions. In addition, it appeared in the course of the first real collection session – in India – that quite a few readers could not do the questionnaire in the time actually allotted (which, in practice, turned out to be less than the two-hour period we had counted on). It was necessary to introduce a «jump-command», telling readers to stop ploughing through the tales/completing the questionnaires and proceed straight to page 32 which posed crucial questions about age, gender, and the like. It means, of course, that we have full data on only, perhaps, half the readers. But in this respect, the data is, presumably, all right because we rotated the order of the stories in each class and all stories have therefore been the first, the second, and the third one read everywhere.

The data has now been collected and is ready for being entered in computers for statistical analyses. These analyses will provide us with much more information. To be true, information which we have influenced in the sense that as analysands and as researchers, we have had to make decisions and to make up our minds on many things. Yet we also argue that, more than any other study that we know of, ours are open to control, and, we hope, to little falsification.

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The Unconscious Text

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INTRODUCTION

This article explores key elements in Derrida's and Lacan's readings of Freud. Criticizing the notion of prelinguistic knowledge, that is, the notion that language is in need of epistemological foundations, both consider reality inseparable from linguistic structures and processes of signification.

Deconstruction takes literary language as the model for all reading. Rhetorical figures and figurative language are not contingent forms characterizing literary language but are integral to the function of language in general. In its reliance on rhetorical figures and figurative language, language exceeds meaning. The presence of the word is not equivalent to the presence of meaning but it entails a certain absence and indeterminability.¹

The establishment of the dissociation between the written sign and the inscribed meaning is not, of course, something new for the understanding of literature. The innovation in the deconstructive approach is found in the rejection of the belief that one can pass through the signifier to a signified meaning which is the truth and origin of the sign.

In that context, Derrida explores the graphic metaphors Freud uses in his characterisation of the unconscious.

In his reading of Freud, Lacan makes use of Roman Jakobson's poetic analyses. Jakobson sees language in terms of two polar opposites, *metaphor*, the trope of resemblance and *metonymy*, the trope of contiguity. According to Lacan, these two tropes determine the signifying processes of the unconscious.

SPEECH, WRITING, AND LOGOCENTRISM

Central to Derrida's deconstructive thinking is the notion that all Western usage of language are *logocentric*, a term derived from the Greek word *Logos*: Western thought identifies with the spoken word which in turn is associated with logic, reason, truth, or the Word of God.² Logocentrism

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¹ See, for instance, Bloom & others (1979), an influential collection of essays by Derrida and prominent American deconstructors: Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Geoffrey H. Hartman, and J.Hillis Miller.

² Derrida's analysis of *logocentrism* and *phonocentrism* can be found in Derrida 1976. Here Derrida examines the conceptual roles played by speech and writing in the texts of Plato, Rousseau, Husserl, Lévi-Strauss, Condillac and Saussure. They all condemn writing as a parasitic and distorting form of speech, which is considered the privileged category.

is, in a phrase Derrida adopts from Heidegger, grounded on a «metaphysics of presence». Being *phonocentric* and promoting the spoken word over the written word Western thought considers speech as a model for analyzing all discourse. The spoken word is given the privilege because it is assumed that meaning presents itself absolutely and unequivocally in speech: the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously, so there is no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech, and auditor. According to a Western logocentric ideal this should ensure the identical presence of knowledge, expression, and meaning; or, as Barbara Johnson puts it: «This immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said» (Johnson 1982: viii).

In contrast, writing is seen as an artificial and indirect representation of speech. In its lack of immediacy, writing is potentially dangerous to the self-presence of meaning. In its characteristic function in the absence of a speaker, it is separated from authorial thought or intention, and from its circumstances of origin in general.

Within a psychological perspective, logocentrism becomes problematic. Using Vincent Descombes's *L'Inconscient malgré lui*, Culler posits that on the premise of the Freudian distinction between consciousness and the unconscious the latter may be determined as the excess of what one says over what one knows, or as the excess of what one says over what one means to say (Culler 1983: 127-28). If the intention of speakers is defined in terms of what is immediately and fully present in their consciousness at the moment of utterance, intentional content is necessarily variable and incomplete and cannot account for the meaning of what the speaker says. If, on the other hand, intention is defined both in terms of consciousness and the unconscious it becomes an inclusive and divided structure which is nowhere present and which turns the intentional meaning of utterances into a matter of indeterminable and potentially endless implication and explanation.

It is Derrida's point that the opposition of speech and writing on the basis of the association of speech with the idea of the immediate self-presence of meaning and the association of writing with absence and representation is an illusion since speech like writing is characterized by distance, difference and deferment.

WRITING AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

In his reading of Freud, Derrida extends his concept of writing to the human unconscious.

Derrida reads Freud as a radical critique of the humanistic tradition represented by Cartesian rationalism and Husserl's phenomenology. This tradition defines the human subject in terms of conscious intelligence and sensibility and consequently considers the human subject the origin and source of meaning. Freud subverts this idea, first, by dividing the human mind into a conscious and an unconscious sphere and, then, by dislocating the hierarchical opposition between consciousness and the unconscious. He writes that «the unconscious is the true psychical reality» (Freud 1975b [1900]: 612-13). Consciousness is derived from the processes of the unconscious.

However, Freud's notion of the unconscious is ambiguous. In a psychoanalytic context, the unconscious controls the self by means of repressed experience. This experience can be consciously re-experienced in the liberating process of psychoanalysis which produces a self-knowledge that restores the self to conscious self-presence. This view defines the unconscious in terms of consciousness, a repressed but recoverable consciousness.

However, Derrida uses the line of argument in Freud's psychoanalytic writing which identifies the notion of the unconscious just described with the term the «preconscious»: a layer of memory and experience which can in principle be brought back to consciousness. In contrast, Freud speaks of the unconscious, first, in terms of its inaccessibility to consciousness and as characterized by *Nachträglichkeit*, deferred action or supplementation. Secondly, in terms of

Urverdrängung, which is, in Culler's summary, «the primary repression in which the unconscious both initiates the first repression and is constituted as repression» (1983: 162).³

What are the origins of the inaccessibility of the unconscious? In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida traces the evolution in Freud's attempts to characterize the psychic apparatus in terms of graphic metaphors.

From the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) to the «Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad» (1925), Freud progresses from a neurological conception of fraying (*Bahnung*) in which writing is absent, through a notion of a system of written traces, to a final invocation of a mystic writing pad. This multilayered writing apparatus explains how the impressions received by the preconscious-conscious perceptive system form no permanent traces there but are inscribed in the underlying mnemonic system. With this model Freud intends to explain how memories of experiences are reproduced in the unconscious as neuroses *without* having been perceived and been consciously present. Freud thus describes the unconscious as a textual mechanism. In a manner similar to Derrida's writing, the structure of experience comes to signify a trace-structure which works according to the dynamics of *différance*.⁴ Derrida writes:

The unconscious is not, as we know, a hidden, virtual, potential self-presence. It differs/ defers itself, which no doubt means that it is woven of differences and also that it sends out or delegates representatives, mandates, but that there is no way the mandator could «exist», be present, be «itself» somewhere, much less become conscious. In this sense... the «unconscious» can no more be classed as a «thing» than as anything else; it is no more a thing than a virtual or concealed consciousness. This radical otherness with respect to every possible mode of presence can be seen in the irreducible effects of deferred action...In the otherness of the «unconscious» we are dealing not with a series of modified presents presents that are past or still to come but with a «past» that has never been nor will ever be present and whose future will never be its production or reproduction in the form of presence. (1982b: 21-22)

There are fundamental limitations on the translatability of the unconscious to conscious language.

Although dreams work with coded elements from individual or collective histories there will still be an irreducible residue which cannot be decoded or translated because of the personal nature of the dreamer's grammar.

In another sense translation is not at all possible. According to Freud, dreams are closely related to linguistic expression. Signified meaning cannot survive the substitution of signifiers which is essential if a translation into conscious language is to occur:

The materiality of a word cannot be translated or carried over into another language.

³ For a lucid analysis of Freud's conceptual opposition between consciousness and the unconscious, see Laplanche & Leclaire 1972.

⁴ Central to deconstructive thinking is the idea that language is a differential sign-system, an idea derived from Saussure. To account for his notion of language as a play of differences or a decentered system, Derrida introduces the portmanteau term *différance*. He uses the spelling *ance* as in a verbal noun to indicate, simultaneously, a (passive) structure of differences and a movement, an (active) production, or play of differences. *Différance* thus becomes a silent fusion of the French noun, *différence*, which means difference, and the French verb, *différer*, which means to differ and to defer. It combines the meanings of difference, differing and deferring. The term concentrates the significations that signified meaning is never present as an identity of inherent features as its significance is derived from its differences from other signified meanings. At the same time meaning cannot be said to be absent, either. Instead, any spoken or written utterance consists of traces of references to non-present forms of utterances. The effect of having a self-present meaning at any given moment is a consequence of its differences from these non-present forms of meaning. This effect of a determinate, or decidable, present meaning turns out to be an illusive trace as the differences are deferred in the play of language (Derrida 1981: 27).

Materiality is precisely that which translation relinquishes. To relinquish materiality: such is the driving force of translation. And when that materiality is reinstated, translation becomes poetry. In this sense, since the materiality of the signifier constitutes the idiom of every dream scene, dreams are untranslatable. (Derrida 1978: 210)

However, there is an even more fundamental limitation on the translatability of the unconscious. To speak of the conscious text in metaphorical terms as a translation (*Übersetzung*) or a transcription (*Umschrift*) is misleading for this presupposes the presence of an original, unconscious source text. Derrida argues:

The conscious text is thus not a transcription, because there is no text *present elsewhere* as unconscious to be transposed or carried over. The unconscious text is already woven of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united; a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions. Originary prints. Everything begins with reproduction. Always already: repositories of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presence is always reconstituted by deferment, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*: for *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*. (1978: 211)

DEFERRED ACTION

In *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Laplanche explores the Freudian concept of *deferred action* in detail.

The notion of deferment is intimately bound up with Freud's notion of seduction. Freud's theory of *seduction* is based on observations of repression and, consequently, of defense in cases of hysterics. In normal cases, psychological mechanisms such as ego attention, attenuation by repetition and gradual discharge and elaboration by associative connecting are employed. In psychoanalytic therapy, they make the subjects integrate painful memories and perceptions into the mental mainstream.

In the case of hysterics these defenses do not work. The unpleasant memory remains isolated from the rest of the psyche and is thus pathologically effective.

According to Freud, one of the reasons for this is the collusion between two separate scenes in the subject's memory. We have, in the words of Laplanche, «on the one hand, the repressed scene, a painful memory; on the other, an apparently subordinate, concomittant memory, a circumstance contingent to the traumatic event, which unlike that event, has remained in memory as a symptom or "symbol" of the first scene, which itself cannot be brought to consciousness» (Laplanche 1976: 35).

The dissociation of idea and affect can also be found in Freud's dream analyses: the relation between manifest dream content and affect seems totally irrational until the latent dream thoughts are uncovered.

This total displacement of affect characterizes Freud's «primary process». But in the cases of hysterical reactions we are not dealing with a primary process which realizes the desires and wishes of dreams but a primary process circumventing the ego (the agency normally responsible for defensive processes) to create a pathological defense. This pathological defense is the sexual nature of the memory.

To demonstrate that sexuality is the subject of hysterical repression, Freud uses the case of Emma and focuses on two scenes in her life. Emma's symptom is fear of entering shops. She, herself, traces the origins of her phobia to an incident at the age of twelve when two shop assistants laughed at her clothes, and she consequently fled the shop in fright.

The second, unconscious, scene which is rediscovered through analysis, dates back to the age of eight. In Freud's words, «when she was a child of eight, she had gone into a shop to buy some sweets and the shopkeeper had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes» (Freud 1975a [1895]: 354).

Thus, there is an earlier event, constituted by a sexual scene (seduction by an adult) which is repressed and replaced by a mnemonic symbol: a fear of shops. Freud traces the associative nonsexual

and seemingly harmless links between elements of the conscious and the unconscious scene: clothing, and the similarity between the shop assistants laughing in the second scene and the shopkeeper making grimaces in the first scene. The key point is that the two scenes are separated by the advent of puberty. The first experience did not provoke any sexual reaction in the eight year old Emma. At the second event there was both a sexual reaction as well as sexual ideas.

Accordingly Emma associates consciously her sexual emotion to the second event which is non-sexual in nature although it is in fact provoked by the memory of the first. This deception does away with the ego's normal defense. Freud concludes:

Here we have an instance of a memory exciting an affect which it had not excited as an experience, because in the meantime the changes produced by puberty had made possible a new understanding of what was remembered. Now this case is typical of repression in hysteria: We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma *after the event* (*nachträglich*). (Freud 1975a [1895]: 356)

In other words, the origins of Emma's trauma cannot be situated in time and space. The traumatic event is never present, it does not occur but is constituted by deferment, by supplementary delay. The trace left in memory has never been perceived, and has never been present in consciousness.

Freud's understanding of trauma or neurosis in terms of the textual, differential functioning of the unconscious may be further illustrated through the case of the Wolfman. In this case the process of sexual deferment is transferred into early childhood. By means of dream analysis Freud established that at the age of one and a half the Wolfman witnessed the «primal scene». We are not dealing with the real or fantasied nature of the experience. The perception of this scene only became meaningful by a deferment of sexual maturation. «...only at the time of the dream, at age four, and not at the time he observed it. At age one and a half he received impressions he was able to understand after the event (*nachträglich*), at the time of the dream, due to his development, his sexual excitation, and his sexual curiosity» (Freud 1975c [1918]: 37-38). Linked to the dream through subsidiary associations the scene becomes traumatic and is repressed. Its affect is displaced in consciousness as a fear of wolves. The phobia is triggered by the dream: «...the dream bestows on the observation of the act of intercourse an effectiveness after the event (*nachträglich*)» (Freud 1975c [1918]: 109).

The two case studies are meant to illustrate, through the concept of deferred action, the fundamental limitations on the translatability of the unconscious. The unconscious text cannot be translated into a conscious self-present text. This implies that psychological causes cannot be identified in any real sense. Depending on signified meaning in need of supplementation the event or the cause is nowhere present. The logic of deferred action reveals a general movement of substitution where every event, every sign, needs to be supplemented to replenish a lack of identity. This lack persists, and creates a sequence of supplements which continuously and endlessly defers any determinate specification.

THE LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE: METAPHOR AND METONYMY

From a Lacanian perspective, both Emma and the Wolfman are dealing with events which are inscribed in the unconscious in pure signifiers. The signifier acts independent of its signification and without the subject's being aware of it. Its effects are felt in consciousness without conscious knowledge or control.

Employing the Saussurian distinction between signifier and signified, Lacan insists that the signifier and the signified are two different orders separated by a line which resists signification. In linguistics, the line symbolizes language's autonomy from meaning. In psychoanalysis, the line symbolizes the repression of the signified. Lacan speaks of «the autonomy of the signifying chain

from the signified, the incessant sliding of the signifying chain over the waves of the signified» (Quoted from Lemaire 1977: 45).

Lacan has it that the unconscious works in accordance with the principal mechanisms of language. In its elementary signifying elements and its formations (dreams – slips of the tongue – forgetfulness – symptoms) the unconscious is structurally comparable to a language.

According to Freud, two mechanisms are at work in the associative network of the unconscious: condensation and displacement.

Freud uses condensation in three different senses. In the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* condensation explains the «overdetermination» of the manifest content of the unconscious. Through a series of associations, one manifest element may replace and refer back to several latent thoughts. These thoughts are *not necessarily* connected to another.

In the *Traumdeutung* Freud speaks of condensation as a fusion of a number of latent elements into one single manifest element representing all.

Thirdly, in the same chapter Freud characterizes words with multiple meanings as a form of condensation.

In the *Traumdeutung* Freud defines the process of displacement as follows:

In the manifest content of the dream, only the *indifferent* impression was alluded to... All the strands of the *interpretation*, on the other hand, led to the *important* impression... What takes place would seem to be something in the nature of a «displacement»... in this way, ideas which originally had only a *weak* charge of intensity take over the charge from ideas which were originally intensely cathected and at last attain enough strength to enable them to force an entry into consciousness. (Freud 1975b [1900]: 176-177)

In other words, displacement is a process which replaces psychically important material by indifferent material.

Jacques Lacan's innovation is to assimilate the metaphoric and metonymic processes of language to these two central mechanisms: metaphoric substitution characterizes condensation. Metonymic substitution characterizes displacement.

Metaphor and metonymy are, of course, the two principal tropes in rhetoric based on the two fundamental types of association: continuity and similarity.

This idea derives from Roman Jakobson's poetic analyses. In the essay «Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances» (1957) Jakobson conceives of language in terms of two polar opposites, namely *metaphor* which is a figure of paradigmatic substitution based on similarity, and *metonymy* which is a figure of syntagmatic combination based on contiguity.

However, there is a crucial difference between Lacan and Jakobson. Although they both define metaphor and metonymy as functions of discourse Jakobson wants to anchor these two concepts in reality by retaining the notion of reference to a prelinguistic resemblance or contiguity. In contradistinction Lacan sees the efficacy of these two tropes exclusively in the signifying process.

It is Lacan's point that the rhetorical processes of metaphor and metonymy determine the unconscious signifying network without the subject's awareness. These two tropes are the principal agents in the transformation and distortion of unconscious manifestations. No actual contiguities or resemblances are involved. The effects of the signified are produced by the tropical interplay of signifiers.

The analysis of dreams and other formations of the unconscious – in order to uncover repressed thoughts – therefore requires the same hermeneutic interpreting techniques as the interpretation of a poem.

The central instance of metaphoric substitution is the symbol. «The hysterical symptom», said Freud, «is a mnemonic symbol» (Quoted from Lemaire 1977: 199). The substitutive relationships between symptoms and the repressed thoughts are always verbal. According to Lacan, the symptom is an unconscious metaphor.

Prior to analysis, Emma's phobia of shops would then be a meaningless metaphor for the

repressed experience of sexual assault. What similarity could be involved in this instance of metaphoric substitution? The substitution between latent and manifest elements obviously seems to work though the term *shop*. In Emma's account shops were found in both events. However, this creates a theoretical problem, because, it seems as if the present example might just as well be described as a metonymic process. The spatial context of the shop is a symptom of the extension of continuity.

The example points to a fundamental problem in Lacan's theory. Lacan defines the tropes of metaphor and metonymy solely in terms of the signifying process. At the same time they are central for his definition of the processes of the unconscious. In accordance with Freud's notion of condensation, Lacan shows no interest in similarity between elements substituted for one another in metaphors. Laplanche points out that this has the effect of voiding the tropes of explanatory content (Laplanche 1776: 131-133). Any unconscious material may be explained equally well through metaphor and metonymy.

CONCLUSION

Both Derrida's and Lacan's interpretations of Freud are meant to restore the most radical elements of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Both readings comprise the notion of tropical supplementation in their mechanisms of the unconscious. Freud's primary psychic processes of condensation and displacement, the methods through which the repressed is translated into consciousness, are described in terms of the differential signifying processes of figurative language. The interpretation of unconscious manifestations, therefore, cannot not be seen as a translation in the sense of the determination and representation of original psychic content in conscious language, but as a translation in the non-equivalent sense of a transformation. The unconscious text is absent, existing only in a non-original and non-equivalent translation.

The idea of the unconscious as a differential signifying structure also reveals the self-presence of consciousness as a non-originary origin, an illusion produced by repression.

Derrida's concept of writing is much wider, however. On a fundamental level, Derrida sees the repression of Freud's theory of repression as an instance of the general historical repression and suppression of writing which has taken place since Plato. It is a repression which presents philosophy as a theory of representation based on the idea of reality as the presence and truth behind representations. The symptom of the repressed is, then, «the metaphor of writing which haunts European discourse, and the systematic contradictions of the ontotheological exclusion of the trace» (Derrida 1978: 197).

In his discourse, Freud operates within a Cartesian framework, and, in this way, both consciously and unconsciously participates in the «logocentric repression». In their readings, Derrida and Lacan trace the symptoms of the repression in the rhetorical signifying processes of his texts.

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Containment and Resistance: Victorian Psychiatry and the Occult Revival

THOMAS C. CARAMAGNO (*)

I am one of three researchers (with Kathleen Spencer and Dennis McGucken) co-authoring a book-length study of the cultural, political, and literary implications of a profound theoretical debate that occurred in 1880-1920 England between scientists involved in brain research and the writers of popular fantastic fiction. My part in this project is to examine the scientific discourse – drawn primarily from Victorian medicine, psychology, criminology, and sexology – which developed a new materialist model to explain abnormal behavior: the hypothesis that each of the brain's two hemispheres contained a fully functioning psyche. To many nineteenth-century physicians, this theory suggested that many mental disorders could be explained as an imbalance between the «personalities» of the two lobes.

As early as 1840 the dual brain thesis was employed by the noted Victorian physician, Henry Holland. Holland described one of his mental patients as clearly showing signs of an internal struggle, as if he were torn between contradictory impulses:

I have seen a case of which the most marked feature was a frequent and sudden outbreak of passion upon subjects, partly real, partly delusive... the patient himself described to me the sort of separate consciousness he had when these violent moods were upon him – his desire, but feelings of inability to resist them – his satisfaction when he felt them to be passing away. It was a painfully exaggerated picture of the struggle between good and evil. (186)

Holland theorized that each of these opposing impulses arose from a separate hemisphere. By 1912, the American physician Eugene S. Talbot claimed that he had pinpointed where such impulses failed to be integrated: he blamed «malconnections» in the corpus callosum (the largest of the nerve tracks that run between the two hemispheres) as «the root of various tropho-neurotic, nervous, mental, moral and other perversions exhibited in degenerates» (311).

In the dual brain theory, normality was assumed to exist only if the «civilized» left hemisphere mastered the «primitive» right hemisphere; «deviant» behavior, which, for the Victorians, included murder, feminism, and homosexuality, could result if the left hemisphere were weakened by degeneration, alcoholism, infections, bad genes, sensuality, or self-indulgence occurring anywhere in

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the individual's family line. In other words, there was plenty of blame to go around; the moral depravity of a grandson could be blamed on an alcoholic grandfather (Winslow). The dire consequences of degeneracy theory popular in fin-de-siecle England could only have been reinforced by the perceived vulnerability of the divided brain. Advances in neurology fed into a general alarm about the state of British society, spurred by the poverty and crime of the London slums, the increasing incidence and public openness of homosexuality, feminism, alcoholism, suicide, and insanity, as well as the great anxieties about the influx of non-white races into England. Victorian medical discourse simultaneously shaped and relieved these anxieties by establishing norms that justified the containment and exclusion of subordinated groups.

But with containment came resistance. Side by side in Victorian journals with this scientific discourse, Spiritualists, Theosophists, Psychical Researchers and other occultists elaborated alternate models of behavior and identity that were not only anti-materialist but socially radical, for they celebrated the irrational, non-linear, or uncircumscribed modes of thought decried as right-brained. These anti-materialist models, often with their radical implications intact, were picked up and disseminated to a wide audience in the fantastic romances that became so popular at the end of the century. The late Victorians were deeply troubled about the problem of personal identity, and popular novelists explored these concerns (Spencer). Literary scholars have generally underestimated the seriousness and intellectual respectability of this debate and the fiction. Yet this fiction, despite or even because of its characteristic literary crudity, can yield insights into how a threatened inversion of cultural ideology during a time of shifting explanatory paradigms was temporarily contained by an increasingly powerful class of specialist physicians who pathologized anyone refusing to accept the natural superiority of white, abstemious, conventional, heterosexual men. If, as Marx argued, the ruling class controls others by ruling the ideas available to them, then we argue that the writers and readers of fantastic fiction used literature to unfix meaning in a way that was itself thwarted and contained by the medical establishment it challenged but which nevertheless anticipated the modernist revolt of the twentieth century.

Until recently this debate between the medical profession and the occultists has been virtually erased from the histories of the period, but it had serious political implications at the time. At stake was the power to define human nature according to a series of cultural binaries that the doubled brain seemed to invite by its very anatomy. In 1861 Paul Broca discovered that language was localized in the left hemisphere, which suggested that what was perceived as uniquely «human» (i.e. language, logic, and the heightened sense of self-control and self-consciousness language and logic bring) resided in only one half of the brain. Bipolarity was compatible with Broca's liberal republican ideals, which stressed human progress through enlightenment, and so the «story» of the articulate and rational hemisphere's struggle to achieve dominance over the more primitive right hemisphere became, for Broca, a political story (Harrington 64-66). Much of the discussion among scientists for the rest of the century focused on whether the right hemisphere contained humanity's barbaric or perverse impulses, and if a weakened left hemisphere unleashed violence, crime, promiscuity, or insanity.

Although Broca believed in the perfectibility of man, he also felt that certain races were more advanced (and advanceable) than others (Harrington 66). The French physician Gratiolet concluded that since Western culture fostered reason while Eastern cultures emphasized intuition, Western man must have gained dominance over the «lesser» races by virtue of his superior left hemisphere (Harrington 42). In 1880 the English neurologist H. Charlton Bastian argued that cerebral asymmetry was highest in the white race while the brains of the nonwhite races were only slightly more asymmetrical than the brains of the higher apes (400). And Henry Maudsley, a well known and respected physician who was also editor of the prestigious *Journal of Mental Science*, amassed supposedly irrefutable objective data to point out:

The brain of the Negro is superior to that of the Bushman, but still it does not reach the level of the white man's brain; the weight of the male Negro's brain is less than

that of the average European female; and the greater symmetry of its convolutions, and the narrowness of the hemispheres in front, are points in which it resembles the brain of the ourang-outang.... Among Europeans it is found that, other circumstances being alike, the size of the brain bears a general relation to the mental power of the individual. (*The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* 50)

Gaetan Delaunay (an entirely respectable figure in his day) and Gustave le Bon claimed that women were naturally inferior because their brains were more symmetrical than those of men, resembling the brains of savages and uneducated children; this «explained» why women were so emotional, unstable, and dominated by instinct, especially sexual instinct (Harrington 68, 87). Both Victor Meunier and Armand de Fleury identified the right hemisphere as the «female» side of the brain, while the left side was «male» (Harrington 88). Wilhelm Fliess, Freud's friend and collaborator, attributed bisexuality to bilaterality, assigning a gender dominance to the left hemisphere with a subordinate sex persisting in repressed or unconscious form in the right hemisphere. Thus, «left-handed men display much more marked female secondary sexual characteristics [while] male secondary sexual characteristics are much more marked in left-handed women than with fully right-handed men or women.... Effeminate men and masculine women are entirely or partly left-handed.» Significantly, Fliess felt that artists were «born» with a strong right hemisphere and therefore tended toward bisexuality; thus, «art, like love, stemmed from the “tension between the sexes”» (Harrington 93, 95).

Cesare Lombroso saw a more sinister propensity in left-handedness. He proposed that «born criminals» lacked the strong left hemisphere to control their naturally evil right hemispheres (*Crime* xviii-xx, 371-72), an atavism that went «far beyond the savage, even to the [prehistoric] brutes themselves» (368). This idea tied in well with Henry Maudsley's conviction that «evil passions and propensities» were genetically inheritable and generally incurable (*Responsibility in Mental Disease* 24-29). Such pessimism about treatment grew out of both Darwinian social theory and out of the fear that entropy was winning out over evolution. Where earlier in the nineteenth century it could be believed that madness was caused by an over-refinement or sensitivity of consciousness, the late Victorians associated lunacy with infection and genetics, neither one of which could be cured. Such fears gave Victorian psychiatrists greater influence over government policy to combat the spread of insanity by forcible commitment (Showalter 102-08).

History itself deepened pessimism. Both France and England were experiencing social and economic upheaval: industrialization, urbanization, frightening rises in crime, madness, suicide, and alcoholism. Towards the end of the century France led all of Europe in per capita alcohol consumption; between 1840 and 1910 there was a 230% rise in crimes against property reported to the police; homicides jumped dramatically just after 1900; and the population of insane asylums grew from 49,589 in 1871 to 100,291 in 1911 (Nye 107-108). Similar conditions existed in England. This cultural crisis was framed as a «metaphor of pathology» (Chamberlin and Gilman) and the polarized brain served as a convenient model for social polarizations that were stressing society. Gustave le Bon, who believed in the left hemisphere weakness of women, also wrote a book in 1896 entitled *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, in which he argued that any individual could lose his capacity for autonomous conscious thought when he became part of a crowd: «by the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct» (12). Because unconscious motives contaminate conscious thinking, and because the unconscious «consists of the innumerable common characteristics handed down from generation to generation» and so «constitute the genius of the race» (7), le Bon warned his French readers that they had to be always on their guard against regressing to barbarism. The binary here presented aptly fit what neurologists were then theorizing about the dual brain: racial strength (in the right hemisphere) was dangerous unless it was controlled by the weaker vessel of

civilization (in the left hemisphere). The socialists/anarchists' agitations seduced the masses by appealing to what was already in their primitive right hemispheres: «To-day», le Bon declared,

the claims of the masses are becoming more and more sharply defined, and amount to nothing less than a determination to utterly destroy society as it now exists, with a view to making it hark back to that primitive communism which was the normal condition of all human groups before the dawn of civilisation.... Civilisations as yet have only been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by crowds. (xvi)

Though strong with instinct, the right hemisphere was presumed to be vulnerable to hypnosis, and so le Bon worried that unscrupulous or «morbid» leaders could whip up crowds into anarchic frenzies by directly appealing to the overly suggestible right brains of each member. Using another medical term often appropriated by degeneracy theory, «contagion», le Bon concluded that «in a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collect[ive] interest» (10).

The dangers of hypnosis was not merely a concern for governments and the status quo. Families were told they could be targets of unscrupulous lower class males who could use hypnosis to exert a «degenerative influence» upon «genteel womanhood» by awakening in them animal tendencies in the unconscious (Harris). A traditional western binary here violently implodes: sensuality, assumed to be epidemic in the lower classes, threatened to reappear in the already contaminated unconscious levels of middle class women. However much the genteel purified their conscious thoughts (and their left hemisphere) of desire, prurience could only accumulate in the unconscious, the right hemisphere, waiting for the cunning plebian to tap its hidden energies. Hypnosis threatened to disrupt this neat binary of woman-as-angel-in-the-house and woman-as-repressed-sexual-demon, first by invalidating the former proposition but then by excusing the woman from culpability for being the latter. Victorian men, who relied on holding women responsible for maintaining the binary, were thus doubly betrayed by hypnosis.

Victorian sensational fiction exploited these fears. Besides sexual transgressions, novelists capitalized on the second most feared Victorian nightmare, insanity, and in much the same terms. Just as sexual relationships were regulated and registered by the state, insanity invited strong bureaucratic response, it was linked to the mental weaknesses of women, and it posed serious threats to the family. Sensational novels gave prominent roles to characters who were insane, half-witted, eccentric, or manic-depressives (Nenadic). Bilaterality was fearful because it contaminated even normal mentality, which implied that degeneration was not stable. Many Victorians tried to contain the threat in identifiable objects. The French focused on the terrors of the Commune and anarchist bombings (Harris 229). For the British, as Pick points out, «the family and the nation, it seemed to many, were beleaguered by syphilitics, alcoholics, cretins, the insane, the feeble-minded, prostitutes and a perceived “alien invasion” of Jews from the East who, in the view of many alarmists, were feeding off and “poisoning” the blood of the Londoner» (80). No wonder that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* had such appeal.

When, in the 1890's, science proved that at least one form of insanity resulted from the terminal stage of syphilis, a link was permanently forged in the late Victorian imagination between immorality, heredity, and insanity (Showalter, *Female Malady* 110-11). The Word of God was, once more, made flesh, but this time it was diseased flesh, and the resulting discussions, among doctors and lay people alike, confused the meanings of words like «germ», «infection», and «epidemic», until biological mechanisms and moral abstractions blended into one another. Fear had contaminated science.

The dual brain theory challenged the fundamental cartesian assumption of Western philosophy that thinking is possible only if consciousness is unified. The philosopher Eduard von Hartmann realized that, if each hemisphere did contain two «minds», then any individual's sense of a unified identity was merely an illusion created by the commissures connecting those hemispheres. By the

1880's new studies of «double personalities» and hypnotic states, along with the publication of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, suggested strongly to the public imagination that the dual brain/mind could explain every discrepancy in their mental lives, from simple hesitation between two resolves to the complete breakdown or duplication of personality, motiveless crimes, psychotic discourse, mind-reading, spiritualistic slate-reading, telepathy, déjà vu, the hearing of disembodied voices, the irruption into consciousness of «alien» or uncharacteristic thoughts, paramnesia, hypnotic states, hysteria, struggles with temptation, or the half identification with their roles by actors. However much physicians and policy makers tried to identify and segregate undesirables, many Victorians were haunted by the fear that at some level everyone was deviant.

The rise of spiritualism in the second half of the nineteenth century capitalized on the obscurity of this second self by theorizing that it could tap into various supernatural realms. Neurologists viewed such rival descriptions with alarm and tried to pathologize anomalous mental phenomena, especially spiritualism (e.g., Hammond; Maudsley, *Natural*; Viollet; Wynter). Here is the site of containment and resistance our study will focus on. We will apply a materialist cultural critique to the Victorian medical texts that discussed research in brain structure and the «popular» reactions to these developments in the occult fiction of the late nineteenth century under such headings as mesmeric influence, astral projections, identity switches, and reincarnation (not including traditional ghost stories). We will consider the transgressive aesthetics of canonical examples (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dracula*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) but also texts (less familiar to us but widely read at the time) by such authors as Marie Corelli, Algernon Blackwood, E. F. Benson, John Buchan, Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, Walter Besant, and Somerset Maugham. Sensational novels typically gave prominent roles to characters who were insane, half-witted, eccentric, or manic-depressives, usually women. While books like *Dr. Jekyll* and *Dracula* certainly fanned fears about the vulnerability of identity and self-control, other popular authors attempted to deal with the issue constructively as a positive opportunity for the individual to explore and enlarge consciousness – and in this they set the stage for modern writers such as Virginia Woolf and their subversive explorations of identity, consciousness, and divergent modes of thinking. In a hierarchical and repressive society, these tales *played* with experiences that the dominant culture tried to pathologize. Before the development of psychoanalysis, they invented a language for the unconscious. They served as a locus of resistance and critique, where unconventional ideas could be preserved as part of the discourse. The fantastic was not always socially subversive; as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it could be used to support the status quo as well as to challenge it. Nonetheless, the radical potential of this fiction makes it worth the serious attention of literary and cultural historians of the late Victorian period.

Today the most broadly accepted models of personal identity are once again psychobiological, this time an uneasy mix of Freudian/humanistic mentality and neurological materiality locked in constant struggle to humanize treatment even as we learn more about the biochemistry of the brain and the sites of specific brain functions involved in speech and memory. We hope that our research will not only illuminate the visible ideological struggles of yesterday but of the invisible contaminations of today.

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Connecting Freud's Scientism, Ethnology, and Self-Analysis

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«Taken as a scientific document. *Totem and Taboo* is simply a huge vicious circle.»
Paul Ricoeur (1970: 208)

«[Clinical psychoanalytic interpretation] is circular and self-confirming but not on that account foolish, false, or unhelpful.»
Roy Shafer (1983: ix)

I

Scientism: «*The habit or mode of expression of a man of science.*» Oxford English Dictionary

Invoking David Hume's distinction that «meaning is not the product of causes but is the creation of a subject», a number of philosophers of science have criticized Freud for confusing causes of symptoms with their meaning to patients. Alisdair MacIntyre says «Freud tries to treat unconscious motives... as causes. This is simply a confusion.» Charles Rycroft defends Freud's procedure as «not the scientific one of elucidating causes but the semantic one of making sense».¹ Yet Freud himself spoke of the «possibility of penetrating from... symptoms to a knowledge of their causes» (*S.E.* 3: 192), even if in postulating unconscious processes he knew he was not making statements about causes that could be observed and tested. Never in his early acceptance of patients' reports of childhood sexual abuse, for example, did Freud argue that his therapeutic results *scientifically* validated his patients' beliefs about the causes of their symptoms:

When we set out to form an opinion about the causation of a pathological state such as hysteria, we... question the patient or those about him in order to find out to what harmful influences they themselves attribute him having fallen ill and developed these

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¹ Hume, MacIntyre, and Rycroft are all quoted by Hopkins (viii), who points out that MacIntyre revised his view in later work, for example, in his article on Freud in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 3: 249-52.

neurotic symptoms. What we discover in this way is, of course, falsified by all the factors which commonly hide the knowledge of his own state from a patient – by his lack of scientific understanding of aetiological influences. (*S.E.* 3: 191)

Seeking «a method of arriving at the aetiology of hysteria, one in which we should feel less dependent on the assertions of the patients themselves» (*S.E.* 3: 191), Freud wanted psychologists to be more like archaeologists, who do not simply question contemporary inhabitants living in the vicinity of a site but also employ them to dig down in the earth to uncover ruins with inscriptions which they perhaps cannot read but which, when deciphered, «yield undreamed-of information... *Saxa loquuntur!* [The stones themselves will talk]» (*S.E.* 3: 192).

The standard treatment of hysteria in the medical community when Freud began to practice was for the doctor to try to disabuse the usually female patient of the notion that there was any medical cause for symptoms such as glove parasthesia (numbness of the hands and forearms). Freud and his teacher Josef Breuer inherited the unproductive tendency to suspect hysterics of wanting to excuse themselves on account of physical illness from the duties of wife and mother. Then Breuer stopped trying to talk patients out of the belief that they were ill and instead encouraged them to do most of the talking – something not always easy to get them to do, but without the catharsis of their doing so, their symptoms persisted. Breuer loosened their tongues through hypnosis, while Freud, never an adept hypnotist, used Breuer's talking cure without hypnotizing patients and developed the notion of their resistance as the focal point of his analytic technique. He also found that patients not cured by talking about the adolescent and adult experiences Breuer concentrated on needed to remember and work through less recent events in early childhood (*S.E.* 2: 256, 267; 3: 195).

What Freud learned by encouraging patients to remember the distant past led him to hypothesize that

Sexual experiences in childhood consisting of stimulation of the genitals, coitus-like acts, and so on, must therefore be recognized in the last analysis, as being the traumas which lead to a hysterical reaction to events at puberty and to the development of hysterical symptoms. (*S.E.* 3: 206-207)

The old medical paradigm of hysterics as malingers Freud endeavored to falsify on the basis of how patients made their revelations: not as liars who, however coy, spoke forth on their own volition, but as real trauma victims who had repressed their experiences and only remembered them with the utmost difficulty (*S.E.* 3: 204). Far from suggesting or encouraging these revelations, Freud admitted he initially shared the skepticism of his colleagues about the reports of hysterical patients (*S.E.* 3: 199) and furthermore «regarded the linking of hysteria with the topic of sexuality as a kind of insult – just as the women patients themselves do» (*S.E.* 3: 204 ; 2: 216).²

When Freud presented his «seduction theory» to the scientific community in a paper in 1896, he said he provisionally accepted the theory because of its therapeutic results: all eighteen of his female patients able to remember early abuse achieved some remission of symptoms (*S.E.* 3: 199) – a greater success rate than Freud and Breuer had achieved by concentrating on more recent events in adolescence or adulthood. Though he did not say so specifically in the 1896 paper, Freud at many other points in his career was careful to distinguish between achieving an effective therapeutic result and making a scientifically valid conclusion about the reasons for that result and the causes of the symptoms it resolved. Even in this paper he implied this distinction by saying that despite the record of some remission of symptoms among all eighteen women who reported early abuse, if the nineteenth patient had the same symptoms without reporting childhood abuse, or if after reporting it and undergoing treatment had no remission of symptoms, then the seduction theory would have to be revised. «By all means», he wrote at the time, «let us wait and see» (*S.E.* 3: 300).

² For a history of medical opinion about the tendency of hysterics to lie, see Masson 40-51.

As is well known, Freud later did revise the seduction theory. Only a year later, in an 1897 letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, he expressed doubts about it because he could not easily distinguish patients' fabrications from the truth and, furthermore, because «blame was laid on perverse acts by the father» (Freud, *Origin*, letter 69) . Much more clinical was Freud's public revision of «My views on the part played by sexuality in the aetiology of neurosis», in a 1906 paper by that name (*S.E.* 7: 270). Referring to his earlier seduction theory, Freud now wrote:

At that time my material was still scanty, and happened by chance to include a disproportionately large number of cases in which sexual seduction by an adult or by other children played the chief part in the history of the patient's childhood. I thus overestimated the frequency of such events (though in other respects they were not open to doubt.) (*S.E.* 7: 274)

Admitting that he overestimated the frequency of real abuse is not the same, however, as repudiating his belief that it ever occurred, as some of Freud's critics and followers alike erroneously interpret him as doing. Instead of forever ruling out incidents of real abuse, he continued to consider it as one among several possibilities to explore on a case by cases basis in clinical practice. By a principle of elimination, patients not helped by talking about either recent or early events constituted the clinical population about whom Freud now hypothesized that memories of childhood sexual abuse might be constructions of psychic rather than historical reality – fantasies for fending off patients' own guilty desires for fathers and older brothers.

These patients had not had abusive male relatives at all, Freud now hypothesized, but, on the contrary, ones whose indulgence and love had awakened precocious sexual feelings in them as young girls. In the innocence of overindulgence, the older males had unintentionally awakened the girls' sexuality, and this had led to the latter's earliest sexual experiences of masturbation. Especially the fathers then took upon themselves to discourage the very acts they had unwittingly encouraged.

Reproofs which daughters suffered from their fathers for masturbating next led to recriminations and revengeful motives against the father, and these in turn were internalized as guilt. Revenge and guilt came into conflict with each other and with the sexual feelings that had been aroused in the first place. Repression of this psychic conflict, Freud came to believe, like repression of an actual trauma such as childhood sexual abuse, could cause hysterical symptoms to emerge with the reawakening of pubescent sexuality.

How he came to this conclusion – and what he made of it after he did – is best understood by comparing Freud the clinical diagnostician interested in curing people to Freud the scientist interested in proving his theories. In general, diagnosticians and scientists in Freud's day were alike in judging which competing diagnosis or hypothesis best explained symptoms or data and produced or predicted a therapeutic or experimental outcome. If this result was not replicated in further trials, the scientist or diagnostician revised or rejected his initial causal explanation. But since results sometimes followed from more than one hypothesis or diagnosis, achieving results did not necessarily constitute sufficient scientific proof, unless one hypothesis or diagnosis ruled out others, which in turn had been given the opportunity to falsify it. In hard science, the hypothesis which achieved results with the greatest statistical significance and replicability usually carried the most weight. Whatever the means of proof, the scientific method generally carried a greater burden of proof than everyday clinical practice where cures were usually taken to confirm diagnoses that led to them. Diagnoses were invalidated because the treatments based on them didn't work, not necessarily because they did not falsify competitors and submit to falsification by them, as scientific theories in Freud's day had to do in order to be accepted as valid. Sometimes clinicians did not meet all criteria of scientific proof, but that did not mean their procedure was clinically unproductive or disreputable. Deriving results from hypotheses which were then in practice considered valid because they produced those results characterized problem solving in many fields. Indeed scientific

theories were themselves often discovered by circular thinking, though they then had to be submitted to the greater burden of proof just described in order to eliminate biased conclusions.³

The therapeutic successes Freud achieved in adopting the Oedipal theory seemed to confirm the diagnosis of patients helped by talking about neither adult, adolescent, nor childhood traumatic experiences. However, never did he methodically subject fantasies and real traumas to falsification as competing causes of hysteria. No experiment has ever been designed to prove either claim. Certainly Freud himself never formally justified one theory as opposed to the other. Unlike experimental scientists who are bound by criteria of scientific proof to rule out less competitive hypotheses, Freud the clinician treating patients in practice did not stop making the diagnosis of abuse when its initial success rate in achieving therapeutic results declined with a larger clinical population. Rather he retained this diagnosis as a possibility to check in the future, on the assumption that the population to whom it applied had not been clearly demarcated.⁴

Indeed, because he understood that clinical populations are rarely as well defined as experimental groups, Freud retained all three possibilities of early, recent and fantasized abuse to check in each case. Hysterical symptoms, he came to believe, might be caused by any of these factors or by them all in combination: such symptoms, in particular, he was found of saying, were often over determined:

And thus the motifs mingle in the most successful fashion to form this fantasy, which often dominates a woman's entire life (seduction fantasy): one part truth, one part gratification of love, and one part revenge. (*Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* 4 [1912-1918], meeting of 24 January 1912).

Freud acknowledged the «great error» of not at first understanding that memory does not always just reproduce but may sometimes reconstruct and greatly alter the past to suit the conscious or unconscious motives of the rememberer. Although he did revise his first seduction theory that early traumas of sexual abuse had in *all* cases actually occurred, Freud continued to warn, even after postulating the Oedipal theory that

You must not suppose... that sexual abuse of a child by its nearest male relatives belongs entirely to the realm of phantasy. Most analysts will have treated cases in which such events were real and could be unimpeachably established.... (*S.E.* 16: 370)

Although Freud came to believe that similar symptoms may result from real or fantasized seduction, he disagreed with those «who do not even recognize the distinction» (*S.E.* 16: 390)⁵ and claim, in Paul Ricoeur's words, that «it is not clinically relevant whether the infantile scenes are true or false» (1981: 251). Jeffrey Masson correctly observes that

³ In the history of natural science in the nineteenth century, Darwin's theory of evolution could not be tested but instead rose above competing theories by its greater general power to explain data. Freud's Oedipal theory has often been represented in the same way – by Jean Paul Sartre, for example, who said that «the number of conscious psychic facts which it explains» made it «like the atomic theory... nothing but an “experimental idea”... not to be distinguished from the totality of experiences which it allows to be realized and the results which it enables us to foresee» (207). For a brief and useful discussion of the scientific method, experimental control, randomization, design, and statistics – all of which were important to Freud – see Anderson. For falsification as a criterion of science, see Popper (both books cited.) For a critique, see Cosin, Freeman, and Freeman; also Harré, especially Chapter 1.

⁴ Thanks to Drs. Linda Sapin, Joel Redfield, Vicky Rivamonte, and Richard Halperin - all medical, psychiatric, or neuropsychological clinicians - for helping me understand diagnostic practice.

⁵ The complete quote is: «who do not even recognize the distinction between the “actual” neuroses [caused by congenital factors, injury, or real trauma] and the psychoneuroses [caused by psychological factors such as guilt and conflict]. I think they are going too far and have not chosen the path which leads to progress. The forms of neurosis... are intermixed with each other... This need not lead us to abandon the distinction between them» (*S.E.* 16: 390).

to tell someone who has suffered the effects of a childhood filled with sexual violence that it does not matter whether his memories are anchored in reality or not is to do further violence to that person. (133, see also Balmory 164)

What Masson does not seem to understand, however, is that, although it is indeed clinically relevant to determine whether infantile scenes were real or fantasized, the symptomatic *effects* may be the same. In Freud's words

up to the present we have not succeeded in pointing to any differences in the consequences, whether phantasy or reality has had the greater share in these events of childhood. (*S.E.* 16: 370)

Since the same symptomatic effects might result from different causes – real or fantasized – Freud's interpretive procedure began the same way in either case: by analyzing the patient's resistance to both possibilities – an analysis whose only confirmation was the partial one of a therapeutic outcome that was itself often hard to assess as either complete or permanent. Only «the outcome will prove the one or the other line of approach right or wrong» (*S.E.* 16: 391).

Freud undoubtedly sometimes mistook realities for fantasies to the detriment of his patients, but never in principle did he treat sexual abuse *only* by urging its victims to acknowledge their own sexual desires, though he might have at times taken this tack to help a patient work a guilty fantasy of complicity through to a catharsis of justifiable anger. Thus an analysis of fantasized seduction might *resemble* an analysis of real abuse. The difference was that the analyst who stopped at the point of the victim's (as opposed to the fantasist's) sexual desires would indeed be doing the same harm as the courts and police in our society sometimes do when they further abuse the victims of sexual assault by holding them responsible. Never to validate the reality that this abuse occurred would indeed be to allow its repressed effects to continue to make patients ill, sometimes to the point of abusing their own children.

Acknowledging the limitations this situation imposed on psychoanalysis as a science in the classic Helmholtzian mold, Freud often remarked that its therapeutic benefits

may make the objective certainly of our findings doubtful. What is advantageous to our therapy is damaging to our researches. This is the objection that is most often raised against psycho-analysis, and it must be admitted that, though it is groundless, it cannot be rejected as unreasonable. (*S.E.* 16: 452)

In calling the objections groundless but unreasonable, Freud may have been implying that the Helmholtzian scientific method of proving one theory at the expense of others, while reasonable, was no grounds for reducing his own competing etiologies of hysteria to an either/or choice. Freud complained that

[i]n scientific matters people are very fond of selecting one portion of the truth, putting it in the place of the whole and of then disputing the rest which is no less true, in favor of this one portion.... Are neuroses exogenous or endogenous illnesses?... This dilemma seems to me no more sensible on the whole than another that I might put to you: does a baby come about through being begotten by its father or conceived by its mother? In the matter of the causation of neuroses the relation, if not precisely the same, is very similar. (*S.E.* 16: 347-7)

Perhaps because neither the Oedipal nor the seduction theory ever scientifically falsified the other, *ad hominem* arguments have been advanced about how Freud viewed their relation. Critics have argued, for example,

(1) that he succumbed through moral cowardice to the negative response of the medical community and repudiated the seduction theory, which he knew to be true (Masson's thesis)⁶;

⁶ For contrasting views of Masson's book, see Herman, who calls it «lavishly documented, carefully reasoned», versus Herbert, who calls it «a house of cards».

(2) that he exonerated fathers in general of sexually abusing their children at precisely the moment when he was mourning the death of his own father – that is, when he unconsciously needed to preserve an ideal image of him (Marie Balmory's thesis)⁷;

(3) that he himself had an affair with his sister-in-law and could not deal with his own, much less other men's sexual improprieties within the family (a thesis advanced in various forms by E. Kris in his edition of Freud's *Origins* (216) and by Peter Swales)⁸.

Freud's motives and conduct do not of course disprove his theories. Nor are they proven by his indignant replies to what he called «the general revolt against our science, the disregard of all considerations of academic civility and the releasing of the opposition from every restraint of impartial logic» (*S.E.* 16: 285).

Recriminations within the psychiatric community regarding the scientific status of psychoanalysis have been notorious ever since Freud's 1896 seduction theory paper drew what Freud in a private letter to Fliess called «an icy reception from the asses» and «the strange comment: "it sounds like a scientific fairy tale,"» from Count Richard von Krafft-Ebing, the distinguished professor and head of the department of Psychiatry at the University of Vienna, who chaired Freud's lecture. «They can all go to hell», Freud confided to Fliess (quoted in Schur 104).⁹

Freud himself often referred to psychoanalysis as a science, usually a new or young science, predicting that «whether [the process of arriving at its conclusions] has been carried out in an adequate and justifiable manner will appear in the course of the further advance of the science» (*S.E.* 16: 224). By this he presumably meant that the science of psychoanalysis was still in the context of being discovered and had not yet passed the test of scientific justification and proof.¹⁰

In excluding neither seduction nor Oedipal theories in the manner of scientific proof, Freud revised not only the theories themselves but the reigning Helmholtzian notion of science with its emphasis on causality. He came to see symptoms not as effects caused by fantasies or real experience, but as the symbolic elaboration of conflicts. Freud pointed out that individuals who had been abused as children but had *not* repressed associated memories or guilt were not likely to develop symptoms. It was not the experience of abuse *per se* but the conflict it engendered that resulted in hysteria. In this sense psychoanalysis interprets the symbolic tie between symptom (symbol) and fantasized or real experience (referent); psychoanalysis cannot always determine whether real or fantasized experiences cause particular symptoms. Until this distinction is made clear, Freud will continue to be misunderstood by followers who claim he scientifically proved his diagnoses – he did not – and by critics who are equally wrong to claim his diagnoses are altogether invalid because they were not experimentally proven.

—⁷ There is also this bit of hearsay: E.R. Eissler told Janet Malcolm that his colleague Krull told him that «Freud watched his father masturbate and suppressed the seduction theory in order to protect him» (Malcolm 114).

⁸ Swales is discussed by Malcolm (212) without reference other than to *The New American Review*. I was not able to locate his piece in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, and *The New American Review* does not seem to have been published during any of the years I surmised from Malcolm as possible.

⁹ Ironically, later generations of Freud's critics – Sandor Ferenczi and more recently Jeffrey Masson, for example – have been regarded by some classical Oedipal theorists as being fantasists for continuing to believe in the seduction theory. Ernest Jones called Ferenczi's persistent belief in it «pathological» (quoted in Masson 172). Freud himself told Ferenczi, «I no longer believe you will correct yourself the way I corrected myself a generation ago», and he also assured Jones that «Ferenczi's change of direction is certainly highly regrettable, but there is nothing traumatic about it» (quoted in Masson 174). Masson clearly identified with Ferenczi as a scapegoat when he told Janet Malcolm that «[K.R.] Eissler [influential secretary of the Sigmund Freud Archives] did to me what Freud did to Ferenczi» (Malcolm 148).

¹⁰ «The scientist invents concepts and hypotheses in the context of discovery and tests hypotheses in the context of justification» (Edelson 21) For the source of this distinction, see Reichenbach; for its application to science, see both Popper texts. Masson and Rozeblum present different views of discovery in science.

II

Ethnology: «study of... technologically primitive societies, esp.... of origins... influencing cultural growth.» American Heritage Dictionary

Although Freud never proved the Oedipal theory scientifically, he did try to provide it with an origin in human history and prehistory. He sought its replication in the laboratory of so-called «primitive» culture. In particular, according to Paul Ricoeur (1970: 205), he «discovered the father figure in totemism in order to secure the historical origin of the Oedipal complex» of children like his patient Little Hans, who, in Freud's words, «displace some of their feelings from their father onto an animal... » (S.E. 13:129).

Totem and Taboo explains that a deceased elder is symbolically converted into a totemic animal by his heirs, who are both grieved at the loss of his protection and subconsciously pleased at the removal of his powerful authoritarian presence. Such ambivalent emotions, Freud writes, «must seem particularly likely to provide a motive for the creation of projections» (S.E. 13: 92). Hostility against the elder is projected as the totem animal's hostility against his heirs, to propitiate which they observe taboos on killing the animal and on sexual relations with women «related» by totemic kinship to it. (Hence the rule of exogamy and its connection with totemism.) But there are also ceremonies during which these prohibitions are lifted, and totemic incest and ritual consummation of the totem animal become sanctioned exceptions that prove the rule – a throwback to the dawn of prehistory when, Freud claims, the ruler was a father whose control of all women in the tribe excluded his sons until one day they rose up and slew him. To the extent that the totem animal represents this patriarch, the totemic taboos and ritual violations are a brilliant stratagem, according to Freud, for working through the Oedipal complex that is at the crux of human history.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud deduced a modern equivalent to totemism for restraining Oedipal anger against the father. The context is neither prehistory nor case history but «the history of the development of the individual» in general in contemporary life. Rather than being projected onto an animal,

[h]is aggressiveness is introjected, internalized: it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from - that is, it is directed toward his own ego. There it is taken by a portion of the ego which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of «conscience», is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals [notably the father]. The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city. (S.E. 21: 123-124)

Civilization's discontents differ from Freud's primitives in introjecting rather than projecting. The superego is a kind of totem carried within oneself, rather than projected onto an external animal. Conversely, the totem is an externalized superego that performs the same function as an internalized one of deflecting one's aggressiveness away from the patriarch onto oneself.

Unlike the productive circular thinking by which clinical diagnosticians use results to confirm a diagnosis that led to those results, *Totem and Taboo* is, in Paul Ricoeur's words, «a huge vicious circle»:

It is difficult to resist the impression, that... Freud... select[ed] from the available ethnological materials just those factors that allow for the reconstruction of a collective oedipal complex of mankind. (1970: 205-208)

III

Freud's Self-Analysis

According to Ricoeur, «Freud believes he is prefacing [not only] the fantasies of his patients [but also] his self-analysis with a true history» (1970: 208). If *Totem and Taboo* provides Little Hans' Oedipal complex with an origin in prehistory, then to the extent that the analysis of Little Hans resembles Freud's analysis of his own Oedipal complex, the latter is provided with an origin in prehistory by *Totem and Taboo* as well.

To what extent then does Freud's self-analysis resemble his analysis of Little Hans? In analyzing his own childhood,¹¹ Freud finds himself facing at age two-and-a-half the same problem of a little sister's arrival that Hans faced. His sister's birth exacerbated the hostility Freud felt toward his father, for it further removed the only son of this marriage from his mother's exclusive love. Freud resolved this hostility by fantasizing that his father was his grandfather and that his little sister had been fathered by Freud's adult half brother, the son of Jacob Freud's previous marriage. Onto this half brother, who was closer in age to Freud's mother than Freud's father was, Freud transferred his Oedipal rivalry, sparing his father, indeed making an ally of him instead.

In its psycho-dynamics, this fantasy is comparable to one that Freud said brought to «an appropriate end» Little Hans' phobia and analysis, a fantasy Hans had of «promoting [his father] to a marriage with Hans' grandmother» (*S.E.* 10: 132), thus projecting onto the father Hans' own Oedipal desires for his mother (whom Hans fantasized marrying, making «up for the loss which his sister's [birth] had entailed on him by imagining that he had children of his own» with his mother). No longer fantasizing his father's death in order to have his mother for himself, Hans instead fantasized the father's having in the father's family of origin the same thing Hans desired in his own: by imagining father married to grandmother, Hans could identify with him much less ambivalently.

In effect, this is what Freud as a child had achieved by fantasizing that his half brother rather than his father was the parent of his little sister.

How are such displacements of Oedipal anger and desire prefigured in totemism as Freud understood it? The totemic strategy, as we have seen, is to resolve the Oedipal complex in three steps: (1) by projecting anger onto a totemic figure who can then be ritually propitiated, (2) by ritually consuming the totem animal, and (3) by committing ritual incest with women in one's totemic clan. In his own childhood fantasy, Freud discharged some Oedipal anger by displacing it not on to a totemic animal but onto an adult half brother, whom he could perhaps hate with greater impunity than he could his father, but still not to the satisfying point of eating him. Hans projected his Oedipal desires for his mother onto his father's relation to his grandmother – a kind of vicarious satisfaction nowhere near as complete as ritually breaking the incest taboo.

Perhaps Freud felt that the greater incidence of neurosis in his society resulted from there being no way to resolve the Oedipal complex as economically and elegantly as by sacrificing a totemic animal – an act committed *against* and at the same time *in honor of* father. Such a paradox was successfully worked through ritualistically by every son in totemic cultures, according to Freud, whereas by contrast, in European mythology, Oedipus tragically kills the father he would honor and Hamlet wavers in honorably avenging his father out of unconscious identification with his killer:

Hamlet is able to do anything – except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience,

¹¹ The following aspect of Freud's self-analysis is corroborated by various biographers: Jones, Schorske, Balmory, and Clark.

which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish ... [I]f anyone is inclined to call him a hysteric, I can only accept the fact as one that is implied by my interpretation. (*S.E.* IV 265)

Several years after mourning the death of his own father, Freud observed that *Hamlet* «was written immediately after the death of Shakespeare's father, that is, under the immediate impact of his bereavement and, as we may very well assume, while his childhood feelings about his father had been freshly revived» (*S.E.* IV: 264). This bit of Shakespearean psycho-biography Freud rescinded in a footnote added thirty years later to the republished discussion: «Incidentally, I have in the meantime ceased to believe that the author of Shakespeare's works was the man from Stratford» (*S.E.* IV: 266).¹²

Why did Freud change from possibly projecting his own feelings onto Shakespeare to denying the latter's authorship? A hint comes in Freud's «Address Delivered in the Goethe House at Frankfurt», where Freud received the prestigious Goethe Prize for literature. After first expressing doubts about Shakespeare's identity, Freud questions the motives of readers who need to know:

[H]ow can we justify a need... to obtain knowledge of the circumstances of a man's life when his works have become so full of importance to us?... [I]t is... the need... to add [such men] to the fathers, teachers, exemplars whom we have known or whose influence we have already experienced, in the expectation that their personalities will be just as fine and admirable as those works of theirs which we possess.

All the same, we may admit that there is still another motive force at work... [R]educing the distance that separates [the biographical subject] from us... tends in effect toward [his] degradation... Our attitude towards fathers and teachers is, after all, an ambivalent one since our reverence for them regularly conceals a component of hostile rebellion. [This]... psychological fatality... is bound to extend to our relations with the great men whose life histories we wish to investigate. (*S.E.* XXI: 211 - 212)

From doubting Shakespeare's identity to wondering why readers need to know about great men in general, Freud moves finally to his main topic, the biography of Goethe, with whom Freud is naturally being associated on the occasion of his winning the Goethe award. Goethe, Freud concludes, «was not only, as a poet, a great self-revealer, but also, in spite of the abundance of autobiographical records, a careful concealer» (*S.E.* XXI: 212). So was Freud himself, according to his biographer Ernest Jones:

Freud felt he had already in many passages of his writings divulged enough of his personal life – which, indeed, he later regretted having done – and that he had a right to keep private what remained; the world should get on with making use of his contributions to knowledge and forget about his personality. (Jones 1961:xix)¹³

Freud originally wrote about *Hamlet* at a stage in his career when, as Jones documents, he frankly aspired to the greatest personal influence. By the time he was disputing Shakespeare's authorship, Freud's own influence had begun to be felt, and Freud reckoned with the attending controversy by retiring somewhat personally. Having revealed so much of himself in his work, he

¹² Freud had quite a tiff (amply footnoted itself – such is the thoroughness of the Freud archive) with his English translator James Strachey, who «was so much taken aback that he wrote to Freud asking him to reconsider [his disbelief in Shakespeare's identity] – not on the ground of the truth or otherwise of the theory, but of the effect

the note was likely to have on the average English reader, particularly in view of the unfortunate name of the author of the book [Freud] referred to» for evidence – *Shakespeare's Identity* by J. T. Looney (*S.E.* XX: 64). Freud referred to his English translator's scruple as a «narcissistic defense» (*S.E.* XX: 64).

¹³ Thus, Jones felt, his biography of Freud «was not a book that would have met with Freud's own approval» (Jones 1961: xix).

felt it should stand on its own, releasing him from further self revelation, absorbing criticism, perhaps even defending him. Unlike Leonardo's unfinished works, which Freud analyzed as forgotten or neglected children in the older artist's life, Freud's own completed works figured in his own late adulthood as a kind of ego ideal – like a totem worthy of respect to a «primitive», or, closer to home, a father that the son had fathered in a kind of transference fantasy of the reversal, not in this case of biological generations, but of another relation between creator and creation – that between author and work. The standard edition would authorize Freud the man as no amount of biographical information could authoritatively explain the work.

With a fantasy of reversal of generations, by which children sometimes imagine themselves in a position of power over the parent Freud had already worked through feelings of both love and hate for his biological father. In analyzing his own so-called «Revolutionary Dream», he had free-associated to a childhood episode of «disregard[ing] the rules which modesty lays down» and urinating in his parents' presence, upon which his father reprimanded him with a prophecy – as Carl Schorske calls it – that rang like a curse: «this boy will come to nothing.» In the final scene of the Revolutionary Dream, Schorske points out,

the grown up Dr. Freud reversed this situation. Instead of the strong father reprimanding the weak son for urinating, the strong son helped the weak father [now blind, helpless, and old] in urinating [by holding a chamber pot for him]. «As though I wanted to say», Freud comments, «You see I have come to something.»

«Vengeance», Schorske concludes, «is being taken here... on the father» (197), but surely care is being taken of the father as well.¹⁴

Fantasies like Little Hans' of promoting father to the position of grandfather, on the one hand, and of reversing generations with him, on the other, had helped the young Freud redirect Oedipal anger instead love, protect and at the same time control and neutralize father. By means of such fantasies, sons preserve the feeling of being the indisputable favorite of mother, even after the birth of siblings who could be construed as rivals for her affection and as evidence of her preference for father. And «a man who has been the indisputable favorite of his mother», Freud wrote, «keeps for life the feeling of a conqueror, that confidence of his success that often induces real success» (quoted in Jones 1961: ix).

Of course it is impossible to say whether Freud's own success as the founder of psychoanalysis – which by the way he sometimes also referred to as a conquest – was partially induced by his retaining a feeling of being his mother's favorite without feeling too much guilt toward his father. But there is no question that Freud analyzed these motives in himself.

He may also have been right about why so many people want to delve into the personal lives of great men. What Freud apparently never examined, however, were his own motives for wishing to transfer the burden of fame from his person to the corpus of his work. Had he worked this transference through, would Freud have gone on, if not to scientifically prove his theories, then at least to correct their patriarchal, ethnocentric, and positivist bias as he speculated in late career on their cultural implications? That is a question I have no way of answering.

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¹⁴ Freud's discussion of his «Revolutionary Dream» occurs in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (S.E. IV: 208-219 and V: 431-5). For another analysis of the Revolutionary Dream, see Grinstein 92-160.

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Varieties of Response to Psychoanalysis in Several British Poets

GEORGE ALTOMARE (*)

The interest of psychoanalysts in poets has lasted since the end of the last century. In a note to an 1897 letter to Fliess, Freud stated that «Shakespeare was right in his juxtaposition of poetry and madness (the fine frenzy)» (1954: p. 208). That the portion in parentheses is written in English suggests that Freud was cognizant that this language might best capture the commingling of diverse elements involved in the muse-accompanied process.

Investigation into links between creativity and neurosis has not flagged. A factor analysis study of male artists, writers, statesmen and scientists conducted by British psychiatrist Felix Post (1994) has concluded that «certain pathological characteristics, as well as tendencies towards depression and alcoholism, are causally linked to some kinds» of creativity. Post would agree with the opinion of aesthete, poet, novelist, critic and artistic trend-spotter Herbert Read (1893-1968) that: «A true poet... is a neurotic whose abnormality is to be preferred to normality. Such a person expresses, “with an unsurpassed perfection, qualities... which are of peculiar value to humanity”. Verse... is a pre-logical, pre-verbal and pre-conceptual kind of knowledge. Those who are stuck in the subjective world are most in touch with the origins of poetry and most able to find the words to express the non-verbal origins of consciousness.» (King, p. 152)

A consideration of how poets responded to the benefits claimed for psychoanalysis reveals stances ranging from downright rejection to total acceptance. This review of attitudes toward the possibilities afforded by explorations into psychoanalytical modalities focuses upon several poets born roughly within two decades of the other who were most likely to come into contact with the allegedly liberating breezes of psychoanalytical ideas at a formative stage in their careers. Regardless of the individual response – rejection, accordance, or acceptance – awareness of psychoanalytic concepts remains pervasive both in their specific mix of genres and in treatments of their creative lives.

SUPPORT AND ACCEPTANCE: EDWIN MUIR (1887-1959)

Edwin Muir eagerly absorbed the message of psychoanalysis. During his first sessions «so much stuff gushed up from my dreams that the effort of facing it was a prolonged nervous and moral strain.» (*Autobiography*, p. 159) Writing at midcentury, Muir is reflective about his attitude toward the psychoanalysis undergone in 1919:

(*) Edwin Ruuds Hospital, 1850 Mysen, Norway.

«All this was thirty years ago, and with one half of my mind I can look at it historically, while the other half still sees it as I saw it then, wrapped in its own illusions. We lived, as it seems to me now, in a climate of “new ideas”, and looked forward to a “new life” which would be brought about by the simple exercise of freedom, a freedom such as had never been formulated before in any terms, since it too was new. We were, or thought we were, without “prejudices”. We “accepted” everything, no matter what it might be. We were interested in psychoanalysis, not as a scientific method but as a magical process which would deliver us from our inhibitions and leave us with a freedom all the dearer because it was beyond our imagining.» (pp. 199-200)

Despite this attempt at distancing, elaborated by Handel (1986), Muir is said to have spoken more about psychoanalysis than any other British poet. Devastated by the loss of both parents and two brothers between his eighth and thirteenth birthdays he never, according to his wife, translator and occasional novelist Willa Anderson Muir, broke out of that remoteness encapsulating his personality. Perhaps his experience in psychoanalysis helped him to find his own voice and avoid having to use the pseudonym he adopted for his first work – namely, Edward Moore (for *We Moderns*)

Orcadian born, Glasgow raised Muir at age thirty two was a member of a small circle centering upon A. R. Orage founder of *The New Age*. Orage might have preferred that Muir follow the example of T. S. Eliot and Julian Huxley and partake of the gently instructive and psychically suggestive regimen of Roger Vittoz’s health farm in Switzerland for «versed-out» cases. Here they were taken out of excessively self absorbed states by performing simple tasks over and over, receiving a type of laying on of hands, physical contact and suggestions to draw off the weight of nervousness and excessive self-immersion causing incapacity and psychic paralysis. Eliot who, in fleeing his mother, faced an even more spirited companion, choral muse/poet Vivienne Haigh, whom he wanted to relieve of the burden of having done so much of his thinking (and writing), found Vittoz’s method of cerebral control (1913) helpful in shucking his aboulia so he could learn to collect his thoughts and cease worrying. Orage had found that his own recipe of yoga and meditation was not to Muir’s (or his wife’s) liking; yet, convinced that the Scot needed to pull up his socks, suggested, through medical specialist Maurice Nicoll (1884-1953), author of *Dream Psychology* (1918), that Muir be psychoanalyzed «just for the interest of it, without payment». This painful process both shocked and stimulated him into having vivid dreams and waking visions described in his *Autobiography* which came of their own accord unprompted by alcohol, opium or any drug, incantation or ritual. At one point the amount of visions was so disturbingly large that Nicoll, discounting Muir’s transcendental explanations, told him to stop them if at all possible for his own good, adding that Muir’s unconscious «was far too near the surface for comfort and safety». Muir’s wife recalls in her memoir *Belonging* a more mundane reason for Muir’s cessation of treatment: «The psychoanalysis was never completed. Maurice Nicoll was leaving England.... he turned Edwin over to a colleague of his, James Young. For some reason, or impulse, or prejudice Edwin could not make the transition with confidence. I know that he was put off by James Young’s telling him that a man set more value on something he paid for than on what he got free, so he would charge a shilling or two for each session. This, I believe, was current psychoanalytical doctrine but it seemed misconceived to Edwin, who paid the token shillings with, I fear, a curling lower lip. Whatever the cause, he became more and more irregular in his attendances and the psycho-analysis petered out.» (p. 47)

AVOIDANCE: EDITH SITWELL (1887-1964)

Muir, who in the person of fictional Keith of Ravelstone, was satirized along with the Huxleys, Sitwells and other denizens of Bloomsbury by Canadian born, painter-novelist Percy Wyndham Lewis in *The Apes of God*, received practice in the then unknown discipline of conflict resolution in his first contact with Edith Sitwell (1887-1964) whose views on psychoanalysis, diametrically

opposed to his, encompassed an attitude of firm rejection. He mollified her, her brothers and Aldous Huxley who, during a tense moment, had interpreted Orage's description of them as «blind» as casting doubt upon their sobriety. Muir later told his wife «that he quaked inwardly as these four tall figures advanced upon him...» His gentle manner assuaged their poetic-gnoetic-frenetic wrath. Perhaps this encounter proved, though not to either the spirited combatants or to the shy non-combatant, the truth of the saying of the Unwin publishing family: Sooner or later/near or far/ the strong have need of the weak. The older sister of Osbert and Sacheverell, described by biographer Victoria Glendinning (1981) as a «unicorn among lions», was a dominant force in a family described collectively as tigers. (Lehmann, 1968) Any discussion of her as having the «inferiority complex» mentioned by Curtis (1993) might refer more to her early life in the household of her medievalist father whose influence upon Edith is described briefly in her autobiography (1965), more fully in Osbert Sitwell's reminiscences and psychoanalytically in Kavalier-Adler (1993).

One incident, a near accident almost undergone in the name of sound-art typifies what has happened to Miss Sitwell's reputation during and after her life. Her brother Osbert recalls:

«On one occasion when he attended a rehearsal of *Facade*, and my sister was engaged in practicing the most difficult of the poems through the megaphone, her eyes at that minute intent on the conductor, Mr. Senger suddenly hurled himself at her throat, explaining, "You are using your voice the wrong way" and gave her glottis so powerful a twist that he nearly strangled her in the process.» (*Laughter in The Next Room*, p. 210)

Sitwell's performances throughout her life made many critics want to yank her; nevertheless, in the face of sporadic disapproval, she stoutheartedly continued her experiments in poetry, the novel and biography.

Sitwell probably shared her American poet friend Marianne Moore's attitude about psychoanalysis. That is, she respected it but had not delved deeply into its tenets.

«I have no respect for Freud, but I do not know his work well enough to know to what extent I may have been influenced by him.» (Answer to an Enquiry, 1934, in *Complete Prose*, p. 674) In her poem *Marriage* Moore notes that «Psychology, which explains everything explains nothing». She disapproved quite violently of Elizabeth Bishop's seeing a therapist, adding that psychoanalysts taught that «Evil is not *evil*. But we know that it *is*.» Moore, like Sitwell, would have countered her writer friend Bryher's suggestion that «Psychoanalysis makes one write better and more easily» and agreed with Bishop's conclusion that «psychologists misinterpret and very much underestimate all the workings of ART!» (Millier, 1993) Much the same has been expressed by journalist Christopher Caudwell who in *Illusion & Reality* opined: «Psycho-analysts do not see the poet playing a social function, but regard him as a neurotic working off his complexes at the expense of the public. Therefore in analyzing a work of art, psycho-analysts seek just those symbols that are peculiarly private, i.e., neurotic, and hence psycho-analytical criticism of art finds its examples and material either in third-rate artistic work or in accidental features of good work.»

Sitwell would not have been surprised that D. H. Lawrence once threatened Freudian psychoanalyst Barbara Low with a bread-knife (*Belonging*, p. 29) and would have responded that those who refuse to fight for their country as had her brothers could not be expected to show chivalry towards a woman. Lawrence, a potential lay analyst, «also believed that writing autobiographical works... could be therapeutic, like seeing the pattern and meaning of one's life in psychoanalysis. It could lead to self-knowledge and enable one to conquer the problems of the past.» (Meyers, p. 113)

Sitwell would probably not have gone as far as psychologist William McDougall (Vol. I, p. 1) who «found opportunities to visit C. G. Jung at Zurich and to be analyzed, so far as that process if possible for so hopeless normal a personality as mine.» Although she might have been, like McDougall «as open-minded as possible» she might have concurred from afar with his conclusion of leaving Zurich «enlightened but not convinced». Sitwell might have agreed with the description of Freud by a Western-trained Thai psychiatrist: «a person who did not have too much to say because he wrote only about sex.» (D.J. Enright, 1969, p. 75) Perhaps her only encounter with a

psychiatrist occurred at Christmas 1948 during a trip to Boston. She recalls in the staccato tone reminiscent of her *Facades* performance more than a quarter of a century before:

«I had a short sharp row with a psychiatrist. He said to me, “I don’t like to find you writing so much about Christ, as if you have to rely on Him.” “Oh, isn’t He good enough for you?” I enquired. “What do you want me to substitute for Him – the goodness of the Atomic Bomb? Is *that* what I ought to urge people to rely on?” “I would like to see you writing about the Dignity of Man”, he replied pompously. I don’t know what he thinks I am writing about, *inter alia*, when I write about Christ, if *not* that. And apart from Christ, I don’t think the Dignity of Man is on a very high level at this moment. And I said so. We parted with no feeling of friendliness.» (Lehmann, p. 242)

Perhaps Sitwell preferred to do her own thinking about her inner states. Particularly revealing is a statement appearing in an April 30, 1955 *Observer*: I have often wished I had time to cultivate modesty.... But I am too busy thinking about myself.

The poet whose performances were critically demeaned as «manic babble» (Bedient, xi) may have been unfairly savaged then and now. Perhaps she regarded any psychoanalytical assistance as a bar to what has been described (Kavaler-Adler, 1993)) as her «compulsion to create», regardless of whether her type of poetry was in fashion.

EVENTUAL DISMISSAL: ROBERT GRAVES (1895-1985)

In his autobiography *Goodbye To All That* Robert Graves expresses doubt that medical knowledge would give him the desired palliative for his post World War I problems. As he notes: «I had bad nights. I thought that perhaps I owed it to Nancy to go to a psychiatrist to be cured; and yet I was not sure. Somehow I thought that the power of writing poetry, which was more important to me than anything else I did, would disappear if I allowed myself to get cured. my *Pier-Glass* haunting would end and I would become merely a dull easy writer. It seemed to me less important to be well than to be a good poet.» (p. 381; p. 143).

Biographer Martin Seymour-Smith argues that: «This argues not only a well-justified lack of faith in psychiatrists to help with that kind of problem, and a strong and proud sense of self-reliance, but also an absolute determination – come what may – to avoid a “dull easy” life.» (p. 401). Seymour-Smith, discussing the interest of Graves in the rehabilitation work of Dr W.H.R Rivers and Henry Head after the First World War, believes that «Graves knew Freud only through Rivers and Head – and a hasty reading of *The Interpretations of Dreams* (the first, imperfect, English translation of this, by A. A. Brill, appeared in 1913); he therefore tends to attribute to Freud himself the excesses of some of his disciples.» (p. 97) Ian Hamilton (1994: p. 194) believes that «the early Graves... explored his feelings of guilt on lines (as his critical study *Poetic Unreason* mad clear) heavily influenced by Freud.»

QUALIFIED ACCORDANCE: W. H. AUDEN (1907-1973)

Auden for whom both Edith Sitwell and Marianne Moore were reminders of his aunts had a more incorporative stance toward psychology and related fields than did Lawrence. Perhaps his being the son of a doctor contributed both to an interest in medical specialties contributing to a cautious investigatory approach which may have earned for him remembrance in his poet friend C Day Lewis’s Nicholas Blake detective novel series as Nigel Strangeways. The young Auden particularly appreciated the theories of Homer Lane who said «if you refuse to make use of your creative powers, you produced a cancer». He also was knowledgeable of the theories of Georg Groddeck, a forerunner of Freud, who wrote *The Book of It* (1923). In Christopher Isherwood’s *Lions And Shadows* Hugh Weston (closed modeled upon Auden) had a «magpie brain» crammed

with «curious and suggestive phrases from Jung, Rivers, Kretschmer and Freud.» Surely Auden might have agreed with the conclusions of British psychologist Charles Samuel Myers (1873-1946) who during the aftermath of World War I was involved inspecting shell shock cases. Myers notes: «Here I reached the definite conclusion that I could never owe allegiance to any one of the various schools of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, preferring to recognize the undoubtedly partial truths in each and to refuse acceptance of their wild and mutually antagonistic generalizations.» (Murchison, ed. Vol. III: p. 224) According to biographer Humphrey Carpenter Auden was very interested in the work of neurologist Oliver Sacks who had just completed his book *Awakenings*. For him, neurological explorations were something to be esteemed somewhat more than the psychoanalytical search which, according to Carpenter, he equated to «doing penance by paying until it hurts».

DEVALUATION: STEVIE SMITH (1902-1971)

In her novel *Over The Frontier* Stevie Smith, justified the annoyance at the behavior of others which permeated her prose and poetry:

«... to a writer, if not to a judge, the spur of irritation, storming upon occasion the heights of supreme anger, is one of the most valuable.» (pp. 88-89)

Smith's cautionary views on humanity and its foibles, customarily expressed with frankness and vim, did not leave out the paying subscribers to the tenets and purveyors of psychoanalysis. Her patent aversion to anyone airing, not to speak of cleaning, soiled emotional linen within earshot of anyone capable of misinterpreting another's private angst is typified in the warning embedded in her poem *Analysand*:

He chases his tail Like a puppy-fool
And wonders it tastes stale The puppy-fool.
All thoughts that are turned inward to their source
Bring one to self-hatred and remorse.
The punishment is suicide of course.
Self dedicated to self scrutiny. His every moment's an eternity
Of irritation and monotony.
But is it surprising Reader do you think?
Would you expect to find him in the pink
Who's solely occupied with his own Mortal Stink?
But first he'll tread a Calvary
from bed to bed of misery
And lying thinking on his bed of stone
No sleep will come to Him. He is Alone
forevermore with every aching bone.

INTEGRATION: STEPHEN SPENDER (1909-)

Despite hearing from T. S. Eliot «that if one wanted to write poetry one could not write anything else creative», Spender has sought out essayistic, novelistic and autobiographical genres. Yet, notwithstanding the diversity of his literary production, he can still say, as he discusses *Dolphins*, his first book of poetry in a quarter of a century: «... I still see myself primarily as a poet, although not a great one.» (Smith, 1994: p. 14)

Spender ponders the relation between art and analysis: «I see now that these apparently disconnected activities, of being psychoanalyzed and painting, did in fact have a secret connection, a

kind of complicity even. Strangely enough they were both attendant on the breaking up of my first marriage. They did not cause it, but they made it more bearable. There may seem to be little connection between psychoanalysis and my desire to be a painter. But whilst, on the one hand, I wished to plunge deep into the sources of childhood and accept myself, on the other I wished to attach myself to outward things.»

Spender notes in his autobiography *World Within World* that despite his venture into other literary areas, poetry remains his first love:

«Only in poetry do I delight in writing and rewriting, making numerous versions of a poem, leaving a sketch for several years and working on it. This may involve much wasted effort, but perhaps it shows an artist that he has found his right medium.» (p. 256)

Perhaps musing on his psychoanalysis informs Spender's poem *Room* (1994, p. 30): This room's electric with those memories/Which, when he enters their invisible/Unanticipated zone to a shape his body had/Centuries, it seems, ago.

Poets, as analysts or individuals, may subscribe to the Lacanian psychoanalytic focus upon an «intersubjective continuity of the discourse in which the subject's history is constituted» so they might weave a past-sense-making and present-relation-forming narrative of memories. (1977, p. 49) They may prefer, like psychoanalyst Schafer, to de-emphasize such continuity, eschewing an «implausible tidiness» engendered by «simplified human narratives, in constructing narratives which «convey in some form the drama of the quest, with all its uncertainties and difficulties, and the timelessness of the mode of investigation itself.» (1981, pp. 153-154). They may not only choose among an ever expanding number of psychoanalytic techniques but also amend attitudes and therapeutic choices. They may, like Herbert Read, find substance in Jungian cosmography or, like Kathleen Raine, hold to Jungian tenets while creating a post-Jungian world. They may, like Elizabeth Wilson in *Mirror Writing*, decide, with some reservation, that there is value in embarking upon a Freudian excursion «to loosen one's anchorage in the past.» (pp. 135-136) They may, like poet-novelist D. M. Thomas, utilize Freudian ideas to inform their autobiographies, novels and poems. The end product of such «psychoanaliterary» peregrinations can only be positive for the ordinarily reticent poets who nonetheless pursue a wide arena in pursuing and elaborating the directionality of their narrational flows and personal myths.

This classification of the attitudes of some poets is far from complete in coverage. Yet the types of responses seem to incorporate a large proportion of responses today among both poets and novelists. The latter in their novelistic creations express attitudes ranging from the cautionary and dismissive tones of Fay Weldon, Margaret Drabble and David Lodge to accepting and enthusiastic stances of D. M. Thomas, Elizabeth Wilson and Will Self. The perusal of additional autobiographical and biographical materials provides sharpened focus, allowing cross comparisons concerning which particular psychoanalytical concepts have been considered and what bearing psychoanalytic contact has had upon the subsequent work of the poet. One path for additional study is a follow-up on the ideas of Forrester (1990, pp. 168-218) on the importance of time as structuring principle for psychoanalysis. Another area for further research is examination of the belief of literary artists that knowing too much about one's psychological profile may indeed hamper subsequent creativity – a belief espoused by poet/novelist Anthony Burgess.

Further study of the response of poets to the theories of psychoanalysis can help identify psychological correlates of creativity. According to Faas (1988: p. 200):

Today we have theories, which they lacked, enabling us to associate creativity with psychopathology without damning either the artist or his creations.

The stumbling block hindering rapprochement between poetic creator and probing analyst has been removed. Dazzling noetic vistas await our muse-attending gaze.

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The Story of the Story: Invasions from the Real

EDMOND WRIGHT (*)

Over the last two decades an increasing number of people in a variety of disciplines has been telling us that the story, narrative, is an inescapable feature of human communication. For example: from psychology – Theodore Sarbin: «Human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures» (Sarbin, 1986, 8); from philosophy – Alasdair MacIntyre: «In what does the unity of a human life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a *narrative* embodied in a single life» (MacIntyre, 1981, 303); from hermeneutics – Paul Ricoeur: «time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence» (Ricoeur, 1983, I, 52); from rhetorical studies – Walter Fisher: «Narration is the foundational conceptual configuration of ideas for our species, ... the context for interpreting and assessing all communication... and the shape of knowledge as we first apprehend it» (Fisher, 1987, 193); from history – Hayden White: «To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself» (White, 1980, 5).

Finally, the example from psychoanalysis – Roy Schafer: «The self is a telling.... Other people are constructed in the telling about them; more exactly, we narrate others just as we narrate selves» (1980, 35). Whereas in all the other disciplines there has been a tendency to presuppose the subject, it is psychoanalysis that has indicated how the subject is constructed within a narrative. Both Roy Schafer and Donald Spence have brought out how the course of an analysis itself partakes of the nature of narrative in that a series of transformations are produced by the joint input of analyst and analysand.

My project in this paper is to offer a paradigm, centring on the gestalt-switch, that will apply to every story, whether or not it has a plot. In the case of a story that appears to be plotless the transformation is one in which the whole text participates in the gestalt-switch, where the reader is invited to insert him- or herself in one or another subject-position.

Let me begin with one of Ernst Gombrich's diagrams, which will ultimately show the pattern of the Story. The diagram is a development of the Rubin's Vase Illusion, can be taken as an emblem of the argument to be presented here. The diagram that initiates this argument was produced by Gombrich to show the effect of existing memory expectations upon features of the distribution of a visual field. He took the familiar Rubin Vase (Fig. 1), which we can subject to a switch of gestalts between two profiles or a vase. He added clues which strengthened our expectations, first a pair of

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ears, which encouraged the Profile interpretation (Fig. 2) or a few flowers at the top, which strengthened the Vase interpretation (Fig. 3).

FIGURE 1

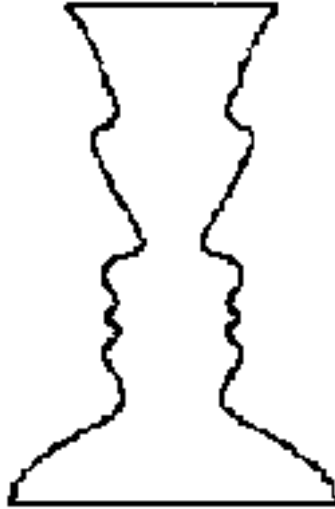


FIGURE 2

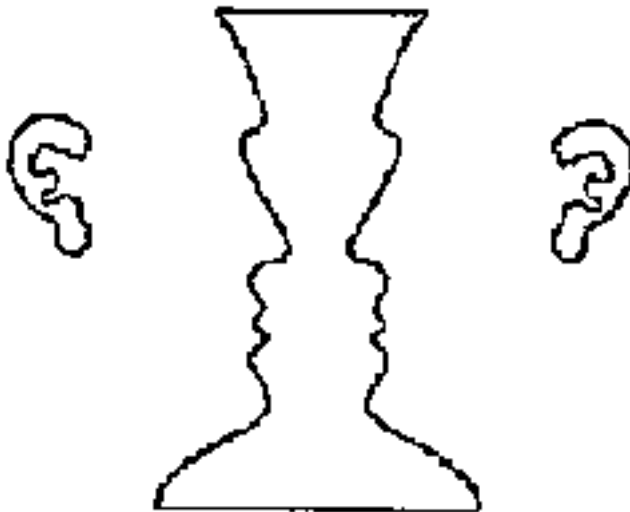
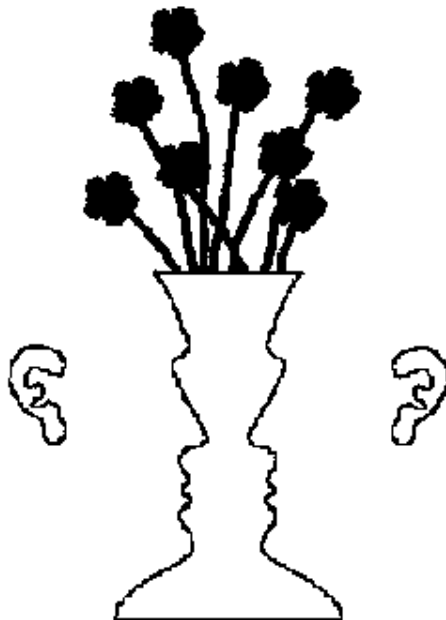


FIGURE 3



His significant move was to include both sets of contextual clues, thus:



He points out that if you mask either set of clues «the reading becomes assured» (Gombrich, 1973, 239), that is, fixed, certain. The interesting aspect of this demonstration is that the rival gestalts play over what is a contestable visual ground which cannot be described in the terms that are used of the gestalts themselves. The old gestalt-psychologists would have told us that there is an interchange of what they called «figure» and «ground», that is, in the vase gestalt it is the space between the lines that is taken to be filled with an object and the space outside to be taken as the background, in the case of the two profiles it is the spaces on either side that are to be taken as filled with the faces and the space between to be seen as background. This implies that the gestalt-switch is taking place over the black lines and the white spaces. The question arises: how should they be described, because the terms «black lines» and «white spaces» is obviously an inadequate description. So it becomes an important question what terms we are to apply to the basic arrangement, a question which will be seen to be crucial in a consideration of what any story is. The same pattern is shown as markedly in Hamlet's mocking play with gestalts on a cloud:

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By th'mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backt like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale.

There is no guarantee that the various gestalts produced by this playing with the sight of some random distribution of water-vapour shared the outlines of the same portions of that water-vapour: the «camel» might have taken up one portion of a chance outline, the «weasel» another, and the «whale» yet another. It cannot be assumed that precisely the same portion of this continuum of water-vapour – for a continuum is – what it is – was captured by the gestalts that two imaginations in play threw upon it. Nor in the real world can be assumed that both observers have the same sensory registration of it: not only are they looking from different points of view, but it is impossible that their visual registrations are the same, for eyes differ in focus and, further, what is hardly recognized at all, differ in the ranges and intensities of their responses to light-waves. The sensory fields are not to be described in the terms we apply to the entities we recognise in them, just as here «camel», «weasel», and «whale» are inadequate descriptions of the continuum. Consider a newspaper photograph of that cloud. It consists of a number of tiny dots, each of which is in a different state: I could now produce a detailed list of the states of these points. This, notice would be a precise description of the state of the variation of intensities over the field, without any reference to any entities, or, indeed, any named properties, other than the quantifications used to mark the intensities of the field. So for any sensory field there are two ways of describing it: an «entity-determinate» one, which is the one we use in our conversations with each other, and a «field-determinate» one, which would be used presumably by a neurophysiologist of the future wishing to describe accurately some particular distribution of a sensory field. I am sure this audience might notice something here: that one is at a conscious level for the subject observing, but the other is quite out of the range of the conscious mind, even though that mind may be experiencing every nuance that the field can provide. Just as one can look at a newspaper photograph without being aware of the state of every dot, nevertheless the state of every dot has contributed to your sensing of it. You will notice that there is a radical claim here, that in your brain, in the visual cortex, there is such a registration indicating a distribution of intensities, and much of it at any time is not consciously recognized. Even now as I look at you and you look at me there are experiences round the periphery of our vision that are outside our recognition. Again it takes some concentration to become aware of them – you have to resist turning your head, as we say, «to see better», but I want you to sense better, get a clear registration of that blur and admit that you are not identifying anything. It is, as we philosophers say, entirely non-epistemic from the point of view of everyday identification, even though from the neurophysiologist's point of view it could perhaps be given its field-determinate description.

I have spent this time establishing this point in order to say that we are not presented with data at all but a sensed field. To sense is not to know. Where, then, do the epistemic gestalts come from? for it is their rivalry that produces the Story. In the lower animal world most categorizations come fairly automatically, but at higher levels gestalts occur to guide action. What produces them? The new neuroscience gives an answer (Edelman, 1992) – the pleasure/pain system, which has the power to imprint in memory whatever is in the sensed field when they are produced. That imprinting is tabbed with desire and fear, such that when that imprinting is matched in the sensed field again, appropriate action is keyed, approach or withdrawal. Thus the higher animals, equipped with sensory fields, are able to learn. But animal species have come to grief, or rather extinction, precisely because of the inability to change categorizations at short notice. What has evolved in the human case is the ability to adjust another's gestalts, to tell stories to each other. One can appeal to memory or point out in the sensory field what the other may have sensed but not perceived in order to change his or her set for future action. Note that this locks in with what writers on narrative such as Jerome Bruner (1990, 47) and Paul Ricoeur (1974, 328-29) have noted, that categorizations from the past once accepted as stable by the community, because of some discrepancy in the present, are subjected to alterations for future action at the behest of members who can point out new significances in the context of action. Narrative is a temporal matter in which a canonical meaning is subjected to a dialectical transformation.

It is at this point we may learn from Alfred Schutz and Ragnar Rommetveit. For such a transformation to take place it is essential as a method that the two agents presuppose *pro tempore* that they have already identified the very same portion of the non-epistemic field. It is an act of faith, undertaken knowing that the presupposition is only that – a presupposition. As Rommetveit puts it, «In order to achieve partial intersubjectivity we have to assume that we have perfect intersubjectivity» (1974, 56) This is the «canonical meaning» to which Bruner referred, the apparently stable common understanding. A new relevant clue is then introduced, by which the narrator brings about a shift of gestalt. There is no necessity that a single portion of the field be preserved.

To take an actual story. If the pattern is the same as that of the Gombrich diagram, there will be a portion of experience which in the past has been accepted according to one well-entrenched interpretation. What must emerge during the course of the story is that second clue from past or present which enforces a switch of interpretations upon the present focus. As with the diagram, the order in which the three key elements appear, the ears, the flowers and the lines, that is, the two memory-clues and the non-epistemic core, may vary. Here is a brief story, one of Aesop's fables:

There was once a blind man, who, when any living creature was put into his hands, could tell what it was by feeling it, but one time, when someone handed him a wolf-cub, he could not make up his mind. «I don't know,» he said after feeling it, «whether it is the young of a wolf or a fox or some such other animal. But I do know this much, that it is no fit company for a flock of sheep.» (1954)

This is a story about the story (what is more, a story without a plot) the reason being that the story pattern can be detected twice over. In the first, the main story, the core over which interpretations are to range is the ability of the blind man himself. What has been established is his skill in identification in spite of his disability. But he is subjected to a difficult test, and the expectation on the part of the onlookers is that he is going to fail it, fail to reach the supposed expertise of the sighted. Stories are all to do with expectations founded on past assumptions. But the second clue, the words of the blind man himself, show that, as far as really relevant action in the future is concerned, he is not to be defeated although it was expected that he would be. So all five of the key features are present, the equivalents of the ears, the flowers, the lines and the two interpretations. What is interesting about this story is that it is about recognition itself, for the blind man, although his access to the real was limited, was nevertheless able to give precise instructions on how a portion of the world was to be treated in future action. By examining what was to him at first

profoundly non-epistemic, since he had access to the world only through his hands, he was able to make an epistemic judgement of use to everyone. Aesop has his own moral for this story: he adds «In the same way a man's evil nature can often be recognized from his physical attributes.» But interpretations are open to readers who can provide further clues to change the meaning. Cannot this be read as an allegory for those who are scornful of the apparent disability of others to read the world according to the received opinion? – showing that it may be someone thought to be seriously inadequate in the view of authority, who nevertheless can modify the Symbolic. Like the analyst, the subject-supposed-to-know, he does not produce the expected answer but a dialectical interpretation which both fails and points the way.

Thus the scope of the Story as such is wide, confirming the words of the witnesses I quoted at the beginning. The pattern is that of all communication. The Word, the Trope, and the Statement themselves, the building-blocks of all communication, are of this very same pattern. Something is to be taken as given – the vase, the disability of the blind man – in order that by the addition of a second memory-clue a new interpretation can be shifted about upon the Real.

Let me conclude with a joke told by Gerald Edelman, who used it to emphasize the semantic creativity of language. Since interpretations can shift, as they did with Aesop's story, we can do the same with this. Two American Jews, Saul and Reuben, are visiting Israel and they are keen to savour the uniqueness of that novel and interesting country. They therefore decide to go to a nightclub to appreciate the entertainment that is on offer. The most successful turn of the night turned out to be an Israeli comedian. As he told his jokes, all in Hebrew, the audience were in fits of laughter, with tears running down their faces. Saul, sitting there with a straight face, suddenly realised that Reuben was actually on the floor, as overcome as all the rest of the audience. «Hey, Reuben,» he said, «how come you are laughing at the jokes? I didn't know you knew any Hebrew!» «I don't,» said Reuben. «It's just that I trust these people.» Here is a joke that makes fun of taken-for-granted faith that is the initial move in the Story or the Statement or the Joke. For Reuben, the non-epistemic remained exactly that, perfectly non-epistemic, that is, absolutely unintelligible. He trusted beyond the level of trust, forgetting that, in order to partake in the language-game, he must be ready to check any assertion on the sensory field himself, for one day the need to correct the Symbolic might be crucial.

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Psychobiography: Existential Psychoanalysis, Class Neurosis and Writing

JACQUES BENZAKEIN (*)

Literature¹ is part of a vast system of inter-related formations and transformations² composed of psychological³, sociological, linguistic, cultural and other relationships for each of the parts of the system:

- 1 - The Person - The writer, the artist
- 2 - The Work(s)
- 3 - The World - The spectator, the reader, the critic, Society.

In its methodology Psychobiography, to be complete, must therefore study each of these components and not be satisfied to merely go beyond psychocriticism as it has, but also further broaden the scope of the psychohistorical model.

It should become a model of structural analysis based not only on biography, autobiography and psychoanalysis⁴ but also on linguistics, anthropology, sociology, history, criticism as well as on any other relevant field so as to establish as many analyses (rings of signifiers) as possible for each of the parts of the system. These analyses of the Person, the Work(s) and the World are then to be superimposed to see where they cross and crisscross to reveal certain common structures (*«points de capiton»*⁵) which can then be admitted as the *Sign* (Saussure). The sum-total of these to reveal the Semiology of the system⁶ as the rings of signifiers gliding over each other cross to uncover the signified – sometimes to confirm, sometimes to reveal a new one. If there are enough of these instants, the language of the system emerges, if only briefly to change again as soon as another ring is superimposed. Hopefully, this sort of privileged moment lasts just long enough to resolve certain enigmas.

To facilitate the task of building such a model, it helps to have access to as many ready made rings (i.e. other analyses) as possible or be able to develop them by applying theory to the great amount of information available on an author who presents many enigmas. An author whom

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¹ This presentation is part of series in which I attempt define a working model for Psychobiography.

² Foucault – «Archives»/Barthes – «Intertexte».

³ Unconscious as well as conscious structures.

⁴ All psychoanalysis.

⁵ Adapted from Lacan.

⁶ Defined by Saussure as the science of signs in social life.

Roland Barthes would label the «Degré Zéro» – an author so famous and so well known as to have warranted just about every type of study and critique. An author like Jean Racine for example who presents, to name but a few, some most intriguing enigmas:

1 - Why does a young Jansenist orphan turn so violently against those who took him in and sets off to write tragedies?

2 - Why does he abandon the theater so suddenly a decade after his first success (*Andromaque*), at the height of his career as a dramatist, to get married and re-enter the Jansenist fold while remaining at court as the Historiographer of the King? Could it be that if Catharsis is the purpose of tragedy, his tragedies might have had the same effect on him, their author?

3 - Why do all his plays have the same basic quasi-obsessional structure characteristic of Freud's "*Familienroman*?"

4 - Why is he so successful in a society whose fundamental morality condemns the theater?

In previous presentations, I have shown how Psychoanalysis revealed that starting with his third play *Andromaque* (1667) Racine projected his psyche on the stage and unconsciously created his own myth centered on the repetitive archetypal motif of the oedipal triangle composed of a Symbolic «Mother», «Father», «Son/Hero». These signifying structures were to be repeated almost obsessively in the rest of his works.⁷ It further revealed that in the image of contemporary XVIIth century society, the «Father» typically a king or an emperor is the legitimate representative of the Social Order and that there is an evolution in his role which forces an evolution in the relationships between the two other members of the triangle. From *Andromaque* to *Bajazet*, the «Father» is either dead or absent. In either case, he is powerfully omnipresent through the «Mother». She is typically a «Devouring Mother» (Jung) who is either the delegate of the «Father's» authority or has usurped it and the «Son» will always attempt to free himself from her.

The chronology of the plays is as Lucien Goldmann observed, also the order of their internal logic and the psychological evolution of the «Son» follows this order. There is indeed a traceable progression which develops from *Andromaque* to *Phèdre* and culminates in *Athalie*. Starting with *Mithridate*, once he enters the world where the «Father» is present, the «Son» has a *Double* (Pyrrhus/Oreste, Xipharès/Pharnace). Although the «Father» is obsessed and emasculated he still detains all the power. The doubles must choose either submission and survival or transgression and death. In each of those plays, one of the sons chooses the former and the other the latter thus setting up a good son – bad son structure. The «Sons» will go from the submissive to the rebellious in their attempts to claim their freedom from the «Mother» and to ally themselves with or be equal to the «Father».

The Linguistic model showed that the conflictual relationships in Racine's theater reside entirely in discourse, in a dialectic of desire where there is a clear difference between desire and love. In each play, there is a character who triggers the crisis when s/he no longer represses his/her obsessive desire. Since this desire goes contrary to the authority of the «Father», it is therefore illegitimate and cannot be fulfilled. This person manifests the symptoms of an obsessional neurosis. For the neurotic, the object of desire is the obsessive signifier of freedom, of equality to the «Father».

Lacanian analysis further revealed that in the context of the lacanian paternal metaphor and of his definition of the Oedipus complex, it becomes apparent that this psychotic behavior is the result of a crisis caused by a problem of gender identity and that it is not limited to the «female» characters in the plays but rather to the «feminine» characters regardless of sex.

In applying the theories as suggested above to each of the components of the system, it became evident that the standard interpretations were falling short in that none of them seemed to

⁷ J. Benzakein, «Psychobiography: Jean Racine – a Jungian Case Study», in *Literature and Psychology, Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Literature and Psychology*, Urbino, July 6-9, 1990, pp. 213-219, Lisbon: ISPA, 1991.

take into account either Racine's or his characters' Free Will nor did they completely explain some of the other enigmas such as his actions, his paranoia and the apparent hatred he developed for his mentors or the cleavage evident in the appearance of the «Double» in himself. A pattern we find duplicated in every one of his main characters. The role of Free Will was after all *the* debate of the time, especially between the Jesuits and the Jansenists. Furthermore, Jansenist interpretations give Racine the role of a moralist when in fact his biography, especially during his most productive period, shows that he was nothing of the sort and that he was in fact leading a life of debauchery.⁸

Two new models of analysis lent themselves to explore these questions:

- 1- Sartrean Psychoanalysis
- 2- Clinical Sociology

In each of the plays there is manifest «Bad Faith» in the interaction between the characters who find themselves in situations they have not chosen. One can in fact assert that the tragic outcome is the result of this Bad Faith. The explosion occurs at the moment when the «neurotic» character⁹ no longer wishes to play the game of status-quo shrouded in «précieux» discourse and begins to make unequivocal and direct demands. The action of the play static to this point suddenly becomes dynamic, hurling the characters toward their tragic ends. Having tolerated rejection, s/he now realizes that the object of his/her desire actually desires another. Completely transformed s/he is no longer satisfied to threaten, s/he now makes the *conscious, intentional choice* to demand or cause the death of the other. A cold, calculated, *rational choice* for which s/he now becomes responsible: kill and die rather than live with rejection.

The role of reason and the mind must therefore be analyzed since traditional psychoanalytical interpretations based on the unconscious or the sub-conscious do not adequately serve in understanding the conscious choice of action Racine and his characters make as a result of a very lucid and logical process of rationalization.

This obvious «Existential» bent suggests that the next ring of signifiers be constructed on Sartre's model of psychoanalysis which analyses existential choice.¹⁰

Sartre defines Existential Psychoanalysis as a method primarily concerned with the way in which the individual lives his family relationships in a given society as a result of the concrete relationships between his conscious and the world – i.e. the individual in society, as a child *and* as an adult.

«The phenomenology which Sartre thereafter embraced assumes a partnership between consciousness and the world – a partnership in which consciousness is always “intentional” in the sense that it is always consciousness of some real, remembered, or imagined event.»¹¹

This approach leads to an understanding of the meaning of acts and symptoms rather than to the simple cataloging of events.

Sartre replaced the traditional Unconscious with what he calls Lived Experience (*Le Vécu*). This implies the choice of committing the act. To choose in bad faith or in lying to oneself on the nature of reality explains the strange phenomenon of «wishing to do good» on one level while choosing to do something totally different on another.

⁸ He was suspected of having poisoned his mistress and to have associated with a known sorceress.

⁹ Hermione (Andromache), Nero (Britannicus), Roxane (Bajazet), Mithridate (Mithridate), Eriphile (Iphigenia), Phaedra (Phaedra).

¹⁰ Sartre, we recall, wrote «Psychobiographies» of Baudelaire, Genet and Flaubert in addition to his own in «Les Mots» in which he applied «Existential Psychoanalysis».

¹¹ Betty Cannon, Sartre and Psychoanalysis, University Press of Kansas, 1991, p. 4.

«Obviously, this is not simplistic voluntarism, and indeed, these two concepts of reflective/spontaneous consciousness and bad faith... will go a long way toward explaining many of the phenomena which Freud proposes as evidence of unconscious processes resulting from childhood and which Sartre sees as... the extent to which an individual, in relating to the world, is impressed by early familial interactions and sociomaterial constraints.» He believes that the problem shared by traditional social science theory and traditional Marxism is in part their failure to recognize the insertion of the individual into the social scene in childhood because any theory must also include intentionality and meaning.

The «force» in human personality is not to be discovered *behind* consciously lived experience but rather *IN* that very experience, i.e. in the concrete choices made by the individual.¹²

This, I propose, is where Existential Psychoanalysis proves to be most useful since all choices are not made solely in function of childhood. They are also the results of the consequences of the lived experience of the individual in *Society* which lead him/her to make certain choices rather than others which may result in neurosis.

In Racine's work, as well as in his life, we can see the anguish and despair of the subject faced with the choice s/he must make – wanting to be honorable but choosing to do «evil». This leads to an inner cleavage where the individual is at war with himself.¹³

What part does Society play then and how can the individual derive his neurosis from the nature of the society in which he lives?

Racine was haunted by his humble origins as a poor orphan raised as a charity case in a convent – a woman's world. He left Port-Royal to enter the world of men, the world of the Sun King and all it implied. Feeling intellectually superior he was obsessively ambitious and spent his energy on being accepted in high society. Quite successfully since even after his success as a playwright he became the Historiographer of Louis XIV. His biography, his correspondence and other writings show however that he was never socially comfortable or secure and that he was racked by guilt and fear of eternal damnation because he turned his back on his Aunt Agnès and Port-Royal. He eventually rejoined the fold but kept one foot at court – a double stance totally unacceptable to either Port Royal or the Court. Similarly, his «neurotic» characters will feel insecure and demeaned by the situations they find themselves in and lose all dignity in their attempt to fulfil their desire.

Clinical Sociology seemed the logical model to turn to in order to understand the symptoms of this neurotic behavior caused by the relationship of the individual to society. In *La Névrose de Classe*¹⁴, Vincent de Gaulejac defines Class Neurosis as

«le tableau clinique qui caractérise les conflits psychologiques vécus par des individus qui changent de position dans la structure de classe»¹⁵

The neurosis appears when the conflicts of the social trajectory and the conflicts of psychosexual development support and reinforce each other – i.e. what occurs when an individual raised in one social class is forced for one reason or another to deal intensively with another class or even to change class.

Class neurosis, says de Gaulejac, is the product of sexual, relational and social conflicts which build on each other through reciprocal influences. It is characterized by the fact that their dialectic complementarity follows the reinforcement of the conflicts experienced by the individual. What distinguishes Class Neurosis from other forms of neurosis, is the importance of the conflicts

¹² Cannon, 13.

¹³ See the frequent monologues of the «neurotic» characters, especially as the play gets closer to its climax.

¹⁴ Vincent de Gaulejac, *La Névrose de classe*, Hommes & Groupes Editeurs, 1987.

¹⁵ The clinical picture characteristic of the psychological conflicts experienced by individuals who change position in the class structure.

linked directly to social displacement in the emergence of the illness. The individual experiences a conflictual dislocation between his objective and his subjective positions.¹⁶

Class Neurosis is the product of contradictions occurring on three levels:

1 - on the social level – social contradictions occurring at the level of the identity of the individual who now belongs to two classes.

2 - on the family level – how the individual now compares himself to his parents and to the rest of his family especially if there is a large gap between the two classes.

3 - on the psycho-social level – how the individual functions in the oedipal situation and deals with his unconscious desires.

The conflict is particularly manifest on the psychological level through:

-a reactivation of the feeling of guilt

-a very strong feeling of inferiority

-a particular amount of difficulty in dealing with the Oedipal Complex whose sexual and social components are the object of a strong reciprocal support

-the development of fantasmatic activity on the model of the Family Novel¹⁷ which will be a mechanism of defense against social inferiority. The individual who experiences Class Neurosis will attempt to reach mediation through the Family Novel.

-a mechanism of cleavage (splitting) linked to the feeling of being inwardly divided. The individual who does not manage to situate himself enters into a process of cleavage and doubling. The ego unsuccessful in finding mediation to bear the division creates what appears to be two identities foreign to each other.

-isolation and folding on oneself.

For those who can write says de Gaulejac, writing can become the mediation:

Par l'écriture, l'auteur effectue un véritable travail thérapeutique dans lequel il décrit l'ensemble des conflits liés à la déchirure sociale qui lui permettra de corriger la réalité. L'individu humilié, blessé narcissiquement par le rejet de l'autre pourra dans le fantasme de l'écriture renverser les rôles et opérer le complexe d'infériorité qui en résulte en complexe de supériorité qui opère une inversion de ses rapports vis à vis de ceux qui provoquent son humiliation.¹⁸

Quoting Guy Volgelweith's work on Strindberg, de Gaulejac sees Writing as the means for the author to project himself onto an imaginary stage. There, in this mental space, he will see his double appear, not necessarily an exact copy of his ego, but rather a project of behavior aimed at resolving his psychological difficulties. Racine, like Strindberg puts on stage the workings of his psyche in an attempt to reach resolution.

What remains to be explored however is why the process of mediation was never complete for Racine for his internal conflict and the feeling of inner cleavage never left him as we saw above and as he expresses it so poignantly at the end of his life in his Cantique III, entitled «*Plaintes d'un chrétien. Sur les contrariétés qu'il éprouve au-dedans de lui-même*» (Paul, aux Romains, VII):

«Je trouve deux hommes en moi:
L'un veut que, plein d'amour pour toi,
Mon coeur te soit toujours fidèle;
L'autre, à tes volontés rebelle,

*«I find two men in me:
One, filled with love for you, longs for
My heart to always remain faithful to you;
The other, a rebel against your will,*

¹⁶ de Gaulejac, p. 148.

¹⁷ A fantasmatic activity of pulling back into oneself where dreams and readings permit the accomplishment of what reality does not allow.

¹⁸ de Gaulejac, 151

Me révolte contre ta loi.
L'un, tout esprit et tout céleste,
Et l'autre, par son poids funeste,
Me tient vers la terre penché.

Hélas! en guerre avec moi-même,
Je veux; mais (o misère extrême!)
Je ne fais pas le bien que j'aime,
Et je fais le mal que je haïs.

Et, domptant par un doux effort
Cet homme qui t'est si contraire,
Fais ton esclave volontaire
De cet esclave de la mort.»

*Makes me defy your law.
One, all spirit and celestial,
And the other, by its evil weight,
Forces me to lean toward the earth.*

*Alas! at war with myself,
I wish; but (o extreme misery!)
I do not do the good I love
And I do the evil I hate.*

*And, tame through gentle effort
This man who is so contrary to you,
Make a voluntary slave
Of this slave of death.»*

Psychoanalysis, Literature and Ethics (*)

TOM EIDE (**)

1. INTRODUCTION

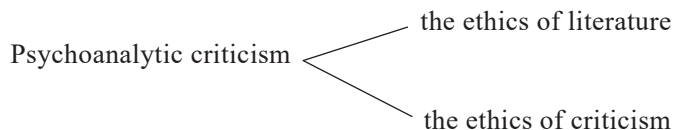
1.1. *Ethics and literary criticism*

In this paper I will discuss some questions concerning the relationship between ethics and a psychoanalytic approach to literature. One reason why I want to focus on ethics in relation to psychoanalytic criticism is that there has been a flourishing discussion on literature and ethics in the course of the last ten years. Minor attention, however, has been paid to psychoanalytic perspectives. That goes both for the philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum (1986, 1990) and the literary critic Wayne C. Booth (1988), the two most distinctive contributors to the debate.¹ Another reason is that psychoanalytic critics themselves have – as far as I know – shown minor interest in ethical issues, perhaps because little serious scholarly attention has been paid to the ethical implications of psychoanalysis in general.

The main question I want to raise, is whether ethics should be taken into account when practising psychoanalytic criticism. My position is that it should, or at least that one could benefit from it, and I will try to argue why. But my primary intention is simply to raise the question.

1.2. *The ethics of literature vs. the ethics of criticism*

When focusing on psychoanalytic criticism from an ethical point of view, it seems reasonable to draw a distinction between two different fields for ethical reflection:



(*) Thanks to Henrik Syse and other participants of the Ethics Program of The Research Council of Norway for fruitful comments on the manuscript.

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¹ Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1986; and *Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990; Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep. An Ethics of Fiction*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

On the one hand we have the ethics of literature, the investigation into the moral dilemmas and problems expressed by the writer through his or her work. On the other hand it, we have the ethics of criticism; the research ethics; the practise of psychoanalytical criticism itself and the ethical aspects attached to it. I will start with the latter.

2. ETHICAL ASPECTS OF PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

2.1. *The Jensen case*

I will illustrate my points by discussing some moral dilemmas I was confronted with when working on my doctoral thesis in the eighties. I gave an interpretation of the first five novels by the Norwegian writer Axel Jensen, based on the object relations theory of Melanie Klein.² These novels were written in the late 50's and early 60's and are congenial to and partly influenced by books like J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* (1956) and Jack Kerouac's *On the road* (1957) and *The subterraneans* (1958). Axel Jensen can be called a beat generation writer, and became a kind of cult figure in Norway, not only due to his books, but also to his lifestyle. The author is still living, and that actualises some special ethical considerations.

2.2. *The integrity of the scholar*

When I started to work on the project I had never met the writer. I asked myself how he would react to being an object of a psychoanalytic interpretation. Should I make contact with him, or should I just do the job and tell him afterwards? On the one hand, I was inclined to contact him. I wanted of course to use every source accessible to make my interpretation as valid as possible, and he could surely give me a lot of information. And would it not be fair to inform him and give him a reasonable possibility to influence the project? On the other hand, what if he did not like my project at all? What if he found my psychoanalytic perspective ridiculous and my interpretations insulting and offensive? If I contacted him, would I not get bound to take his opinions and feelings into account? My remonstrances grew: What if I learned that he would be very unhappy with certain interpretations? Or perhaps angry? Was it not a risk that his reactions could influence my integrity as a critic?

2.3. *Respect for privacy*

Another concern was related to the privacy of the author. What if he gave me access to strictly private information? Or what if I got hold of such information from other sources? It appeared that when it became known that I worked on this book, a lot of people suddenly turned to me with stories about the writer, especially stories about his personal life. According to the psycho-critical method of Charles Mauron, one should confront one's interpretation of the texts with the accessible information on the author's life in order to verify or falsify the interpretations.³ Should I do that? I

² See *The Writings of Melanie Klein 1921-1963*, Vol. I-III, London: Hogarth Press, 1975; Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, London: Hogarth Press, 1978; and A Psycho-Analytical Approach to Aesthetics, *International Journal of of Psycho-Analysis*, XXXIII, 1952: 196-207. Otto F. Kernberg, *Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis*, New York: Jason Aronson, 1976; and *Internal World and External Reality. Object Relations Theory Applied*, New York: Jason Aronson, 1980.

³ Charles Mauron, Die Psychokritik und ihre Methode, In *Psychoanalytische Literaturkritik* (Reinhold Wolff, Ed.), pp. 276-288, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, (1958) 1975; and *Des Métaphores obsédants au mythe personnel*, Paris: Corti, (1963) 1976.

certainly got a lot of material this way. I could probably even get access to the writer's diary from an early period of his life. Should I try to persuade the holder of it to let me look into it?

2.4. *Media's (mis)use – who's responsibility?*

This dilemma concerning privacy was made even more acute by the fact that psychoanalytic criticism occasionally can be «hot stuff» for journalists. And in my case it was, due to the writer's cult status and controversiality.

Do we as psychoanalytic critics have a moral obligation to protect the writer and his work against the use or misuse of our material and our interpretations by the media? If «yes», how far does such a responsibility go?

According to my Kleinian interpretation of Axel Jensen's five novels, they were all structured according to the same psychological-mythical fantasy of attacking, destroying and recreating the good object and harmonious inner world.⁴ After having published my book, I read a newspaper interview with Jensen where he was asked the following question: «Do you have a traumatic relationship with your mother's breast?»⁵ That in spite of the fact that I had kept a very low profile in exposing the author. So the problem can be summed up thus: How to solve or balance the conflict between on the one hand the considerations of the integrity of the scholar; the research-ethical ideal of the independent critic searching for truth and accordingly making use of all accessible sources and drawing the full consequences of his or her analyses, and on the other hand the moral obligation not to offend the privacy of the writer or his family or other persons involved, or the authors name or the public image of his work.

2.5. *Interference with the writer's creativity*

One more concern about psychoanalytic interpretations of the work of living authors is the possible influence the interpretations might have on the writer's creative work. What if the interpretations should interfere with the writing process of the author? This is not a problem specific for psychoanalytic criticism, of course, but I would think that a psychoanalytic interpretation – at least in some cases – can have a deeper impact on the writer than, for instance, a formalistic approach.

If this was the case with Jensen, I do not know. He said, however, in an interview after I had published my book, that he was glad he had not been aware of these psychological patterns before, because then his books would have been different. And, he added – and maybe that was a joke –, that he was now going to rewrite the book he was working on to disprove my thesis.⁶ A joke or not, there could be an ethical problem here.

Maybe my example, with a living author, is somewhat peculiar. But also when we deal with deceased writers we have to take ethical considerations into account, for instance by considering respect for the work and the author's name.⁷ And how are we to weigh these concerns and considerations concerning the privacy of the writer's family and other persons involved against the research-ethical ideal of searching for truth?

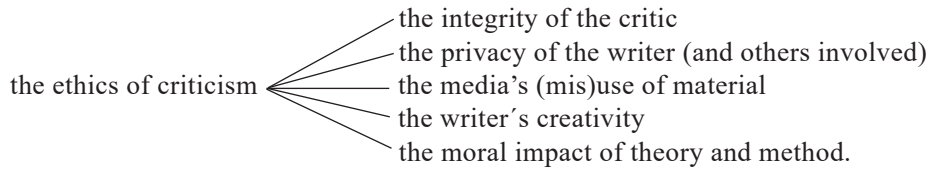
One could put the different concerns related to the practising of psychoanalytic criticism into a model. To make it more complete (or less incomplete), one could also mention the moral impact of choice of theory and method:

⁴ Tom Eide, *Outsiderens posisjoner*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991.

⁵ Interview with Halvor Fjermeros, *Klassekampen* (newspaper, Oslo), 16.11.91.

⁶ *Aftenposten* (newspaper, Oslo), 13.12.91.

⁷ The Norwegian Guidelines for Social Sciences and Humanities (Oslo: NESH, 1994) say, for instance, in a section on «Respect for the deceased»: «The researcher ought, for instance, not to attach motives to agents unless one can give convincing arguments for it» (author's translation).



I have to leave these research-ethical questions here, aware of the fact that there is much more to be said, and that I undoubtedly have left out important aspects. In the following I will turn to the other main area for ethical considerations, namely questions concerning literature itself.

3. SOME ASPECTS OF THE ETHICS OF LITERATURE

3.1. *The primacy of ethics*

In the following I will discuss one aspect of the ethics of aesthetics, namely the primacy of ethics in literary criticism, especially concerning a psychoanalytic approach to literature.

The Dutch literary philosopher J.J.A. Mooij has argued for the primacy of ethics in literary criticism.⁸ I will not discuss his whole argument here, only focus on a few aspects of it. He points out that for many years, probably since the 1940's, the most broadly accepted view within literary criticism was that literature is – and should be – autonomous with respect to ethics. In this spirit Oscar Wilde claimed that there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. A book is well written or it is badly written. That is all. According to Wilde.

Of course that is not all. What Wilde does here, is to tell us what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. He tells us how we should value books - as something beyond morality.

Such a claim is, of course, not ethically neutral. On the contrary. It is strongly moral; it implies making a statement about what should be done, praised, chosen or pursued, in the last resort a statement about what one should prefer and how one should live one's life. And that is indeed the basic Aristotelian ethical question.

The primary reason – I think – why ethics should be relevant to the study of literature – also to a psychoanalytic approach – is that the fundamental questions of literature are moral questions; more or less the same moral questions we are confronted with as individuals and members of a society; questions about what a good life and just social and political institutions presuppose and imply. My claim is, in other words, that great literature often applies to our lives, not only because of its unconscious impact, but also because it represents psychological and aesthetical investigations into the fundament of human motivation and morality.

One could, of course, argue against this position and claim that literature should be immune from this kind of moral criticism. The primary function of literature, one could hold, is not to investigate morality or to communicate moral values, put to provide pleasure. So, the primary function of literature is not ethical, but psychological.

But, as Mooij argues, to claim that one way of looking at literature is the right and good one, is a moral claim, and should accordingly be examined from an ethical point of view.

⁸ J.J.A. Mooij, *Literature and Morality. The Primacy of Ethics*. In *Literature and Ethics* (Bjorn Tysdahl et al., Eds.), pp. 99-114, Oslo: The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, 1992. Wilde's aestheticism and its relation to ethics is also discussed by Booth, *The Company We Keep* (1988:11f).

In the following I will put forward an argument for the primacy of ethics. I will start with the question: Why do we find literature important?

3.2. *Why does literature matter?*

Why do people – why do *we* – appreciate literature the way we do? According to Norman Holland's theory of literary response from 1968 we appreciate literature because it gives us pleasure.⁹ I cannot here go deeply into Holland's analysis, and I am not sure whether we disagree about anything. But is it not so that this pleasure – at least the pleasure we get from reading *great* literature – is related *not only* to the satisfaction of psychological drives and needs, but also to our sense of meaning, to our experience of what is important and worthwhile, to our deepest concerns about how we should live our lives? If this is right, we are going beyond the field of psychology and entering the field of ethics.

Again I can use the Axel Jensen case to illustrate my point.

3.3. *Solving the riddle – and so what?*

After having published my book, I felt a little bit uneasy about it. Not because of the writer's reactions. He was certainly ambivalent, but nevertheless quite positive and enthusiastic. My unease has – at least primarily – other sources.

As I have already mentioned, my interpretation of Axel Jensen's five novels indicated that they all were structured according to the same pattern of unconscious fantasy; in Kleinian terms the fantasy of attacking, destroying and recreating the good object and harmonious inner world.

I had the feeling that I had solved a riddle. I had found concepts to interpret the conflicts between the characters, a formula to analyse the structure of the plots, a scheme to explain the rhetoric of the novels and the continuity of the authorship. I even had the idea, though I never wrote that, that this interpretation was a quite adequate description of the core theme not only of the novels, but also of the writer's personal life. And so what?

The problem is: I still think that my interpretation is valid and – at the same time – I feel deeply unsatisfied and uneasy about it. How come?

Perhaps one of the reasons is that I did not discuss questions like the following sufficiently: Why did this authorship mean so much to a lot of people (if it did)? Why do these novels matter (if they do)? Is that primarily because they generate *pleasure* – for instance in the Freudian sense of the wishfulfillment of daydreaming or the «fore-pleasure» of artistic form¹⁰ or, as Holland (1968) puts it, «a pleasure achieved as part of a defence maneuver» (p. 132, 189)? Other questions I would like to have discussed more profoundly are: What kinds of values do we share when we go into these novels? How is the writer investigating questions concerning what a good and worthwhile life presupposes and implies (if he is), and what came out of this? I did not ask these questions, at least not clearly enough.

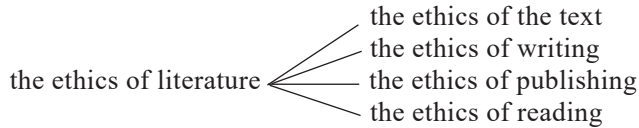
My question today is: Is it not the task of the literary critic not only to analyse the unconscious fantasies that structure the literary work, but also to analyse and discuss the ethical norms and values which are communicated through these structures?

You already know my answer to this question. As I see it, the «pure» psychoanalytic interpretation can certainly solve riddles that probably are unsolvable without psychoanalytic theory. But it also can leave important aspects of the work, such as the ethical ones, in the dark.

⁹ Norman Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 14, London: Penguin Books, 1988, pp. 131-141. First published 1908 (*Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*). This English translation is a reprint of the *Standard Edition* version.

In this part of my paper I have discussed the primacy of ethics in psychoanalytic literary criticism. I have briefly mentioned the ethics of the text, the ethics of writing and the ethics of publishing. One could add the ethics of reading, which is too complicated a matter to go into here.¹¹ These different aspects of the ethics of literature can be put into a model:

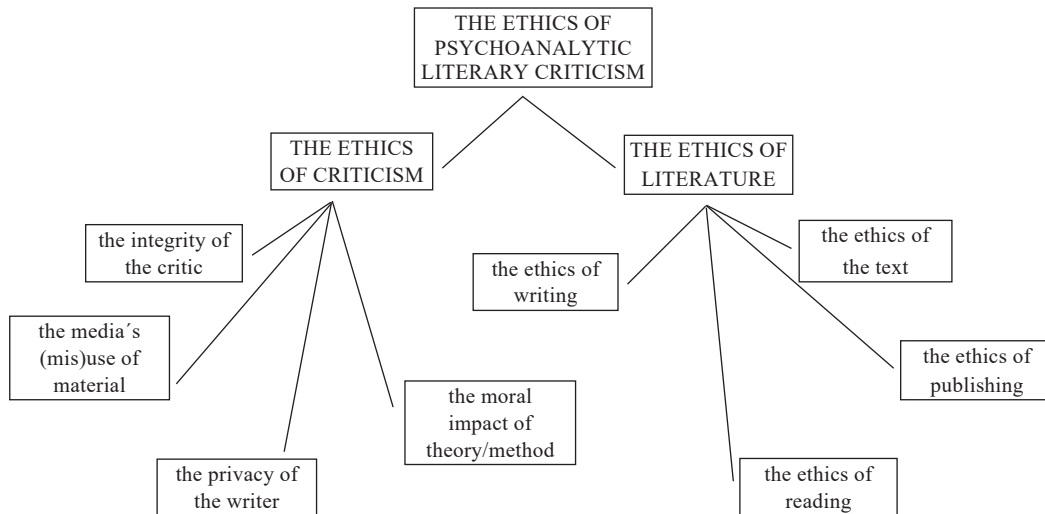


4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

4.1. *The complex field of ethics and psychoanalytic criticism*

In this paper I have discussed two quite different areas concerning the ethics of psychoanalytic literary criticism: the research ethics of a psychoanalytic approach to literature and the ethics of literature in general. I have argued that both should – or at least could – be taken into account when practising psychoanalytic literary criticism.

One can put all the aspects of the ethics of psychoanalytic criticism mentioned here together, as in the following figure:



This scheme of moral concerns and fields for ethical consideration does not pretend to give a complete account of every aspect of an ethical approach to psychoanalytic criticism, but is meant to show how complex the field is. In practice these fields and concerns often overlap, and must be seen in connection with each other.

¹¹ J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

4.2. *The primacy of ethics – final remark*

Does taking my position and arguing for the primacy of ethics imply reducing the importance of psychoanalysis in literary criticism?

I do not think so. On the contrary, I argue for paying more attention to this field because I think it is important for our understanding of how literature works and because I think psychoanalytic theory has more to give in this respect.

As the American philosopher and psychoanalyst Ernest Wallwork has shown in his latest book *Psychoanalysis and ethics* (1991), psychoanalytic theory contains excellent concepts to deal with ethical questions.¹² Wallwork provides a sympathetic reading of Freud's moral psychology, and discusses the moral impact of concepts as narcissism and determinism, self-interest and psychological egoism, love and hate, good and evil, the problem of free will and the question of moral responsibility, etcetera – all central ethical and psychoanalytic issues.

Wallwork argues that psychoanalysis, at least in the version of Freud, is a deeply ethical enterprise. In that respect he quotes a letter from Freud to James Jackson Putnam, dated 30 March 1914, where Freud states that psychoanalysis «should find a place among the methods whose aim is to bring about the highest ethical and intellectual development» (ibid., p. 16).

Wishful thinking?

Perhaps. But nevertheless a challenge to psychoanalytic literary criticism.

¹² Ernest Wallwork, *Psychoanalysis and Ethics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

The Politics of Identity: The Poetry of Antjie Krog

PIETER CONRADIE (*)

INTRODUCTION

The poetic production of the Antjie Krog-text displays the intertextual process that constitute the formation of the human subject. The writings of a sixteen year old girl in 1969, and the subsequent work that followed during the next 20 years, reflect the Lacanian contention that unconscious truth floats at the surface of the text as an enigma to be deciphered.

Krog's earlier verse represents the adolescent girl's search for identity, and finds expression in Biblical figures of speech. Soon the theme of love merges with the image of motherhood, and is richly illustrated in the portrayal of subservient Biblical women. After a six year period of silence Antjie Krog's publications from 1981 onwards increasingly speak of gender dissatisfaction. Her subject matter becomes the family, women's role within the South African context and women's writing. Adolescent girls, female students and «frustrated» housewives took to her writings. Afrikaans literary critics and academics admired the naive expression, the uncomplicated diction and coined it «bare-foot poetry». The themes of love and motherhood were likely to impact on the prescribed market. From a formal point of view, however, the literary establishment criticised her undisciplined use of free verse, as well as the disjointed use of metaphor. Since the eighties her application of irony and intertextuality, and the execution of a well planned structure, have led to her being compared to the leading male poets in Afrikaans. Krog has expressed her dissatisfaction with formal pretence, as well as gender discrimination, when it comes to women's writing. It is not to be denied that literary art form is depicted through metaphors with a bias towards structure, categorisation and order against the unformed matter or the chaotic (Summers 1993: 243-271). Without falling into essentialist arguments, one cannot ignore the metaphors of male command versus female matter or nature as inherently discriminating. Small wonder then that such a discriminatory aspect will in a literal manner spill back into the oversimplification of literary expression.

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KROG'S MODUS OPERANDI

Krog's poetry reflects a definite pattern of repetition with regard to procedure. The desire of the subject, to signify is continuously undermined by the very procedure that guarantees her a place of enunciation. As Lacan has explained, the I of the enunciation is forever moving further away from the I of the poetic discourse. The referential and iconic effects that are the hallmarks of poetic rhetoric and the literary text, are simultaneously the deictic markers of a split subject. C S Lewis referred to the fact that in the Middle Ages this distinction between poetry and rhetoric was not acknowledged, and that representation elicited a much more direct experience (Easthope 1983: 102).

Krog's inclination of mirroring women and using them as masks whereby identification is implied, is often ruptured by the effect of a gaze: the Other that prescribes. Her identification is dependent on the absence by which her own fantasy is inscribed. Much of her disappointment can be located in the struggle between the ideal ego and the superego. The first referring to the narcissistic strivings of the primary process in contrast to the latter which in general implies interaction with the outside-world (Laplanche & Pontalis 1988: 201-202).

OEUVRE

Her debut Daughter of Jephthah (1970) is dedicated to the father. The virginal body is sacrificed to the God of the father as she declares herself «midwife to the nation». In the follow-up poem forgiveness is pledged from the mother, and throughout the anthology guilt is indirectly admitted for the trespasses of adolescent behaviour. In *January-suite* (1972) a melancholy tone is sustained throughout various relationships. This mood is continued in the next two anthologies of 1975 – *Woman* and *Beloved Antartica* – where the theme of self-sacrifice is again taken up, and conception and motherhood are celebrated. Above all the omnipotence of motherhood is singled out. The poem itself is equated with the child. She concludes this particular phase of her writing with reference to an Afrikaner child-hero and a German woman who in their separate ways come to grips with the African continent. The one dies and the other survives; but both are reminded that their conduct is subject to patriarchal scrutiny. The role of the woman as adventurer and prophet is gradually established in her poetry.

In 1981 Otters in watercress is published and her poetic expression reverberates with an aggression which is mainly aimed at the male-dominated world. An introductory poem in which the homosexual world threatens the mother and child, is transferred to another spot in the anthology, and is replaced by the woman who in memory of her husband, the nation's beloved poet, honours but also desecrates him in the national museum. Explicit sexual metaphors are used to typify the male act of writing as artificial, forced and repressive. Irony and satire are applied to liken the sexual and writing act to an acquired ritual. Use is also made of childverse to reveal the patriarchy's homosexual cultural foundation. It is ironic that the anthology itself was compiled with the assistance of the patriarch of the Afrikaans poetry, D.J. Opperman.

The concluding poem is based on the diary of Susanna Smit, a Voortrekker woman who proved to be superior to her husband, Reverend Erasmus Smit, the unofficial lay preacher of the Trek. Krog debunks many of the myths of the headstrong male in the Afrikaner's history. Mention is also made of the Reverend's inability to provide his wife with a child after the death of their only son. In the Afrikaner history Susanna Smit would become a prototype of the volksmoeder. The latter would be the kingpin around which Afrikaner nationalism would rally itself; compare Reich's rendition of the motherland in Nazi Germany (Reich 1983: 91). The volksmoeder represents self-sacrifice, bravery, a love for freedom, self-reliance, housewifeliness, nurturance of talents, virtue, integrity and a sense of religion. Susanna Smit's only escape within the repressive male order is

exemplified in her personal writings. In her diary she substitutes her marriage with a visionary union with God in which metaphors of a sexual nature still prevail.

Women's role is emphasised in broader South African context in *Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (1985). The founding of the country and early historical events converge in metaphors of gender and associated struggles. As a prophet of her time Krog refers to women who have been omitted from official history, black and white. These pioneer women are celebrated amidst the acknowledgement that history itself is a metaphoric construction. The power play of present day gender conflict within the white community serves as an interlude to the epic poem that concludes the anthology. In this poem the Afrikaner trekkers set out on their journey to freedom symbolised in the image of Jerusalem. When malaria brings the trek to an end the visionary calling of the male leader, as well as that of a prophetess, turns fiction into fact, imagination into history. This recognition ironises the desireability to genderise history.

The diary of Lady Anne Barnard, first lady at the Cape and wife of the British colonial secretary, Andrew Barnard, is used as point of reference in Krog's latest anthology called *Lady Anne* (1989). The female bard or voice in the text applies the creativity of Lady Anne – painter, poet, hostess from 1797-1802 – as yardstick for her own accomplishments as a South African woman during the turbulent years of political struggle. Krog uses intertextual practices to escape final truths, but beneath the joyous play anxiety and aggression soon surface as lady Anne is described: «as metaphor you mean fuck all». Of major interest is that the female voice takes refuge within her family:

only for my children
do I surrender my life.

here I learn to write – I cannot do anything else.

The writing talent is metaphorically interpreted as an instruction from the father, or Creator, to document one's life. When leave is taken from Lady Anne the female voice identifies with Lady Anne's feminine body from a drawing and photo's. Besides Krog's appraisal of Lady Anne the latter's breasts are singled out since she never bore children. The reader is reminded within parenthesis that a drawing by Lady Anne has lactation as its focus point. While the observer identifies with Lady Anne and admits in another poem that writing destroys the relationship between them, the breasts remain divisive. The breasts were described as two wounds in a previous anthology. The title of the poem on Lady Anne reads «you are remembered for your parties». Krog's desire to be remembered, i.e. as represented in her own motherhood, is belied by the breasts as objet petit a: a dismemberment. The objet petit a is that part of the object around which the fantasy of the scopic drive develops (Lacan 1986: 67-78). The fantasy being the desire for the phallus.

CONCLUSION

The sacrifice of the self within relationships seems to be a recurrent theme in Krog's earlier work. When disappointment in others leads to aggression against the self, the fragile ego seeks refuge in the idealisation of the family. Gradually the family takes on a fetishistic character. Krog acknowledges that she becomes reckless at the slightest indication of any endangerment to the family. Her dependency on her children and her overprotectiveness are also admitted. This narcissistic tendency is aggravated by the luxury of self-indulgement in the act of writing. Guilt and anxiety seem to be at the heart of the many attempts at self-formulation. The glorification of the role of women and of prophetesses seemingly underlines the struggle on a deeper level between ideal ego and superego. Narcissistic tendencies call forth repudiation from broader societal norms, such as parental responsibilities.

The oedipal ban – love for the parent of the opposite sex – contributes to the frailty of the idealised self-image as represented in the parent of the same sex: one is never good enough. Similarly object-relations enforced by culture demands exemplary conduct. The cultural differentiation of the sexes leads to the conviction that motherhood and writing raise certain expectations. The guilt created in the process of conforming to the cultural expectations of motherhood seems to elicit Krog's reproach to Afrikaner morality. Special reference is made to the grandmother. Krog's opposition to discrimination within her culture is reflected in her staunch support of feminist and human rights. Her last two anthologies centering around Lady Anne Barnard and the African continent may be read as processes in the individuation of the self. Her criticism of the Afrikaner is rooted in the Christian morality and the suffering it brought to others; now being experienced as guilt which is the founding block of the religious upbringing. A sense of loss is aggressively countered by associating with the oppressed.

It also seems as if the bodily grounding of the ego becomes a general metaphor for Krog's exploration of life. Her desire to signify is metaphorised in an acute awareness of the female body. It is no small wonder that the striving towards identification is focussed primarily on the figure of the mother. In the first phase of her poetry, i.e. 1970-1975, the homoerotic identification of the daughter with the mother during pregnancy, as put forward by Kristeva (1980: 239), is abundant. However, after her divorce and a silence of 6 years, the very symbol of the mother becomes a dubious matter.

The aggressive tone of the introductory work of the second phase is sustained by a reification of the word: it emulates the body in its energy and sublimates, as well as evokes, sexual aggression. Slaughter, castration, visions and nightmares become animated and the boundaries between vegetative, mineral and human existence are dissolved. Children's verse is utilised to erase the borders between the animate and the inanimate, emphasising the inseparability of nature and culture. Visionary and apocalyptic meet as the volksmoeder experiences God in orgasmic images. Continuity between great-grandmothers and poetesses who commit suicide are established. A torn uterus and dying children simultaneously affirm the forces of life and death. This transgression through the word, where mother and writer confronts the patriarchal world, may be read as a simulation of the Kristevan notion of the abject (Kristeva 1982: 13-14). The abject is a relationship to a boundary and represents what have been jettisoned out of that boundary. It is not a quality in itself, and threatens all identity. Kristeva describes it as a kind of narcissistic crisis when the child discovers that primary identification is an illusion. The very symbol of the maternal becomes representative of the struggle between primary and secondary identification.

The various attempts at defining the self in terms of other - the lover, other women or children – represent the defence against the narcissistic crisis of abjection. The fear of abandonment is warded off by numerous attempts at secondary identification. In this regard Krog's poetry and her feminist politics can be read as a process of selfpreservation. As abject subject she is nevertheless reminded, through motherhood, of the dual character of union and separation. The identity that is established through the child leads the mother to be conceptualised as the desire of the Other (Lacan 1986: 203-215). She exists for the sake of the other. The remarks by Afrikaans literary critics that the narcissistic tendency of Krog's earlier work is replaced by a greater social awareness thus seem to be an oversimplification. Krog's identification with female personalities projects rather a reunion with the mother's love. This Kristevan love enables the child to move from the mother's body to the mother's desire, which is commonly described as the desire of the Other (Oliver 1993: 85). Imaginary identification with the mother's body allows the child to loosen the real identification with the body which is necessary for the identification with her desire, represented by the desire for the fallus. Autonomy for the sexes lies in the effectiveness of a break with the mother's body. Primal repression of the mother's body is replaced by secondary repression: language.

Signification is derived from functioning as the fallus for the mother: by taking on social roles the woman becomes the fallus to her mother. The apparent narcissistic discourse characterised by

the repetition of family and child-images in Krog's poetry finds metaphoric expression in motherhood: the child recognises herself in the mother. The politics of the body knows, as Kristeva emphasises, that for the female the other is no phallic transcendental truth (Kristeva 1987: 262). The Other resides within her: she is the living or loving truth. Is the uniformity of the theme in Krog's work, the repetition of poetic rhetoric, not the indirect result of a self that seeks empathy, and thereby affirms narcissism as the Janus-face of culture? The female body thus remains a threat to the Symbolic order where the emphasis on difference is proclaimed.

Krog's verse is as much a defense against the abject mother who remains a phobic object, as a reminder of the origin of the speaking subject, i.e. the separation from the mother. By representing the creative act and procreation through the metaphor of the mother, Krog allays the fear of the devouring mother by attempting to replace it with the image of the nurturing mother. The giving and loving mother lives through others: language (art) is the effect of birth and the attempt to survive the separation. Through art Krog resuscitates herself and speaks of desire. The theme of the prophet in her work vouches for this oral thirst to signify and become, whilst the process of encountering others is a reminder of the search of one's own origin. The politics of identity embodies a constant pledge for selfassurance. Krog's poetry speaks the language of subject-formation through introjection and projection. Language as self-in-other.

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Meta-illness: Writing Beyond Cultural Metaphors of Illness in Dickinson and Fuller

TAMI DAVIDSON (*)

The eminent nineteenth century physician, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, said, «The man who does not know sick women, does not know women» (qtd. Showalter 330). In Victorian culture illness in women, especially «nervous» illness, was thought to be «rooted in woman's very nature» (Smith-Rosenberg 206), as if sickness and women were in some way interchangeable. I argue that this was one of the ways that the subversive elements of women's writing could be contained: if the artist was sick, so was her art.

Meaning and metaphor, as we now know, are complex products of both the subject's urge to express individuality and the culture's attempt contain or even erase individuality. As Susan Sontag affirms in *Illness as Metaphor*, «nothing is more punitive than to give disease a meaning - that meaning being invariably a moralistic one. Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash with significance» (58). What influenced this significance were cultural mores that prescribed a sick role for women, which was simultaneously a blessing and a curse. It was considered fashionable in the nineteenth century to look sickly, thin, and consumptive (Sontag 28). «By cultivating as much prostration as possible», Alice James knew her gaunt appearance gave her the look of refinement, which made her more interesting, especially since she lived in the shadow of her over-achieving brothers, William and Henry. The framing of women by cultural attitudes about illness ultimately undermined self-representation in writing.

Nevertheless, two women writers, Margaret Fuller and Emily Dickinson, co-opted, ignored, or subverted the roles of their cultural proscription and created their own metaphors. They took the metaphor of illness and used it in a way that went beyond societal descriptions and became liberatory. This subversive act I term «meta-illness»: it is a way to discuss how these women got beyond traditional definitions of illness that represented their culture and not themselves.

Although patriarchy was responsible for troping women as frail, feeble, and insipid, the medical community aided and abetted patriarchy. The two principal physicians who treated women and their nervous disease were Drs. George M. Beard and Silas Weir Mitchell, who publicly proclaimed that they operated under the assumption that many of their female patients suffered from nervous exhaustion or «neurasthenia». Beard defined neurasthenia in terms of the nineteenth century's most pervasive concerns – energy and control:

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Neurasthenia is a chronic, functional disease of the nervous system, the basis of which is the impoverishment of nervous force; deficiency of reserve, with liability to quick exhaustion, and a necessity for frequent supplies of force; hence the lack of inhibitory or controlling powers, physical and mental – the feebleness and instability of nerve action and the excessive sensitiveness and irritability, local and general, and the vast variety of symptoms, direct and reflex. The fatigue and pain that temporarily follow excessive toil or worry, of deprivation of food or rest, are symptoms of acute neurasthenia, from which the chronic form differs only in permanence and degree. «Nervousness» is really nervelessness. (36)

Here containment worked as a double bind: those afflicted with neurasthenia were either too active or not active enough, and only the doctor held the privilege of deciding what middle ground his patient should occupy. Even worse, neurasthenia encompassed a whole host of ailments, so patients could never be sure what to suspect about their own behavior. One day's headache could be another day's loss of appetite. Patients were discouraged from deciding for themselves what was healthy and what was morbid. Although neither Fuller nor Dickinson were diagnosed neurasthenic, they both represented themselves in writing as neurasthenic. Because the cultural proscription was so strong, they shared a common idea of representation, language and metaphor, which resulted in their thinking of themselves as being physically frail.

Dr. Mitchell also shaped culture by his prolific writings and prescriptive «rest cure». The rest cure (so prominently displayed Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, «The Yellow Wallpaper») involved constant bed rest, a plentiful, bland diet, and no stimulation of any kind, a regime that clearly required submission above all else:

... let such a woman avoid all forms of emotion. Her former standards of resistance apply no longer, and what once did not disturb will now shake her to the centre. A time comes, however, when she will do well to meet and relearn to bear calmly all the little emotional trials of life... For the nervous strong emotions are bad or risky, and from violent mirth to anger all are to be sedulously set aside. Calm of mind and quiet of body are what she most needs to aid the more potent measures of the physician. (*Doctor and Patient*, 130-1)

Unable to express emotions, even happy ones, women were forced into solitary confinement where even reality was defined by the physician. As Mitchell himself advised, «it then becomes the business of her physician to tell her what is real, what is unreal, what must be respected, what must be overcome or fought» (Mitchell 131). Yet even in the face of such authority, women found covert ways to subvert the good doctor's regimen. Ellen Bassuk argues that women patients could find more freedom in identification with the doctor than being pacified by a cure: «Their unwillingness or inability to form idealizing transferences to their physicians may have provided a vehicle for escaping traditional domestic roles. Their refusal to be “cured”», although painful and entailing its own costs, ensured greater personal growth and the potential for identifying and working through conflict rather than putting it to rest (150). And, although Fuller and Dickinson felt the pressures put on them by society to be ill (which by Victorian definitions meant «refined»), they created a meta-illness through their writing by subverting prescribed roles.

The pathological connection between emotion and health infiltrated both the private and public discourse of nineteenth-century women. Even Margaret Fuller reported feeling so overwhelmed by emotions that she required the care of a doctor at age twelve. She blamed her excitability on reading Virgil, which caused a red flush to appear on her forehead, a symptom that her father «attributed... to overheating [her]self» (5). Since her parents proclaimed «the fineness of [her] complexion destroyed», she rebelled and decided to be «bright and ugly» (5). Notice the strategic reasoning: imagination is paired with ugliness. She was willing to pay the price of the active mind. Not surprisingly, Fuller read Amariah Brigham's *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation*

and *Mental Excitement upon Health* (1832) and turned to him to fight «that which must be overcome» to regain health:

The summer of that year my forehead and indeed my whole system was pretty fairly exhausted of the vital fluid under the care of Dr Robbins – Thanks to his medicines, my nerves became calmed, flushes and headaches gradually disappeared – ... My wakefulness had always been troublesome to myself and others – I would now lie down in the middle of the day and sleep for hours... (5)

Although the cure for her nervousness seems to have been a narcotic, it was judged less damaging than a flush to the forehead; anesthetizing her «self» became desirable because she was «troublesome [even] to herself». What is curious here is Fuller's ability to ignore and conform all on the same page of the *Autobiographical Romance* with unselfconscious fluidity. She created a meta-illness (going beyond prescriptions of femininity) by writing metaphorically. The best examples of this subversive discourse are found in *The Magnolia of Lake Pontchartrain* and *Summer on the Lakes*.

In *The Magnolia of Lake Pontchartrain*, flowers represent the struggles of women in the nineteenth century to find a «voice»:

«As the rays of the morning sun touched me, consciousness returned, and I strove to speak, but in vain. Sealed were my fountains and all my heart-beats still. I felt that I had been that beauteous tree, but now only was – what – I knew not; yet I was, and the voices of men said, It is dead; cast it forth and plant another in the costly vase. A mystic shudder of pale joy then separated me wholly from my former abode. (48)

It is only when the flower is declared «dead» (the epitome of meta-illness) that she can go beyond the socially constructed «costly vase» of facade. When discarded by men, she can venture beyond cultural representation and reclaim a feminine identity free from depression, illness and, most of all, functional use in society: «Secret, radiant, profound ever, and never to be known, was she, many forms indicate and none declare her. Like all such beings she was feminine. All the secret powers are “Mothers”» (48) of invention.

In *Summer on the Lakes*, Fuller uses the persona of the character Mariana to describe what I think are cultural inscriptions on the body, based on what she says of her «fancy» in *Autobiographical Romance*. The description sounds identical to her childhood remembrance of herself:

This excitement, as may be supposed, was not good for her. It oftenest came on in the evening, and often spoiled her sleep. She would wake in the night, and cheat her restlessness by inventions that teased, while they sometimes diverted her companions... They consulted a physician, who said she would outgrow it, and prescribed a milk diet. (119)

Mariana, however, does come to a bad end. Because of her exuberant nature, her schoolmates make fun of her, causing her «terrible nervous affection» (124), and eventually she marries a man who becomes disenchanted with her because she is «not sufficiently occupied with what occupied those around her to come on the same level with them and embellish their hours» (127). Losing the love of her husband becomes too much for her, and «one long day she passed alone, and the thoughts and presages came too thick for her strength. She knew not what to do with them, relapsed into fever, and died» (129). Because Mariana is unable to conform, she is socially outcast and therefore must die. This may seem antithetical to feminist texts now, when death is punitive for nonconformist women, but for Fuller this story illustrated what happens to women who evade or defy hegemony. If nervousness and illness result because of a jarring clash of culture, death is imminent, whether it be death of the soul or death of the physical body. Would Fuller agree with Kate Chopin in her novella, *The Awakening*, that even suicide is more appealing than a repressive patriarchal society? Again, death is the ultimate expression of the meta-illness; it creates a disequilibrium, causing the reader to see beyond the surface of objective reality.

Another writer who causes disequilibrium is Emily Dickinson, not only in her poetry and letters, but in her personal life. Like certain illnesses whose origins are unknown and have mysterious co-determinants, so is the life of Dickinson a perennial slate upon which critics write cultural norms. It's as if some scholars see her work as the diagnosis of her symptoms, which include wearing white, remaining unmarried, and keeping to her room. Her prolific and highly creative year of 1862 *wants* to be tied by James Guthrie to her eye affliction, for which she received treatment some two years later (*Dickinson Studies*, 16). Illness, metaphor, and creativity are perniciously connected not only in nineteenth-century cultural constructs but in twentieth-century constructs as well. In another article validated by publication in *Dickinson Studies*, Ambreys Whittle writes a doctorly essay entitled, «Second Opinion: Diagnosing ED», which enumerates a list of illnesses that may help us «identify» her art: epileptic seizures, systemic lupus erythematosus, extrophia («walleyed»), and psychotic breakdown. Whittle sees Dickinson as having «COMPLEX AGORAPHOBIA, creative malady, and Bright's Disease» (his emphasis). Whittle cites various poems as indicators that she was suffering loss of control during an attack of agoraphobia:

The Moments of Dominion
That Happen on the Soul
And leave it with a Discontent
Too exquisite – to tell – (27)

That illness is metaphor is abundantly clear with this analysis, but he can argue this only by assuming that whatever secret rapture Dickinson withholds is nothing more than a fear of freedom (and a concomitant distrust of herself), when in fact the text implies that 1) it is a feeling too intense to be fixed by language, and 2) she doesn't want to tell us because she doesn't trust her audience. Whittle's reading of the poem does exactly what Sontag decries in her essay *Illness as Metaphor*. By making illness the grand scheme for her poetry, he «whittles» creative genius down to a subsidiary issue. He also accuses her of «creative malady», which is the «theory that the genius wants time to expand his ideas and write or otherwise put them into execution» (31). Now Dickinson is guilty of creative malingering, like Darwin, Freud, and Florence Nightingale (Whittle 31). Whittle peaks in his conjecture based on Nichols, who claims that Dickinson had Bright's Disease because «ED had lilies in her hand when she met T. W. Higginson chez lui. They served as a deodorant against the ammoniac smell» (31). Even a poetic gesture to a friend can be metaphorically transcribed into an illness. But even if these allegations were true, the poetic spark has been lost, because the body has become merely the catalyst and not the site of a fiery imagination. So I submit that even if Dickinson did suffer from agoraphobia, she went much further than a culturally proscribed recluse could: she wrote.

Only by taking the illness out of the artist can myopic interpretations be abandoned. In Dickinson's case she has been reduced to a demure woman in white whose sensitive psychology supersedes her work. In *The Landscape of Absence*, Inder Kher strongly rejects these kinds of interpretations, believing that «we should keep our eyes steady on the text because our responsibility is to interpret poetry and not the person» (3). This comment completely decontextualizes Dickinson, so that the subject was never there. I don't recommend either stance. I believe in biographical and historical contextualization, but not to the point that there is only one reading or only one controlling metaphor. To debate about the various interpretations of Emily Dickinson could fill an entire room with texts. So I would like to address how the writer observes her illness, not in terms of high metaphor as in poetry, but in her letters.

In a letter to Higginson in 1864, Dickinson remarks that she is ill: «Can you render my Pencil? The Physician has taken away my Pen» (L. 290). This is an interesting comment since she is still writing (so the doctor has not silenced her) and she has written many letters in pencil without comment on its efficacy. It seems as if she is telling the truth, «but telling it slant», about the advice doctors give to women patients. Almost twenty years later, in a letter to Mrs. Holland (her spiritual sister), she writes that «The Physician says I have “Nervous prostration”. Possibly I have - I do not know the Names of Sickness. The Crisis of the sorrow of so many years is all that

tires me -» (L. 873). For Dickinson, the process of naming the affliction is secondary to feeling the sorrow. Notice here that she doesn't call it nervous prostration or even sickness, but sorrow. Dickinson recognizes her illness as a sad emotion, rather than a physical ailment. In the nineteenth century distinctions of this kind were often blurred, fusing the mind and the body, each part being responsible for the health or sickness of the other.

In a letter written to Helen Hunt Jackson, a very public woman writer, Emily describes her fractured leg and her nervous prostration in high metaphoric terms:

Dear Friend,

I infer from your Note you have «taken Captivity Captive», and rejoice that the martial Verse has been verified. He who is «slain and smiles, steals something from the» Sword, but you may be harmed no more – I shall watch your passage from Crutch to Cane with jealous affection. From there to your Wings is but a stride – as was said of the convalescing Bird,

And then he lifted up his Throat

And squandered such a Note –

A Universe that overheard

Is stricken by it yet –

I, too, took my summer in a Chair, though from «Nervous prostration», not fracture, but take my Nerve by the Bridle now, and am again abroad – ... (L. 937)

As in the earlier letter she co-opts the advice of her physician but subverts the role she is to play as «good patient» by writing in such high metaphor that she can only be understood by another artist like Hunt, who also subverts the cult of domesticity by becoming a writer herself. Dickinson comically talks about the ability of taking her nerves «by the Bridle now, and am again abroad – ...» She complements the theory of meta-illness because she again reclaims her illness for herself; it becomes a liberation, rather than a prescriptive prison. Such a breaking away is a major theoretical challenge that escapes language perhaps because meta-illness replaces language by using the body as signifier.

Virginia Woolf in her essay, «On Being Ill», asks why illness isn't a major theme in literature:

Considering how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings, how astonishing, when the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are then disclosed, what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to view, what precipices and lawns sprinkled with bright flowers a little rise of temperature reveals, what ancient and obdurate oaks are uprooted in us by the act of sickness, how we go down into the pit of death and feel the waters of annihilation close above our heads and wake thinking to find ourselves in the presence of the angels and the harpers when we have a tooth out and come to the surface in the dentist's arm-chair and confuse his «Rinse the mouth – rinse the mouth» with the greeting of the Deity stooping from the floor of Heaven to welcome us – when we think of this, as we are so frequently forced to think of it, it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love and battle and jealousy among the prime themes of literature. (9)

This *one* sentence is overloaded with poetic metaphors about illness. To remove them would render it meaningless and dull. All language would be lackluster without metaphor anyway, but what metaphor does for illness is give the writer *agency to describe* what the feeling is like, which helps to heal rather than hurt. In writing about multiple sclerosis, Nancy Mairs, in her latest collection of essays, *Plaintexts*, describes the agency of writing about illness metaphorically:

I have had time to translate my madness into the rituals that keep me alive as well as dying. But at least I know now that depression and agoraphobia are metaphors, codes

in the cultural text in which I am embedded. Not entities. Not the inevitable fate of the woman who trespasses onto the page. I'm a writer. If I can make the change, I'm sure as hell going to revise them out of this script. (qtd. Couser 72-3)

Perhaps this is why Emily Dickinson had such a hard time naming her supposed nervous conditions, because to name them is a way of owning them, making them entities, culturally contextualized entities of which she wanted no part. So while I agree with Sontag that culturally constructed metaphors of illness can hurt people (perhaps even kill them, as is the case of AIDS), it may be an oversimplification to condemn all metaphoric language concerning illness. After all, *Illness as Metaphor* barely recognizes women writers except in passing. The same type of criteria can not be applied since the circumstances are so different. Women writers have been marginalized for more than just being ill: they were women, and they were writers. Women in the nineteenth century had a yoke to throw off first before they could write freely about illness, or anything else for that matter. That is why Fuller's Mariana had to die. She became representative for the power that culturally constructed myths can wield about women; it can kill them. Moreover, «the woman who makes an art of her illness accedes to her "place" in a patriarchal system, but she controls that place» (Herndl 126). And for writers like Fuller and Dickinson, they not only «control» that place, but they have strung together many different beads of language, not just for ornamentation but for posterity.

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On «The signification of the Phallus»

ROBERT SILHOL (*)

I

Why choose to discuss Lacan's paper on «The signification of the Phallus»? Besides all the unconscious reasons that you can think of,¹ the first other answer that comes to mind is that I found this text provided me with a perfect touchstone for testing my understanding of Freudo-lacanian theory. Indeed, Lacan's comparatively short paper uses and develops some of his most fundamental concepts. Confronted with his text, I could at last find out whether what I had so far learnt – thanks to Freud and others – made sense. Such was my reasoning: if what I make of psychoanalysis is «scientifically» correct, there is no reason I cannot come up with a clear notion of what is being discussed in Lacan's text. It is also, as you see, an attempt at showing Lacan can be read and understood, and understood before it can be studied and criticized if need be. Reading over and again the difficult, dense, baroque sentences which made up the 1958 paper (revised in 1966 for the publication of *Ecrits*), but also listening to them with a psychoanalytical ear, the same ear one should lend to any piece of literature, here is, then, what I make of it.

The paper opens with a brief discussion of castration and insists straight away on the importance of the «castration complex»: «Why must the human being assume the attributes of his sex through a threat, the threat indeed of privation?» (p.685)² What follows is an answer to this question. First, through a reflexion on language, which enables Lacan to form his own concept of «signifier» (*le signifiant*) – one of the two central elements of his paper –, and then, secondly, through a discussion of the phallus, also a concept. This takes us to a third part, or to a conclusion, which is a logical sequel of the demonstration that precedes: a reflexion on the relationship between the sexes and on the fetish (homosexuality and libido are also briefly alluded to in this final part).

In the first place, then, why bring phallus and signifier together? The answer is simple: because sex difference is in itself a system of representation (for the small child, for instance). As you know, as soon as we have two different terms: absence and presence, minus and plus, I and me, yes and no, we have the minimal basis of a linguistic structure. Another opposition – but I will presently discuss the term «opposition» – is provided by Saussure with his signified and his signifier. This is what,

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¹ You might also say that in this tussle with a father figure – and a formidable figure at that – I was out, if not to kill the father, at least to obtain admittance into a league not too inferior to his. Another equally valid analytical comment can be that Lacan's text provided an excellent material for anyone as interested in sex difference as I was.

² I am using the 1966 edition of *Ecrits*, Paris, Le Seuil.

looking for something in language that would help him understand the importance of the spoken word in psychoanalysis, Lacan chose to adopt, or rather, as we are going to see, to adapt. For his signifier, as has been pointed out many times, is not Saussure's. The whole matter would certainly deserve a long discussion and no doubt a separate paper; let me just try and summarize the issue here, as briefly as I can. Whereas in Saussure the signifier is a sound, the sound that will enable the small child to form a sign when it connects a signified with it (which you can also conceive as a representation of another order and even as an affect), with Lacan, a hierarchy is introduced, the signifier being the active part, the one determining effect, which submits, as it were, the signified, which is therefore only second to this signifier. Hence the inversion of the formula of the linguist $\downarrow \frac{\text{sié}}{\text{Snt}} \uparrow$ which becomes $\frac{\text{Snt}}{\text{sié}}$ pointing out what some have called, inappropriately, the lacanian subversion.

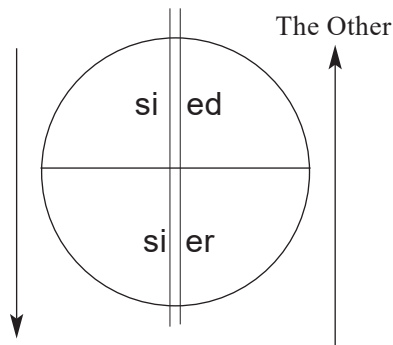
What does the inversion mean? It means that for Lacan the saussurian signifier is given, is received by the infant, is in a word a determinant (and this goes far beyond the social dimension of language, of course); «It speaks in man and his nature is woven by effects.» The lacanian subject is the «matter» of what «resounds» in him or her. And what resounds in him or her is the discourse of the Other – and I read this as «parents» or at least as the child's immediate environment –; thus not only does it speak in man, but what he says comes from the Other. Here is a quotation that sums up all this beautifully:

It speaks in the Other (...) and if it speaks in the Other, whether the subject hears it or not with his own ear, this is because it is here that the subject, thanks to a logical anteriority to any awakening to the signified, finds its signifying place. (p. 689)

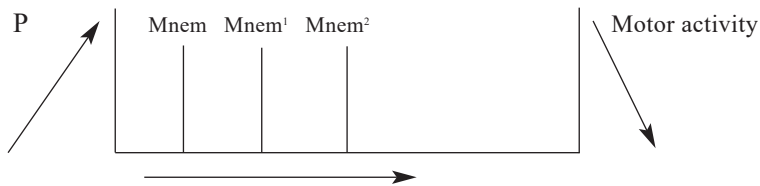
I have no problem with this formulation as a whole: it rightly insists on determining factors, it incites us to take into account the essential symbolical dimension of language. If we go down to details, however, it raises one question at least, and we must certainly try to clarify it.

I am referring to the «opposition» Lacan sees between signified and signifier. What is this «logical anteriority» of the signifier he insists upon? In plain language, how can the signifier – a sound, a noise –, which forms a sign when attached to a signified (which I read as an affect, that is to say a perception, a mental image), comes first? Does not the perception come first? Does not the infant feel before it can speak? Indeed it does; but what Lacan has in mind is not a particular word or sound, which would become meaningful when signified and signifier come together, but a general structure, the system which enables humans to speak and, above all, the place determination occupies in this system. And then, as far as I know, the linguist does not seem concerned with «what comes first». All he tells us is that a sign is the combination of a sound and of a mental representation (the mother's face, the father's presence or voice, food, the breast, the world). We may think Saussure's model implies some anteriority of the signified (mental image), but his diagram has two symmetrical arrows on each side, and a hierarchy between signified and signifier is not discussed by the linguist. On the other hand, if we leave the linguist's point of view and adopt that of the psychoanalyst, or even of the philosopher, it is not too difficult to realize that this signifier, the sound, we attach to a perception when we form a sign, is given us, comes from somewhere, a somewhere Lacan calls the Other. Had he accepted to be more specific – but this is 1958, do not forget –, Lacan might have said simply: the words we use are not, in the first place, labels society gives us to stick on things (hence his refusal of the linguist's term «sign»), but primarily what our parents and near relatives *tell us to say*, desire us to «repeat» in fact. Presently, when he discusses the phallus, this is the line of thinking he adopts, and you will see he is much clearer. The «logical anteriority» he stresses, simply points out, then, that the signifier – not so much as a sound, but as a concept for us – has its origin in the Other, or, if you wish, is a sound in the discourse of the Other, that is to say expresses unconscious desire.

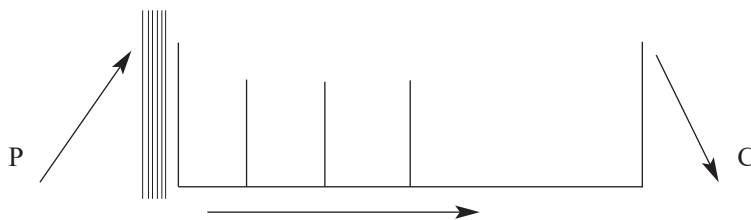
Perhaps I can now, in order to clarify the matter completely, reconcile the linguist and the psychoanalyst. As we have just seen, the formula of the linguist is $\downarrow \frac{\text{sié}}{\text{Snt}} \uparrow$, while Lacan's own formula is $\frac{\text{Sier}}{\text{Sied}}$ no circle, no arrows. If we accept that Lacan's signifier only refers to what is sent, given by the Other, and received by the infant, we can write:



which illustrates how the signifier of the linguist only partly corresponds to that of Lacan, and also how there is much of the signified that is dictated by the Other. Can this be so, though, and - if we forget for a moment that an affect can also come from the «inside» - isn't it true that there is a particular time when between infant and the world there is no intermediary? We may have an answer in Freud's illustration of the reflex arc between perception and consciousness, in the last part of *Die Traumdeutung*. Here is the diagram:



Now, thanks to Lacan, we can introduce a «first» mnemonic «filter», one that preceded in time – was anterior to – all the other memory-traces Freud mentions; the result being that to the above question about the intermediary between the infant and the world we can reply: «Yes, between the child and the world, and from the start, there is a mediation, the “desire” of the Other.»



To put it briefly, Lacan's signifier is Freud's first memory-trace, what I shall call an «inscription», a determination, in fact, which will have an effect on all the other events to come.

Again, I find no difficulty in considering Lacan as a genuine follower of Freud. What he has done is simply to carry on Freud's inquiry a step further, preserving the original structure.

In the end, Lacan's signifier is what, sent by the Other, inscribed by this Other into the subject, transforms what we have so far believed to be only a neutral affect (the world as felt) into a *representation*, that is to say into the personal way each of us receives, feels, sees, hears, smells, tastes the world. As can be seen, the signifier of the psychoanalyst represents, stands for, part of the linguist's signifier and signified. What Lacan stresses, here, before proceeding to the second part of his paper, is the splitting of the subject. *Spaltung*: I is split because he/she is the effect of someone else's desire. I is a signifier. (One may, of course, think of an original, primary *Spaltung*, a division

that would be there even before the alienation of my speech/desire in the Other occurs. It is in such an original division that I see the logical basis of psychoanalysis, its ontological dimension. Lacan's «I speak therefore I am split» (which is quite correct in itself), can then be completed or amended: «I am split, separated, therefore I represent (speak)... *and this divides me all the more.*»

It is when considering this primary splitting, *coupure*, *béance*, that the psychoanalyst and the philosopher can join forces.

II

Having specified how something «spoke» in the Other (first meaning of the term «signifier»), thus deciding of the place I was to occupy as a subject, Lacan carries on his analysis of this Other and answers the question he started out with: castration. Because castration belongs to the symbolical register, the phallus - which is not a fantasy, nor a part object, and is not an organ, clitoris or penis - is naturally defined as a signifier: something that represents. But represents what? The desire of the Other, that is to say of the parent. In what way and why? Because, to put it very briefly again, it is what the parent symbolically, and unconsciously, demands of the child. «Demand», *la demande*, in the lacanian system, expresses the fact that desire cannot be reduced to need. This can be illustrated with the sketch which will no doubt remind you of the relationship there is between «*énoncé*» and «*énonciation*», the latter clearly defining the place of the subject.



Now, «*l'homme ne peut viser à être entier*» (man cannot pretend to be complete, attain finitude), and sexual difference rates high among the reasons which cause humans to be, and feel, incomplete: you belong to one sex and not to the other. Perhaps, here, we could reproach Lacan with making too much of the difference between the sexes, insisting as he does in a way that might obscure the fact that we are incomplete in many ways, ontologically, as we saw. But it is a fact that sexual difference constitutes an essential chapter of our incompleteness, and then we remember he started with a question on castration. Coming from a psychoanalyst, his insistence can easily be understood. Also, there is so much in the chapter of gender difference that applies to representation, to the very structure of language and to the function of the Other, that we must admit his choice was an excellent one.

For there is much in sex difference and in its consequences that is archetypal; whether there are other chapters in the history of the infant with a similar importance – and I think there are – is matter for another discussion.

Confronted with this difference, in any case, the mother requires of the child what she «desires»; in short, the Other, here the mother, asks the infant to stand in the place of what she thinks she has lost.

It is this «demand» that makes of the infant a subject, because it defines its role. The phallus appears here as a privileged signifier because it is what the mother *first* asks of the child. And if you do not agree with Lacan because you think he oversimplifies the mother's unconscious wish and demand, circumscribing it as he does to gender difference, you must nevertheless admit that his reflexion enables him to come up with an archetypal structure where we can clearly make out,

on one hand, an incomplete parent and, on the other, an infant who is told what kind of a subject he/she is to be, that is to say how he/she will henceforth desire in its turn, or signify. Such indeed is the «instauration of the subject» by the signifier (*l'instauration du sujet par le signifiant*) (p. 692).

Now, a signifier – and here we might as well use the plain linguistic term of «sign» (as Lacan does, by the way, in one instance) – is not the «thing» and never will be. For the act of naming «contains» in itself, indeed is based upon, the absence of the thing. (A subject is nothing but a signifier, the consequence of this being that a subject can only be recognized, grasped, in its effects, is always, as we saw, a representation.) I wants(s) to be loved, but will only be loved as a signifier, again, as the representation of a (lost) object.

There are we reminded in passing of our *Spaltung*, splitting, *Urverdrängung* even. A splitting which Lacan primarily places in the fact that it is the Other who decides of our place and in our place. Alienation of the subject would do as well, I think, since our incompleteness appears first, but it is a fact that next in time to the original ontological division (which I read as *Urverdrängung*), a second splitting occurs in the alienation of the subject in language, that is in the desire of the Other.

Then follows the desire of the mother that the infant should complete her, should, in terms of the difference between the sexes, replace what she thinks she has lost.

Seduction, Chance and Unconscious Desire: An Episode from the *Memoirs* of Casanova

NANCY BLAKE (*)

My vices have always worked at my own expense, except in cases where I seduced, but seduction was never characteristic of me, for I never seduced except unwittingly, being seduced myself. (v 12, p. 109)

«The Signification of the Phallus» a short, but enigmatic text included in Lacan's *Ecrits* may be used as a psychoanalytic gloss not only on the episode we will be considering here but on the author, known, by name least, to every schoolboy, who has become the eponymous hero of the phallus in our culture, though a hero, Lacan would say, who always signifies a lack not generally understood. This paper will insist upon two fundamentals of Lacan's thought: (1) his distinction between the represented self or «I» and the subjectivity it both represents and misunderstands and (2) his theorizing of desire, especially here in its relation to unconscious knowledge.

Casanova is nineteen years old, he is dressed as an abby since his mother has found a place for him as the secretary of a cardinal. In fact however, he is at this moment without a real situation since he has fallen from favor after hiding a girl in his room in the monastery. He is obliged to leave Rome and the good cardinal asks him where he would like to go. In other words he is out of a job, but in lieu of a terminal contract, the cardinal has given him the appearance of a diplomatic mission as a means of quitting Rome gracefully. Casanova pronounces the first name which comes to his mind without knowing why, it is Constantinople. Later when thinking about it, Casanova concludes that it must have been «the occult power of my genie» which made him suggest this destination. He is traveling with a letter from the cardinal to a pacha and has plenty of money which is however his severance pay and when it is gone there is no assurance of any more. In fact the episode we are going to examine is situated at one of many moments of career change for the hero of the *Mémoires*.

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At Ancona, where he stops at an inn, Casanova insists on a big meal. The innkeeper tells him that during Lent all Christians must fast. Remember that the nineteen year-old adventurer is dressed in the robes of a cleric. Casanova replies that the Pope has dispensed him from fasting, but the innkeeper does not believe him. Although the innkeeper's attitude is far from unreasonable, Casanova becomes very angry and insulting: he even threatens violence. As they are arguing, another guest of the inn comes out of his room to make peace and then invites Casanova to listen to some music, since the family of the leading soprano of the theater is lodged at the same inn.

In the room with an invalid mother are two young girls and two boys, the eldest sixteen or seventeen, is presented as a castrato called Bellino. Ancona is under papal jurisdiction and, in all the pope's domains, women are not allowed on stage. Bellino's beauty is such that Casanova immediately decides that he must be a woman. In his own words: «I got it into my head that he must be a girl. I was so sure that I did not at all attempt to fight the desire he inspired in me.»

Before analyzing this short episode where the nature of desire as it articulates with sexual identity will be questioned, it should be noted that uncertainty as to gender is a constant in the *Memoirs*. About a year after this episode, Casanova has come back to Venice and by chance been able to save the life of an elderly senator. It is another case of disguise and usurped identity, for here, as elsewhere Casanova pretends to a medical knowledge he does not really possess. He thus becomes the quasi-adopted son of the senator, the closest thing to an identity the adventurer has ever had. The senator lives with two other elderly patricians and Casanova maintains his power over the three of them by foretelling the future with the help of his genie. What interests us at the moment is his language in warning a busybody who was trying to arrange a marriage for one of his protectors. «Remember that as long as I live with my three friends they will have *no other wife but me*. As far as you are concerned get married if you wish, but if you want us be friends give up this idea of debauching them» (emphasis mine). It is of course comical that the great seducer should call marriage «debauchery», but it is more surprising that the phallic hero considers heterosexual union off limits for his foster fathers and insists on embodying the role of the «wife» for all three of them.

In this paper I would like to attempt to articulate the notions of chance, desire and knowledge, keeping in mind the enigmatic remark of Lacan: «Il m'est arrivé d'appeler *savoir* la jouissance de l'Autre.» (I have come to call knowledge the jouissance of the Other. *Le Séminaire*, XVII, p. 12) In the famous definition of desire in «The Signification of the Phallus», «desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*)», Lacan seems to be commenting Casanova's frustrated attempt to recognize himself in his desire.

Bellino, presented as a castrato, a mutilated male, dressed as, and playing the part on stage of a woman, is actually, thinks Casanova, a woman, playing the part of a man, playing the part of a woman. This idea fascinates him. It is no doubt relevant to note that Casanova is the son of actors, that he is never so much at home as in the back stages of all the theaters of Europe, and that common consent to illusion in the case of the castrato, comparable to that which we must suppose in analyzing the belief of the spectator in Shakespeare's heroines, this repudiation of conscious knowledge, is central in his writing. Reading the episode, however, it is interesting to note the way in which the two protagonists proceed in their strategies of seduction.

The morning after their first meeting, Bellino appears at Casanova's door to offer him the services of his brother Petronius since Casanova has no valet. This Petronius, Casanova discovers, is a professional homosexual. The hero easily discourages his advances without insulting the boy. He then attempts to examine Bellino's conformation only to be rebuffed. Later though, as he is ready to retire for the night, Cecile the twelve-year-old sister presents herself at his door. She is charming and Casanova has no intention of turning her away. «However», he confesses, «I had not had the time to desire her». In the morning he gives her money. But now the eleven-year-old sister Marina arrives saying that she loves Casanova and, always impartial, he promises to spend the next night with her. Bellino, whose own gender identification is at this point uncertain, seems to be

testing that of Casanova offering him his brother and then his two sisters as possible objects of desire.

In the case of Casanova however, the ambiguity concerning gender is not apparently at issue, yet the hero takes advantage of every occasion to parade his phallic identification, almost as if there were a doubt. The desire provoked by Bellino seems in fact, to put identity to the test. When Bellino seems to be leading him on, only to refuse the last favors, Casanova is perplexed: «I was burning with anger, yet unable to despise him for I would have had begin by despising myself.» Taking a walk with Bellino on the port, he meets a Greek slave woman he had courted in a previous episode, who takes advantage of a momentary absence of her master to throw herself on the hero. Casanova is pleased that the Greek has given Bellino, who was obliged to stand by and witness the scene, the idea that he is irresistible. He says that he is glad to inform Bellino, who must be a girl, that he attaches very little importance to the «great affair» and that it is therefore useless to make a big deal about it.

Bellino is to accompany Casanova as far as Rimini on the morrow and has promised to clear up the mystery about his sexual identity before the end of the day. But on the pretext that Marina is waiting, Bellino puts his revelations off. After a pleasant night with Marina, Casanova comes back to his obsession with Bellino. In a tussle he believes that he has discovered that Bellino is a man, but «a despicable one, as much because of his degradation as because of his shameful calm at a moment when I should have seen the evidence of his emotion.» This is the encounter with the castrato, he who must be outside of the economy of desire. Casanova closes his door disgusted but perplexed: «What more did I want? Alas! I tried to think, but found nothing.»

The next day in the coach with Bellino, Casanova has doubts. He has seen yet he does not believe his eyes. The desire for a feminine body which is perfect, without flaw, unmarked, but also complete, is ever present in the *Memoirs*. This emphasis on perfection maintains the belief in a maternal phallus, a fantasy which upholds the subject's denial of his own castration. This is, of course, the definition of perversion, *die Verleugnung*, the denial of one's own fate as incomplete.

In fact when Bellino does reveal himself to be Thérèse, a beautiful woman obliged to act the part of castrato in order to earn a living as a singer, Casanova is overjoyed. Yet still something is missing. He requests her to show him the prosthesis she had used when he thought he had seen she was a man. Wearing the prosthesis, Thérèse is infinitely more interesting. Before, when Casanova hoped that Bellino was an impostor, he offered the singer one hundred sequins to spend the night with him. Now that he has discovered so much more, Casanova is determined to join his fate to hers in marriage.

The proposal is however accompanied by a confession that the young monk is penniless. The *Memoirs* always present a pendulum swinging between the pursuit of love, and the desire for money. Money is the power to spend it, to spend it to obtain pleasure. Casanova is never interested in anything else. The phallic value of money is only invested in its transformation into *jouissance*. In the Author's Preface we find Casanova confessing to «emptying the purse of my friends to satisfy my fancies.» And he continues, «I might think myself guilty if I were rich now, but I have nothing. I have squandered everything, it is my comfort and my justification.» As Lacan always insisted, «jouissance» is something that can be bought and if it is paid for it exists. At that moment it is urgent to spend it, to waste it, to lose it. Nothing is more abhorrent than its possession. (see *Séminaire, livre XVII L'Envers de la psychanalyse*)

Apparently Casanova has forgotten his need to «squander everything» in the face of his discovery of a perfect being, the phallic woman, for he decided to marry Thérèse. And when Thérèse-Bellino agrees to the proposal of marriage, it is in these terms: «If you fear losing me to change, marry me and your rights over me will become legal ones. I do not say that, as husband I shall love you more; but the title of wife would flatter me, and we would have a good laugh about it.» As is usual in the *Memoirs*, each time the story line confronts the sacred it is interrupted by laughter.

According to Thérèse, marriage is a response to the fear of change, inconstancy. One immediately thinks of the loss of desire. However, we are in a world of actors and impostors. On the other hand, the laws regulating marriage are among the most ancient known to humanity and thus must be seen as a response to fundamental anxieties. In this case marriage seems to be the refusal of any metamorphosis. This refusal is of course essential to any society which admits a hierarchy since the outlawing of metamorphosis prevents a given class from attaining equality or family relationship to another.

As Casanova is commenting the eternal refrain of this theatrical family's mother «*Dio proverà*», he remembers and quotes the prayer which, according to Horace, Roman thieves addressed to their patron goddess. Casanova says he is not really surprised and understands the faith in Providence of those who live in transgression. This episode and many others in the *Mémoires*, is one fraught with contradiction, or rather with disavowal. «I know I am prostituting my children», the theatrical mother seems to be saying, «but I believe Casanova is a gentleman!» «I know I am attracted to a castrato», Casanova tells us, but I «need to believe he is really a woman.» And what about the genie who suggested the word «Constantinople»? Surely Casanova only uses the genie to fool others. Why then does he feel the need to believe in the benevolence, of chance, or Providence, or the genie?

All of these questions come down to the question of belief – for whom is the actor performing?

In «The Signification of the Phallus», Lacan theorizes the «signifier of signifiers». The phallus is ultimately that in which I must believe in order for anything to make sense. In conclusion, let us go back to the introduction to this episode. Casanova arrives in Ancona, where the seafood is better than meat, and he arrives dressed as a monk, demanding a dinner with meat during Lent. In other words, he parades demands that others can easily refuse. In answer to the objections of the innkeeper, he says that the Pope has given him permission not to fast. Given his healthy appearance, the innkeeper is right to have doubts. In fact we know from a previous episode that Casanova has had a talk with the Pope in which he informed the Holy Father that he preferred meat to fish and the Pope, laughing, gave him a dispensation. This lesson of the Pope's given the nineteen-year-old adventurer at the outset, will never be learned despite a lifetime of experimentation: «You are responsible for your desire. You are your desire.» Casanova, like so many of us, will spend a lifetime pursuing a desire which he cannot identify for it seems to depend upon the definitions of others. Here we have once again come up against the impossible in the formula of Lacan: «The analyst is authorized by himself.»

Narcissistic Issues in Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*

ROLAND A. PIERLOOT (*)

In the psychoanalytic approach to a literary work we are looking for symbolic representations, corresponding to psychoanalytic assumptions on intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning. With regard to «narcissism» and «narcissistic issues» we are confronted with a problem because the term «narcissism» refers to a psychodynamic impulse as well as to distorted expressions of this dynamism. It is the symbolization of the latter in a literary text which is the subject of psychoanalytic literary criticism directed at narcissistic issues. Such a study is based on the conceptualizing of psychodynamic foundations and manifestations of narcissistic disorders, by psychoanalytic authors. In Freud's writings the concept of narcissism appeared only in the middle and late years of his career. In his 1914 essay *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, he opposed ego-libido against object-libido (p. 76). Since then the subject of narcissism earned a steady growing importance in psychoanalytic theories. The specific character of the «self» has been thoroughly elaborated in the work of Hartman (1956) and Jacobson (1964). Freud's notion of narcissistic object-choice has been further developed in the theories of Kohut (1971) and Kernberg (1975) on narcissistic object-relationships.

The interest in symbolization of narcissistic issues in literary works started with the study of Rank (1925) on «the double» in which he linked this phenomenon in the works of authors such as Goethe, Hoffman, Poe, Dostojevsky, Wilde and others with narcissistic urges. He paid particular attention to the narcissistic characteristics of the protagonist in Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. This novel was also the subject of several later psychoanalytic studies (Grinstein, 1963; Kavka, 1975; Green, 1979). Klein (1955) devoted an extensive analysis to *Si j'étais vous* by Julien Green. Layton and Schapiro (1986) collected a number of essays on narcissism in literary texts and Berman (1990) explored the subject in some nineteenth and twentieth century British novels.

According to Berman, in fiction: «Narcissistic issues exist on four separate but interrelated levels: fictional character, text, author and reader» (p. 49). Every psychoanalytic interpretation of a literary text is a personal interpretation depending on the openness and attitude of the reader towards the phantasy-material conveyed by the author. With regard to narcissism this attitude should be analogous to the countertransference elicited by a narcissistic transference. The text

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being the child of the author's imagination, we can assume that his personality and/or life circumstances contribute to the representation of narcissistic personality organizations and interactions. Insofar as biographical data are available, it is interesting to verify this assumption. We would prefer to replace the terms «fictional character» and «text», mentioned in the definition by Berman, by «content and form of the text». The status of a fictional character is a controversial subject (see Hochman, 1985). We consider a fictional character as an imaginary representation of a living human being. As such, human psychological characteristics can be attributed to a character as far as these are based on the content of the text. But the content of a text contains more than the characters; there is the plot, the background and meaning of events and interactions. Also formal characteristics of the text, such as the structure of the narrative, the choice of terms and tropes etc. should be taken into account.

In another context (Pierloot, 1994) we focused on the idealization of the female protagonist and the representation of God in *The End of the Affair* by Graham Greene. In this study, we will try to offer a more encompassing view of the narcissistic issues with respect to the biographical background, the content and some formal characteristics of the text.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The novel was published in 1951 and Greene started writing it at the end of 1948. He was 44 years old and was generally recognized as a celebrated writer. Moreover the success of the film *The Third Man* made him world-famous. But he felt himself imprisoned in his success. In his autobiography, he states about that period: «The slow discovery by a novelist of his individual method can be exciting, but a moment comes in middle age when he feels that he no longer controls his method; he has become its prisoner. Then a long period of ennui sets in: it seems to him that he has done everything before. He is more afraid to read his favourable critics than his unfavourable, for with terrible patience they unroll before his eyes the unchanging pattern of the carpet» (Greene 1980, p. 134). He read *Great Expectations*. «I had never before found Dickens a very sympathetic writer, but now I was captivated by the apparent ease with which he used the first person. Here seemed an escape from the pattern, a method I had not tried» (pp. 134-135). This choice of *Great Expectations* as a model for a new pattern of writing is intriguing. Berman (1990) labels this novel «a parable of the narcissistic condition» (p. 125). Was Greene only attracted by the use of the first person in this novel or did his state of uncertainty and looking for new forms of expression make him also more sensitive for the narcissistic elements in the novel?

For a writer like Greene who identified explicitly with his books, the search for new patterns of writing undoubtedly had repercussions on his self-representation. But, as it is exposed in *The Greene Trilogy* (B.B.C. Television, 1993), at that time he also experienced a turmoil in his personal life. His marriage had gone on the rocks but it was only in 1952 that it came to a definitive separation; he never divorced. He lived alone in an apartment in London and had started a stormy affair with the American Catherine Walston, the wife of a diplomat. She is the «C» to whom *The End of the Affair* is dedicated. Kohut (1972) points out that periods of transition demanding «a reshuffling of the self, its change and its rebuilding, constitute emotional situations which reactivate the period of the formation of the self» (p. 367) and related narcissistic problems. The stated biographical data incite us to assume that at the time he wrote *The End of the Affair*, Greene passed through such a period of transition and that his narcissistic preoccupations are reflected in this novel. As William Igoe states in *The Greene Trilogy*: «Bendrix has substantial slice of Graham in him» (B.B.C. Television, 1993).

THE CONTENT OF THE NOVEL

The setting of the novel is London during the war and the immediate post-war period (an image of destruction, confusion and uncertainty reflecting the state of mind of the narrator). The female protagonist, Sarah, is married to Henry Miles, a Senior Civil Servant in London. In their marriage sexual intercourse had become extinct since many years but she kept «an enormous loyalty» to him. To satisfy her sexual desires she takes pleasure wherever it is to be had, but just before the war she meets the novelist Maurice Bendrix, the narrator of the novel, and he becomes her unique lover. Still, he is haunted by the fear that one day she will leave him for another man. His possessive attitude and jealousy lead to frequent quarrels and sometimes violent arguments. «I refused to believe that love could take any other form than mine: I measured love by the extent of my jealousy, and by that standard of course she could not love me at all» (Greene 1951, p. 56). When after an airraid in the war, she does no longer want to see him his so-called love turns into resentment against Sarah and a possible new lover. Nearly two years later, after the war, when he meets Henry who confides to him that Sarah is often away in the evening, Bendrix's jealousy flares again and he hires a detective to spy on her. He meets Sarah again but she avoids intimate contacts with him. By Sarah's diary, stolen by the detective, her viewpoint on the events of the last two years is rendered. So it is revealed that, when Bendrix and Sarah were together during the airraid in the war, he was knocked unconscious underneath a door. Sarah, believing that he was dead, promised God that she would give up seeing Bendrix if He restored him to life. Given the fact that Bendrix apparently presented only a temporary unconsciousness, her request was immediately granted. Although her love for Bendrix remained as strong as ever, she did not see him for eighteen months. She was caught in a continuous struggle between on one hand her longing for peace by identifying her pain with the pain of God in the image of the suffering Christ and on the other hand the need to deny the existence of God (implying the validity of her promise). More and more her love of Bendrix and her love of God were merging.

After reading the diary, Bendrix is convinced to regain Sarah as his possession. He pursues her in a cheeky way till he finds her sick and miserable sitting in a church. A few days later she dies of pneumonia and after her death Bendrix finds a letter in which she declares that she is becoming a Catholic and prays to God He won't keep her alive. But Bendrix's possessive bond with Sarah didn't stop with her death. He insists on the cremation of her body. «I wanted her burnt up, I wanted to be able to say, Resurrect that body if you can. My jealousy had not finished, like Henry's, with her death. It was as if she were alive still, in the company of a lover she had preferred to me... it was as though by dying she had robbed me of part of myself» (p. 148). A distinct formulation of her meaning as a self-object. Finally Henry offers Bendrix the solution to perpetuate the bond with Sarah; he can move in with Sarah's widower in the house where Sarah lived.

The reading of *The End of the Affair* evokes a countertransference reaction of being confronted with an account imbued by narcissistic arrogance. Bendrix cannot hide his egocentric narcissistic attitude. De Vitis (1986) notices: «Indeed it is Bendrix who is both bitch and fake, for he is jealous, conniving, sadistic and foolish. One of the flaws of the novel is quite simply the fact, sexual matters excluded, that it is difficult to understand why Sarah loves him» (p. 95). He started the affair with Sarah with «the cold blooded intention of picking the brain of a civil servant's wife» (Greene 1951, p. 5) as material for a planned novel. He describes openly his need of superiority. «I don't know whether psychologists have yet named the Cophetua complex, but I have always found it hard to feel sexual desire without some sense of superiority, mental or physical» (p. 23). He is a jealous and possessive lover: «This woman, whom I loved so obsessively that if I woke in the night I immediately found the thought of her in my brain and abandoned sleep, seemed to give up all her time to me. And yet I could feel no trust: in the act of love I could be arrogant, but alone I had only to look in the mirror to see doubt, in the shape of a lined face and a lame leg – why me?» (p. 48). In

this passage we find an illustration of Kohut's (1972) view «that the ubiquitous sensitivity about bodily defects and shortenings can be effortlessly explained within the vicissitudes of the libidinal cathexes of the grandiose self and, in particular, of the grandiose exhibitionistic body-self» (p. 374).

Bendrix prefers to speak of a love-affair rather than of love, because this makes him less vulnerable. His pride is particularly hurt when Sarah avoids meeting him; «if I could have her once more – however quickly and crudely and unsatisfactorily – I would be at peace again: I would have washed her out of my system, and afterwards I would leave her, not she me» (Greene 1951, p. 25). He would have liked Sarah to say that their affair would never end, that one day they should marry. «I wouldn't have believed her, but I would have liked to hear the words on her tongue, perhaps only to give me the satisfaction of rejecting them myself» (p. 27).

He is jealous and extremely self-centered. He needs Sarah only to complete the deficiencies experienced in himself. Not a single time is he able to empathize with her. When he learns by her diary that she had sacrificed, in her belief of a miracle, her desire and the pleasure of meeting him for his life and his happiness, this evokes only his jealousy and contempt. In agreement with the view of Kernberg (1975, p. 229), there is no sadness or mourning when he has lost her but only anger and resentment. Sarah clearly represents an archaic self-object to Bendrix and as a such she is idealized. In spite of all his declarations of hate, nearly always counterbalanced by the association with love or referring to self-pity («my self-pity and hatred walked hand in hand» (Greene 1951, p. 58)), he idealizes her loyalty to her husband as well as her self-surrender to himself; «sometimes it seemed to me that her abandonment touched that strange mathematical point of endlessness, a point with no width, occupying no space» (p. 52). Bendrix needs Sarah as an idealized self-object. When she avoids meeting him, he cannot give up the relationship and his declarations of hate are a way of continuing it. He is very pleased when Henry's unburdenings offer him a pretext to hire a detective who personifies a link between him and Sarah. Living with Henry after Sarah's death also means an opportunity to perpetuate the bond with her.

FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NOVEL

As formal characteristics enhancing the narcissistic colouring of the novel, we mention the structure of the narrative as a first person account with an intercalated diary and the recurrence of the terms love and hate turning up like a refrain in the text.

The professional author Bendrix writes the account of his unsuccessful love affair from the point of view of a frustrated narcissistic man, who is in the centre of all events, and idealization of his mistress, functioning as an archaic self-object, is a natural manifestation of his narcissistic outlook. The narrator is also very selective in the construction of his story. He begins with the new encounters of Henry and Sarah in 1946. His meetings with Sarah, before and during the war, are rendered as a retrospective account alternating with the reproduction of the events of 1946. In this way the marked importance of this relationship for his self-esteem gets repeatedly emphasized. On the other hand, he devotes only two pages to the period of eighteen months that Sarah avoided seeing him. But here Greene takes the relief of his narrator and, by interpolating Sarah's diary into Bendrix's story, he expands the idealization on a natural level to an idealization on a supernatural level. Sarah's intercalated diary and last letter, picturing her as a personification of supreme self-sacrifice, uniting human love and devotion to God, also matches the narcissistic outlook of the narrator. The loss of his mistress was provoked by her supreme love for him and only God was able to defeat him in a rivalry conflict. The introduction of this supernatural context roused many criticisms. However, it cannot be denied that in this way Greene depicted Sarah as a symbol of supreme love and enhanced her idealization in agreement with Bendrix's archaic narcissistic needs.

At the beginning of the novel the narrator announces: «So this is a record of hate far more than of love...» (Greene 1951, p. 1). As remarked by Lodge (1966, p. 33) the words love and hatred

occur in closed conjunction on nearly every page of the novel. «If I could I would write with love, but if I could write with love, I would be another man: I would never have lost love» (Greene 1951, p. 7). Further, hate and love are equated: «Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love: it even produces the same actions» (p. 24). «It is odd to find myself writing these phrases as though I loved what in fact I hate» (p. 47). Later he recognizes: «When I began to write I said this was a story of hatred, but I am not convinced. Perhaps my hatred is really as deficient as my love» (p. 58). And still later: «When I began to write our story down, I thought I was writing a record of hate, but somehow the hate has got mislaid...» (p. 141). «Hate and love are different sides of the same coin; and, when the coin is set spinning, the differences are impossible to distinguish» (De Vitis, 1986, p. 97). This excessive use and abuse of the terms love and hate fits in with a narcissistic attitude in which genuine differentiated feelings are lacking. It is a way of boasting, disguising an absence of real mature feelings. In the context of this novel both the terms love and hate refer only to a primitive relationship with an archaic self-object. Both the statements of hate and love are illusory means to confirm the bond with this idealized self-object. For Bendrix, proclaiming hate is only a way of protecting himself against the unbearable pain resulting from the loss of this self-object. This implies that his so-called «hate» does not prevent him from idealizing Sarah. Eventually the narrator gives account of it when he states that his hate as well as his love is deficient. His declarations of love and hate are merely expressions of his need to preserve a vital link with Sarah. «My hatred could believe in her survival...» (Greene 1951, p. 173).

CONCLUSION

Biographical data suggest that, at the time he wrote the novel, Greene passed through a period of reshuffling of the self, implying narcissistic problems. The content of the novel evokes a countertransference reaction of being confronted with an account imbued by narcissistic arrogance. The narrator, Bendrix, demonstrates an egocentric possessive attitude towards his mistress Sarah. He needs her as an archaic idealized self-object. Not a single time is he able to empathize with her. When he learns by her diary that she had sacrificed, in her belief of a miracle, her desire and the pleasure of meeting him for his life and his happiness, this evokes only his jealousy and contempt. Also some formal characteristics contribute to the narcissistic colouring of the novel. On one hand the first person account allows the narrator to present himself at the centre of all events. On the other hand, the intercalating of Sarah's diary and last letter, depicting her as a symbol of supreme love, enhances her idealization in agreement with Bendrix's archaic narcissistic needs. The excessive use and abuse of the terms love and hate, turning up like a refrain in the text, fits in with a narcissistic attitude in which genuine differentiated feelings are lacking. The convergence of all these elements incites us to interpret *The End of the Affair* as a symbolization of a narcissistic object-relationship.

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Die Narzißmus-Problematik in Ulrich Woelks Roman *Freigang*

WALTER SCHÖNAU (*)

I

Ulrich Woelks preisgekrönter Roman *Freigang* (1990) besteht aus den Notizen des jungen Physikers Frank Zweig, der nach einem Nervenzusammenbruch in einer psychiatrischen Klinik aufgenommen worden ist. Er wird von einem älteren Psychiater namens Früger behandelt. Früger hat ein Gutachten über diesen Fall abzugeben und Zweig schreibt seine Notizen in erster Linie für ihn. Ihr Motto lautet: «Wenn es keinen Gegner gäbe, müßte man einen erfinden» (8). Zweig erlebt seinen Therapeuten Früger als Gegner. Denn Zweig behauptet, seinen Vater umgebracht zu haben und verlangt nichts anderes als «ein ordentliches Verfahren» (9) vor einem Gericht, weil er ja gestanden hat, keine psychiatrische Beobachtung und schon gar keine therapeutische Behandlung. So empfindet er seine Beziehung zu Früger als einen Kampf.

Die siebzehn (nicht nummerierten) Kapitel des Romans alternieren zwischen Notizen über die Erzählgegenwart, die den Verlauf des Klinikaufenthalts aus der Sicht des Patienten dokumentieren, und Notizen über die Erzählvergangenheit, die zusammen so etwas wie eine Anamnese darstellen. Der Leser wird darin informiert über die Geschichte der Liebesbeziehung des jungen Physikstudenten zu Nina, einer Germanistikstudentin mit feministischen Anschauungen und einer besonderen Liebe für das Theater und das Theaterspielen. Orte der Handlung sind die Universitätsstadt Tübingen in den achtziger Jahren und ein Bauernhof in Norditalien.

Zweigs Hauptbeschäftigung in der Anstalt ist die Herstellung und ständige Neugruppierung einer Reihe von Zetteln, auf die er Stichworte zu seinem Fall notiert hat, wie «Nina», «Gutachten», «Stolz» oder «Vater». So, indem er jeweils ein zentrales Motiv in konzentrischen Kreisen mit anderen verwandten Motiven umgibt, sucht er nach einem System, nach einer Ordnung seiner chaotischen inneren Welt, als handelte es sich um eine wissenschaftliche Aufgabe. Dieses Puzzlespiel, das er selbst auch sein «Mosaik» nennt, versteht er selbst als den Versuch, den mutmaßlichen Inhalt von Frügers diagnostischem Gutachten, an dem er nicht mitarbeiten will, auf eigene Faust zu rekonstruieren. Für den Leser bedeutet es eher die konkrete Metapher für den Versuch, seinen eigenen «Fall» zu verstehen.

Berichtet wird unter anderem von Zweigs Autofahrt nach Italien im Frühjahr, um Nina zu besuchen. Wie er aber in diesen Erinnerungen sich selbst betrügt, geht etwa aus der rationalisierenden Begründung hervor, mit der er sich sein nicht einmal durch eine kurze Kaffeepause unterbrochenes Fahren erklärt:

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Ich hätte auch anhalten können, da relativ zu einer zehn- bis zwölfstündigen Fahrt eine Kaffeepause von zwei, drei Minuten nichts ist. Daß ich es nicht tat: Vielleicht eine subtile Wirkung des Trägheitsgesetzes, das jeder Änderung des Bewegungszustandes Widerstand entgegensetzt, selbst wenn es sich nur darum handelt, die Bremse zu betätigen (65).

Um keinen Preis will er sich selbst gestehen, daß er sich einfach nach Nina sehnt. Diese verbringt einige Monate mit einer Liebhaber-Theatergruppe in Klausur auf einem alten Bauernhof, um mit Improvisationsübungen und Selbsterfahrungsexperimenten eine Aufführung vorzubereiten. Die Gruppe veranstaltet während seines Besuches einen Casinoabend mit Roulettespiel, teils als Unterhaltung, teils aber auch als Theaterprobe. Als Zweig, der sein Studium inzwischen erfolgreich beendet hat, dann von Nina erfährt, daß sie dort einmal mit einem anderen Mann aus der Truppe, dem «Astrologen», geschlafen hat, verläßt er in der Frühe den Ort und fährt allein nach Deutschland zurück. Es findet keine Aussprache, keine Versöhnung mit Nina statt. Sie wirft ihm seine «Lebensfeindlichkeit» (194) vor, die Beziehung geht in die Brüche. Zweig vereinsamt, fängt zu trinken an, gerät in eine schwere Depression und geht eines Abends, völlig betrunken, zu Nina. Offenbar im Wahn, dort seinen Rivalen, den «Astrologen» zu finden, schreit er besinnungslos: «Wo ist er?» Er greift sie an, zerreißt ihr Nachtkleid, sie weicht vor ihm zurück und schreit um Hilfe. Zweig notiert als seine Erinnerung an diese Krisenszene: «Ich stürze, noch bevor sich einer bewegt. Als ich im Krankenhaus erwache, gebe ich an, meinen Vater getötet zu haben» (197).

Soweit die Vorgeschichte bis zur Einlieferung in die Klinik, wie sie vom Leser aus den Notizen rekonstruiert werden kann. Der Roman ist also wie ein analytisches Drama gebaut; als er anfängt, ist die Katastrophe schon geschehen und die Handlung besteht in der Rekonstruktion der Vorgeschichte. Das erinnert auch an den Bau von Kriminalgeschichten, eben der Gattung, die dem Schüler Frank Zweig sowohl sein erstes Erfolgserlebnis wie auch seine erste Kränkung besorgte. Denn in der Schulzeit schrieb er solche Geschichten, die er in der Klasse vorlesen durfte. Sein Vater aber zeigte sich davon nicht beeindruckt. Zweig erscheint im Roman als der Protagonist in einem phantasierten Ödipus-Drama. Denn im Gegensatz zu dem des Ödipus erweist sich sein Vatermord als ein Wahngebilde und steht sein Schuldgeständnis ganz am Anfang. Am Schluß widerruft er es. Der Widerruf erscheint als Ergebnis der Anstaltsperiode.

Die Kapitel mit den ungeraden Zahlen, die die Ereignisse während des Klinikaufenthaltes festhalten, spiegeln und wiederholen nun in mancher Hinsicht den Verlauf der Geschichte seiner Beziehung zur Freundin. Denn in der Anstalt findet er in der Schwester Leonie einen Gesprächspartner, der ihm rasch viel bedeutet. Einmal besucht er mit ihr einen Jahrmarkt mit Schießbude, Schiffsschaukel und Geisterbahn, was er vielleicht als eine philobatische Kompensation seiner sonst ausgesprochen oknophilen Existenzform (vgl. Balint 1959) in der Anstalt empfindet. Sie erzählt ihm bei dieser Gelegenheit von ihrem Leben, von ihrer mißlungenen Ehe und von ihrem neuen Freund, einem Arzt, mit dem sie bald in einen alten Bauernhof ziehen wird, den sie gemeinsam mit ihrem Freund renovieren will. Leonie gibt ihren Beruf auf, sie wird die Anstalt – und also auch den Patienten Zweig – verlassen.

Zweig, der sich inzwischen ein Leben ohne Leonie nicht vorstellen kann (167), reagiert – mit einer gewissen Verspätung – auf diese bevorstehende erneute Trennung mit einem neuen Zusammenbruch. Wieder hat er sich betrunken, wieder stürzt er und wird ohnmächtig. Das 13. Kapitel beschreibt diese zweite Krise, die der Leser als eine Art Wiederholung der vorigen erfährt, obwohl Zweig der Wiederholungscharakter nicht auffällt: In einer regnerischen Sturmnacht unterhält er sich in ihrem Dienstzimmer mit Leonie, die ihm erzählt, wie ihr voriger Ehemann seine Eifersucht wegen eines einmaligen Seitensprungs von ihr im Alkohol zu betäuben versuchte und sie bald darauf verließ. Während dieses nächtlichen Gesprächs stürzt sich einer der Patienten, die Leonie zu betreuen hat, aus dem Fenster zu Tode. In der Panik des Augenblicks schreit Leonie ihn an: «Nehmen Sie endlich Ihre Weinflasche und verschwinden Sie. Was bilden Sie sich eigentlich ein! Sie sind auch nur ein normaler Verrückter!» (178)

Zweig geht darauf in sein Zimmer, wo er sein Zettelkastensystem neu ordnet und im Alkoholausgang meint, endlich die Lösung seines Mosaik-Puzzlespiels gefunden zu haben, ohne daß wir sie allerdings erfahren:

- So einfach, sage ich, so einfach, so einfach, so einfach, so einfach. Ihr Blick, als habe sie Angst.

- So einfach, sage ich, ich kann es erklären – Dann stürze ich, noch bevor sie versteht (182).

Nach dieser neuen Krise dämmert ihm allmählich die Einsicht, daß er kein Mörder ist, sein Vater lebt ja noch. Fröger kann ihm jetzt auch mitteilen, daß sein Gutachten fertig ist. Der Nervenzusammenbruch sei ein «Kreislaufkollaps infolge Alkoholvergiftung» (204) gewesen, eine psychische Fehlfunktion sei mit Sicherheit auszuschließen, er sei kurzum psychisch kerngesund, «abgesehen von Macken und Kleinneurosen, die wir alle so haben» (204). Er könne ihn aber noch nicht entlassen: «Wer garantiert mir», so Fröger, «daß Sie nicht auch in Zukunft Unschuldige für Ihren Vater ermorden?» (205) Dieses psychiatrische Urteil ist recht widersprüchlich, vielleicht verschweigt es die Diagnose einer Borderline-Persönlichkeit, für welche es viele Indizien gibt. Erneut wendet Zweig sich dem Kartenspiel seines Zettelkastensystems zu, es wird ihm zu einem «Geisterszenario» (209), bis er wiederum die Lösung des Rätsels gefunden zu haben meint: «Es gibt kein zentrales Motiv. Nichts gehört in die Mitte, es gibt keinen Planeten, nur Monde» (209). Fröger zieht nun auch sein Fazit und teilt Zweig als seine persönliche Ansicht mit:

Das eigentlich grausame Schicksal ist nicht die geistige Behinderung, sondern die Normalität. Ohne geistige Behinderung ist die Unfähigkeit zu Einsichten nur Dummheit, und Dummheit demaskiert sich, wann immer sie kann, das ist doch das Grauen des Alltags. Die Beschäftigung mit Verrückten ist ein Rückzug in die heile Welt (210).

Bevor er entlassen werden kann, steht ihm noch eine entscheidende Erfahrung bevor, die im 16. Kapitel erzählt wird. Es ist das Einweihungsfest des bereits teilweise renovierten Bauernhofes der Schwester Leonie, ein richtiges Mittsommernachtsfest, zu dem er – als Freigänger gewissermaßen - eingeladen ist. An diesem Abend erlebt er, in verdichteter Gestalt, eine Wiederholung aller Schlüssel-szenen des Romans.

Vorhin (im 9. Kapitel) hatte er sich an ein mit Nina erlebtes nächtliches Abenteuer in einem verfallenen Palazzo in der Nähe von Pisa erinnert. Dort hatten sie, in einem Raum mit alten Fresken, die Nymphen und Bacchanten in erotischen Szenen darstellten, gemeinsam eine Nacht verbracht. Sie waren dann durch unerklärliche spukhafte Geräusche aufgeweckt worden und hatten, gelähmt von Angst, regungslos dem gespenstischen Lärm zugehört, ohne nachher eine plausiblere Erklärung als den Sturmwind gefunden zu haben.

Jetzt begibt er sich, wieder nach reichlichem Alkoholgenuß, mit Sarah, der Schwester von Leonie, auf einen ähnlichen gespensterhaften Spaziergang mit einer Kerze durch die finsternen verfallenen Räume im oberen Stockwerk des alten Bauernhofs, um den Zugang zu dem dazugehörigen Turm zu suchen und diesen zu besteigen. Offenbar ist dieses Abenteuer, gemischt aus Gruseln und erotischer Spannung, mindestens zum Teil von jemandem inszeniert worden, denn er hört aus der Ferne klassische Musik ertönen, ein Klavierstück seines Lieblingskomponisten Scriabin. Auch in diesem Geisterraum sind erotische Fresken zu sehen:

Die vor uns liegende, einst weiß getünchte Wand ist übersät mit bunten Piktogrammen, flackernd beleuchtete Graffiti: erregte Glieder, die in pfeilartigen Linien ejakulieren, reduzierte Körper, Nacktheit in ihrer Minimalversion, zwei Kreise mit Punkten und ein Dreieck, Sprüche und Worte, kaum entzifferbar aus dem Abstand, das Wort Sex als eigenständige Botschaft, [...] (226).

Der Spuk und die Erotik, die beide Szenen miteinander verbinden, stehen offensichtlich für das abzuwehrende Irrationale. Es scheint, als befände er sich in einer Art von magischem Theater wie in Hesses *Steppenwolf*, das «nur für Verrückte» bestimmt war, oder als wirke in diesem Sommer-

nachtstraum die Verzauberung aus Shakespeares Stück wieder (in seinen Notizen findet sich einmal eine «Verabredung zum *Sommernachtstraum*» [161]). Als die beiden endlich das Turmzimmer erreicht haben, kurz bevor ein Gewitter losbricht, ereignet sich wieder ein Sturz, findet eine Art Wiederholung der den Wahn auslösenden traumatischen Szene mit Nina statt. Er entkleidet Sarah und fängt an sie zu streicheln, sie hat Angst, weicht nackt vor ihm, dem Blut aus den Ohren fließt, zurück und stürzt rücklings vom Balkon hinunter (231).

Daß es sich um eine Phantasmagorie, einen neuen Wahn oder einen shocktherapeutischen Alptraum handelt, darf der Leser aus dem Schlußkapitel folgern, in dem die Szene und ihre Folgen mit keinem Wort mehr erwähnt werden und das nur noch kurz von seiner Entlassung berichtet: Früger bestätigt ihm seine Normalität, «zieht mit seiner Unterschrift einen Schlußstrich unter meinen Mord, läßt auferstehen, wo nie gestorben wurde» (236).

II

Nicht der Stoff, die Beziehungsprobleme von Studenten, und nicht die Thematik, die Lebensfeindlichkeit, der Hochmut und die Selbstentfremdung des extremen Rationalisten, machen diesen Roman zu einem interessanten Debüt. Auch die Form der salopp und knapp formulierten Notizen und das Prinzip der zwischen Gegenwart und Vergangenheit alternierenden Kapitel sind nicht wirklich originell, sondern offensichtlich von Max Frisch inspiriert. Dessen Roman *Homo faber* (1957) hatte bereits gezeigt, wie fatal die Dialektik der Aufklärung sich in einer Person und deren Lebenslauf auswirken kann, mit dem Unterschied allerdings, daß Frisch dieses Problem vor allem mythologisch und Woelk es in erster Linie psychologisch gestaltete. Aus *Stiller* (1954) ist nicht nur die Komposition mit ihren zwischen dem Heute und dem Damals abwechselnden Notizen, sowie mit den die Hauptthemen kunstvoll spiegelnden Nebenhandlungen übernommen worden, sondern etwa auch das Motiv des Lokaltermins in der Privatwohnung, und auch der Einfall, das Ganze vom Patienten selbst, also von einem höchst unzuverlässigen Erzähler berichten zu lassen. Dessen Abwehrstrategien, Projektionen und Verleugnungen, Rationalisierungen und Übertragungsbeziehungen sollen vom Leser durchschaut werden. In dieser Hinsicht, daß die Erzählperspektive den Leser zu einer psychologischen Deutung einlädt, ja zwingt, ist Woelk allerdings radikaler vorgegangen, denn bei Frisch wird Stillers Bericht durch den des Staatsanwalts kontrastiert und korrigiert, bei Woelk haben wir nur die Notizen des Patienten.

Das Reizvolle von *Freigang* liegt, überspitzt gesagt, in dem, was alles verschwiegen wird, und in den Rätseln, die die Leser zu lösen haben, weil der Roman-Text sie zwar aufgibt, aber nicht selbst löst. So werden wir Leser zum Durchschauen eines Menschen eingeladen, der sich krampfhaft dagegen wehrt, durchschaut zu werden und der zugleich selbst nichts anderes will, als seine Mitmenschen, an erster Stelle Früger, zu durchschauen.

Zu den ungelösten Rätseln, mit denen der Leser nach der Lektüre des Buches zurück bleibt, gehört die im Roman nicht aufgeklärte Ätiologie der Wahnidee des Vatermords, die Zweig unmittelbar nach seinem ersten Zusammenbruch in der Eifersuchtsszene mit Nina entwickelt hat und an die er sich in der Klinik ebenso hartnäckig anklammert wie Stiller an seine Behauptung, nicht Stiller zu sein. Es ist die zentrale Frage, vor die das Buch den Leser stellt. Während die Romanhandlung um Frauenbeziehungen kreist und noch in ihren letzten Sätzen den Abschiedskuß erwähnt, den Zweig der Schwester Leonie geben wollte und dann doch nicht gegeben hat, während Haupt- und Nebenhandlungen in Szenen von Eifersucht und aggressiver Erotik gipfeln und somit der Wahn, eine Frau ermordet zu haben, eigentlich verständlicher gewesen wäre, versteift der Protagonist sich darauf, ein Vatermörder zu sein.

Über den Vater, der auch Naturwissenschaftler ist und einer «alten Lehredynastie» (56) entstammt, erfahren wir leider von Zweig so gut wie nichts, aber ein zweiter therapeutischer Gutachter, Dr. Conradi, der weniger zurückhaltend als Früger auftritt, schildert sein Bild von Zweigs Elternhaus und dem dort angewandten Erziehungssystem, auf das dieser selbst zwar mit Ablehnung

und Irritation reagiert, das aber auch nicht widerlegt wird. Zweig ärgert sich nur, daß er Conradis Ausführungen «einen gewissen Wahrheitsgehalt nicht absprechen konnte» (57). Insgesamt erscheinen Conradis Deutungen überzeugend, gerade weil Zweig sich so sehr dagegen wehrt; für den Leser sind sie informativ, aber für Zweig therapeutisch verfrüht. Die Atmosphäre zu Hause ähnelte wohl derjenigen, wie sie von Fritz Zorn in seiner Anklageschrift *Mars* (1977) beschrieben wurde: peinliche Sauberkeit, keine Unordnung, also keine Abenteuer-Möglichkeiten, Belohnung von Rechenaufgaben mit Fleißmarken, Dressur, das Leben als Schulstunde – also «Mechanismen der kleinfamiliären Unterdrückung» (58), «Inhaftierung des Denkens» (59).

Was auffällt, ist das völlige Fehlen der Mutter, sowohl in den Notizen des Patienten Zweig, wie in seinen Gesprächen mit den beiden Therapeuten. Dies läßt vermuten, daß die Beziehung zu ihr noch problematischer als die zum Vater gewesen ist. Sie ist nicht Gegenstand der Reflektion, sondern des Agierens. In seinem Verhalten zu Nina und zu Leonie fällt die narzißtische Qualität seiner Verliebtheit auf, er behandelt sie als Selbst-Objekte im Sinne Kohuts (1981), das heißt, daß er Mühe hat, sie als von ihm getrennte Wesen mit einem eigenen Dasein wahrzunehmen. Besonders seine unreflektierte Beziehung zu Leonie erweist sich als Übertragungsbeziehung. Auf Sarah, die Schwester der Schwester Leonie, verschiebt er offenbar seine aggressiven sexuellen Impulse. Daß er in der traumhaften Turmszene ihren Tod verursacht, läßt ihn auch als potentiellen Muttermörder erscheinen. Über den Vater kann er sprechen, die Mutter, so folgere ich, steht hinter den Szenen von Gewalt gegen Frauen. Vielleicht ist es das narzißtische Defizit, die innere Leere des Narzißten, für die sie verantwortlich gehalten wird. Jedenfalls scheint sie der väterlichen «Dressur» (57) nichts entgegengesetzt zu haben.

Die Frauen im Roman haben alle drei einen Partner, die er also jeweils zum geschädigten Dritten macht, ein Umstand, der nicht nur die Mutter-Übertragung verrät, sondern uns auch darauf aufmerksam macht, daß Zweig in seiner Eifersucht völlig vergessen hat, wie er selbst damals Nina ihrem Freund Hans-Jörg Plank weggenommen hat.

Für den jungen Zweig, dessen künstlerische Begabung sich passiv in seiner Musikliebe, aktiv im Schreiben spannender und abenteuerlicher Kriminalgeschichten bekundete, hatte die väterliche Erziehung einen nachher verdrängten Konflikt zwischen Naturwissenschaft als Beruf und Kunst als Berufung zur Folge. So hat er in forciert einseitiger Entwicklung das falsche Selbst eines rigiden gefühlsarmen Naturwissenschaftlers gebildet. Sein wahres Selbst scheint eher mit seinen schriftstellerischen Versuchen, mit denen er in der Schule großen Erfolg hatte, und mit seiner Musikalität verbunden zu sein, Talenten, die er bisher mit seinem Selbstkonzept als Physiker nicht harmonisch zu verbinden wußte. «Schreiben», so erklärt er dem Psychiater ganz am Anfang, «ist auf Dauer keine sinnvolle Beschäftigung für einen Physiker». «Literatur ist etwas für Leute, die Zeit zuviel haben» (14).

Kunst, so Dr. Conradi in seiner Deutung, sei in Zweigs Elternhaus «gleichbedeutend mit Absturz» gewesen (59), was eine vielsagende Wortwahl ist, wenn man sich vergegenwärtigt, daß der Sturz das wahre Leitmotiv der Romanhandlung ist (vgl. auch die Anekdote von dem Bergsteiger, der seine Brille verloren hat, [12]). Die jugendlichen Abenteuer geschichten, die Zweig sich schon am Anfang seiner Anstaltsperiode besorgen läßt, weil er sie wiederlesen möchte, sind eine Art Fortsetzung seiner kriminalistischen Kinderspiele mit einem Freund, genau nach dem Modell der «gemeinsamen Tagträume», wie sie von Hanns Sachs (1924) beschrieben wurden. Er hat sie einmal seinem Vater zu lesen gegeben. Dieser brauchte lange Zeit, bis er sein Urteil über die Phantasieprodukte seines Sohnes abgab. Es lautete dann, in zwei Worten: «Sprachliche Mängel» (145).

Wenn wir uns vergegenwärtigen, daß Zweig den Liebesverrat der Freundin und den Abschied der Schwester Leonie vor allem als narzißtische Kränkungen, als ein Im-Stich-Lassen erlebt hat und daß daraufhin die unverhältnismäßige schrankenlose narzißtische Wut seinen kühl-distanzierten überrationalen Charakterpanzer sprengte, können wir nicht nur die Genese des Vaternord-Wahns ahnen, sondern zu einem ersten Verständnis der psychischen Problematik gelangen, die der ganze Roman präsentiert, indem er sie verschweigt. Die Kränkung durch den Vater hatte ohnmächtige

Wut hervorgerufen, die aber rational verleugnet, abgespaltet und überkompensiert wurde im erfolgreichen Physikstudium nach väterlichem Wunsch und Vorbild und dazugehöriger einseitig wissenschaftlicher Lebensanschauung, bis die Kränkung durch Nina, als «gehörnter Liebhaber» (109) dazustehen, das ohnehin mühsam aufrechterhaltene psychische Gleichgewicht völlig zerstörte. Was der Gehörnte erfährt, ist – wie Peter von Matt in seinem Buch vom *Liebesverrat* ausführt – «eine Form von Kastration, die die ältesten, realsten Kastrationsängste tatsächlich aufweckt». Als körperliche Erfahrung sei sie kompatibel mit dem Tod überhaupt, deshalb kann die Schande «nur durch seinerseits tödliche Aktionen wettgemacht werden. Nur der Mord bringt ihn wieder in die Gesellschaft zurück, [...] selbst wenn dieser Mord dann zu seiner Verurteilung und Hinrichtung führen sollte» (von Matt 1991, 53f.). Es kommt hinzu, daß er als Student nicht nur Gedichte, sondern – wie der Autor Ulrich Woelk selbst – auch Theaterstücke geschrieben hat, von denen er eines zur Beurteilung an einen Regisseur gegeben hat, der ihn aber hinhält und nicht die Mühe nimmt zu reagieren. Auf diese neue Kränkung seines Künstler-Ehrgeizes reagiert er mit «Verärgerung über die eigene Unzulänglichkeit» (164), die Wut wird, wie damals beim Vater, nicht erwähnt und vermutlich ganz verleugnet.

Die abgespaltete Wut wird aber in einigen Symptomhandlungen sichtbar, deren Funktion in der Erzählstruktur kaum anders denn als Hinweis auf Zweigs latente Aggressivität aufgefaßt werden kann. So zerdrückt er in der Studentencafeteria, wo er eine Wiederbegegnung mit Nina erhofft, quasi als wissenschaftliches Experiment einige Plastikbecher und beobachtet dabei die physikalischen Vorgänge: «Deformation der Wandung», «systematische Druckerhöhung bis zur Bildung von Rissen», «Stabilitätseigenschaften eines ungerissenen Bechers in bezug auf senkrechte Krafteinwirkung: erstaunlich» (43). Ebenso ausführlich und detailliert, mit dem präzise beobachtenden Blick des Physikers, wurde vorher sein Spiel mit der Flamme einer Kerze beschrieben, als er an einem Tisch im Café sitzt. Es scheint, als hätten diese äußeren Wahrnehmungen die Funktion, von der inneren Wahrnehmung abzulenken, als wehre er damit Gefühle der Wut, der Angst und der inneren Leere ab.

Wenn wir Zweig auf Grund aller dieser Beobachtungen, auf Grund seiner Selbstbezogenheit, seines Mangels an Einfühlungsvermögen und seiner extremen Kränkbarkeit als den Typus des narzißtisch gestörten Menschen verstehen (vgl. Schärer und Schärer 1993), so wird auch verständlich, daß er in der Klinik lieber die mythische Heldenrolle des Ödipus spielen will und lieber als schuldiger Vaternörder nach einem ordentlichen Gerichtsverfahren verlangt, als sich in einer Therapie mit seiner verdeckten Grandiosität auseinanderzusetzen. Die vordergründig ödipale Problematik verhüllt die tiefe narzißtische Wunde. Seine Abwehr, sein «Kampf gegen Früger» (40), richtet sich in erster Linie dagegen, daß er keine «Geschichte von der Stange» (40, 60) will, daher die von ihm notierte Erkenntnis: «Mein Stolz als letzte Ursache meines Hierseins» (40). Der primäre Krankheitsgewinn des Wahns, ein Mörder zu sein, besteht darin, daß dieser ihn seinen extremen Stolz behalten läßt, während eine Therapie ihn dazu bringen würde, darauf zu verzichten und seine Normalität zu akzeptieren. Seine Flucht in die Krankheit ist also eine Flucht vor dem Verzicht auf die Grandiosität. Alle Interventionen von Früger und Conradi berühren diesen wunden Punkt seiner narzißtischen Verletzbarkeit, alle Energie von Zweig ist darauf gerichtet, die Kränkung nicht zu spüren.

Conradi macht ihn wütend, weil er vermutet, «daß die Individualität Ihres Falles nicht sehr ausgeprägt ist» (58). Leonie schreit ihm die paradoxe Wahrheit ins Gesicht, er sei «auch nur ein normaler Verrückter!» (178) Und als er seinen Wahn aufgegeben hat, aber von Früger noch als potentieller Mörder (204) bezeichnet wird, muß er auf dem Mittsommernachtstraumfest von Leonie erfahren, daß er in der Klinik bereits einen Nachfolger hat. Es ist jemand, der behauptet, seine Mutter erschossen zu haben, die Mutter, die bei der Geburt des Patienten im Kindbett verstorben ist: «also es bewegt sich alles im Rahmen des Gewöhnlichen, wie Sie sehen» (215). Kurz nach dieser erneuten Kränkung seines Stolzes folgt dann die traumhafte Szene im Turm, wobei er Sarah sexuell angreift, worauf sie, zurückweichend, abstürzt – was Frügers Diagnose, er sei ein potentieller Mörder, im Grunde bestätigt.

Zum Narzißmusproblem der Hauptperson gehört auch die gestörte Beziehung zur Sexualität. In den Szenen des Buches ist sie mit Gewalt und Angst konnotiert, sie ist nicht integriert. Im dualistischen Weltbild von Zweig, der nur das Vernünftige gelten läßt, gehört sie, mit Astrologie, «Romantik» und den Leidenschaften zu den eher ichfremden Vorstellungen oder zum Verdrängten, das dann im Wahn oder im Rausch wiederkehrt und ihn überwältigt.

Seine fixe Idee, den Vater ermordet zu haben, erweist sich so als eine für den minimalen Zusammenhalt seiner inneren Welt notwendige Phantasie. Seine unbewußte Strategie ähnelt dabei derjenigen des Verlorenen Sohns in der biblischen Parabel (vgl. Pohier 1985): Sein Schuldgeständnis ist eine verhüllte Bitte um Liebe. Zweigs «Kampf gegen Fröger» (40) ist dadurch motiviert, daß er nicht verständnisvoll durchschaut, sondern beurteilt und verurteilt werden will. Ein Schuldiger braucht einen Richter, ein Richter kann nicht ohne einen Schuldigen: das ist eine das Vater-Sohn-Verhältnis wiederholende Beziehung, die befriedigender erscheint als diejenige zum Psychiater, weil sie die Grandiosität unberührt läßt, weil die Verbrecherrolle wenigstens keine «Geschichte von der Stange» (40) ist. Als er sich einmal nach dem Besuch eines Sexkinos in einer Kneipe betrinkt, trifft er dort einen Leidensgenossen, auch einen Studenten, den seine Freundin betrogen hat, auch einen «gehörnten Liebhaber» also. Als dieser gegangen ist, fällt ihm ein:

Ich hätte meine Geschichte erzählen können. Vielleicht hätte ich ihn dazu gebracht, gemeinsam unseren Kummer zu ertränken. Männerbesäufnis (194).

Daß er dazu nicht fähig war, hängt sicher damit zusammen, daß seine Geschichte dann unvermeidlich wie eine «von der Stange» ausgesehen hätte.

Die eingebildete Schuld, zu der er sich bekennt, soll die reale Scham, die er um jeden Preis abwehrt, verdecken. Das ist nicht nur eine für die narzißtische Störung typische Abwehrstruktur (vgl. Grunberger 1982, 324), sondern auch ein wichtiger Schlüssel zum Verständnis von Kafkas *Prozeß*, der von der eingebildeten Schuld des Josef K. handelt, aber mit seiner Scham, die ihn überleben sollte, endet (vgl. Schärer und Schärer 1993).

In seiner Identitätsdiffusion, von der er selbst notiert, er «habe keine Idee für [sein] Leben, nur das Wissen um die Unzulänglichkeit der väterlichen Entwürfe» (159), klammert er sich an sein Zettelkastensystem, die Metapher für seine in Unordnung geratene psychische Realität. Als er auf den Gedanken kommt, statt «Stolz», «Nina» oder «Gutachten» das Wort «Vater» ins Zentrum seiner Karten zu rücken, muß er seine Forschungen «für gescheitert» (160) erklären, vermutlich weil er zu der Einsicht in die Bedeutung des Vaters noch nicht fähig ist.

Die Krise, in die er durch das Scheitern der Beziehung zu Nina hineingeraten ist, bringt auch das bisher verleugnete Dilemma zwischen seiner künstlerischen Veranlagung und seiner wissenschaftlichen Begabung näher an die Bewußtseinsschwelle. Bisher hatte er sich in einseitiger Weise zum rationalen Wissenschaftler, zu einem *homo faber* redivivus entwickelt, der noch in der Anstalt seine inneren Schwierigkeiten wie ein physikalisches Problem auf naturwissenschaftlich-logische Weise, nomothetisch statt ideographisch, empirisch statt hermeneutisch, zu lösen versucht hatte. Das Andere der Vernunft trat ihm entgegen in der Gestalt weiblicher Irrationalität bei Nina, in der Astrologie-Liebhaberei des Rivalen oder in dem Dichter auf dem Sommerfest, der den Naturwissenschaftlern insgesamt ein *Savoir-vivre* abspricht (223) und den er als Urheber des ganzen Mittsommernachtsspuks vermutet (227).

III

Ob Frank Zweig am Ende wirklich geheilt ist, bleibt dahingestellt. Immerhin ist er von seinem Wahn befreit, immerhin hat sich seine Grandiosität insofern reduziert, als er sich vornimmt, seine Koffer zu packen «wie jeder normale Mensch auch» (236), immerhin hat Fröger ihm seine Normalität und psychische Gesundheit bescheinigt. Aber hat er Einsicht in dasjenige bekommen, was ihn heimgesucht hat? Hat er es als eine Wiederkehr des Verdrängten verstanden? Eine therapeutische

Behandlung hat eigentlich gar nicht stattgefunden. Der Kampf um die Erinnerung ist ausgetragen, das Wiederholen geschah vor allem in seinem Agieren, in der Beziehung zu Leonie und deren Schwester – aber von einem Durcharbeiten kann keine Rede sein. Der Roman scheint zu suggerieren, als hätte er die Besserung doch vor allem seinem Zettelkastenspiel, dieser Karikatur der Selbstanalyse, zu verdanken. Eine Karikatur: weil er nicht frei assoziieren kann, widmet er sich der Konstruktion dieses Systems. Jedenfalls erlaubte ihm das Mosaikspiel, durch Herstellen von Assoziationen einige Dissoziationen rückgängig zu machen und sich gleichsam konkretistisch mit den Hauptthemen seiner psychischen Störung zu beschäftigen.

So ist wohl der Titel *Freigang* – ein Freigänger ist bekanntlich ein Häftling, der tagsüber ohne Aufsicht in einem normalen Betrieb arbeiten darf, der aber noch abends in die Anstalt zurückkehren soll – als ein Hinweis auf das Vorläufige und Bedingte seiner Entlassung zu verstehen, vielleicht auch als eine Anerkennung der Möglichkeit, daß seine narzißtische Wut ihn immer noch zu einem Mörder machen könnte.

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A Dark, PostKafkaesque World

About and Beyond Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*: Some Psychological Issues (*)

LÁSZLÓ HALÁSZ (**)

The title and subtitle of my paper refer to two kinds of literary fictional narrative. The possible world presented in Kafka's novels and short stories is enigmatic and absurd; both the plot and the characters are completely unreal. Everything is fictional – in other words it seems to be a product of mere fantasy. We know that Kafka's fictional texts are related to his personality and to the highly bureaucratized world of Habsburg Monarchy, nevertheless, we find another decisive relation between his fiction and the non-fictional reality. Namely, we are inclined to see that following the author's death, his possible world came into being in the totalitarian states.

Although Koestler's most important novel is fiction, its relationship with non-fiction is quite obvious. When reading the literary narrative we inevitably associate the Koestlerian possible world with the Stalinist real world, depending on the extent to which we think (guess, know) that it served as the model for Koestler's fiction. Thus the reader understands one world by matching and completing it with the other one: he goes from a Kafkaesque world to a Koestlerian one and back, and from the real world of show trials (based on historical non-fictional narratives) to each of these and back.

Before one would blame us by the arbitrary violation of borderlines due to our ignorance about them, it is worth considering some problems. «I could claim – says Doctorow (1977: 229-230) – that history is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive, and fiction is a kind of speculative history, perhaps a superhistory, by which the available data for the composition is seen to be greater and more various in its sources than the historian supposes (...)

There is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative (...)

We (novelists) have it in us to compose false documents more valid, more real, more truthful than the "true" documents of the politicians or journalists or the psychologists. Novelists know explicitly that the world in which we live is still to be formed and reality is amenable to any construction is placed upon.»

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Doctorow's words are in accordance with White's ideas (1978: 82, 125) about historical texts: «(...) historical narratives (...) most manifestly are: verbal fictions the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences(...) Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation is a poetic process. Here the historians must utilize precisely the same topological strategies, the same modalities of representing relationships in words, that the poet or novelist uses.»

«There is no mimesis, only poesis. No recording. Only constructing» – says Scholes (1975: 7). «Surfiction is the only fiction that still means something today (...) because it exposes the fictionality of reality» (Federman, 1975: 7). Scholes and Kellogg (1969: 86-87) emphasize that the novel has historical or empirical and fictional or imaginary tendencies which are «blended rather than distinctive kinds». History and fantasy are «the poles of a narrative spectrum».

The polarity for the human mind is an «(...) essential device in gaining understanding». As it is well-known from Gestalt psychology «(...) perception ordinarily operates within qualitative and totalizing frames of reference. The rabbit – duck drawing (...) has two possible, and mutually exclusive, interpretations – it is either a rabbit or a duck. The viewer can readily enough grasp both perceptual possibilities but can process only one scheme at any particular instant» – summarizes Fooley (1986: 37) and adds (40): «(...) both fictional discourse and nonfictional discourse make use of totalizing frames (...) Any given element in a narrative (...) must be scanned and interpreted as either factual or fictive in order to be read or understood».

When interpreting some of the psychological meanings of *Darkness at Noon* as either factual or fictitious, we perceive the text in the context (frame) of other texts (two representative Kafka novels and some basic documents relating to two great show trials) which constitute the poles of a narrative spectrum. The protagonist in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* is ex-commissar Rubashov, who is arrested by the Party of which he is a prominent member. Though none of the better-known defendants in the historical show trials was called Rubashov, we are inclined to see him as a type of real figure, like Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev or Radek. This is in line with the author's intention. As Koestler noted in his autobiography (Koestler, 1969: 479): «When I began writing the book, I had no notion of the plot, and only one character was established in my mind. He was to be a member of the Old Bolshevik guard, his manner of thinking modelled on Nikolai Bukharin's, his personality and physical appearance a synthesis of Leon Trotsky and Karl Radek.»

In his cell Rubashov realizes that he will be executed: «(...) you are going to be destroyed, he said to himself half-aloud». He remembers: «His past was the movement, the Party; present and future, too, belonged to the Party, were inseparately bound up with its fate; but his past was identical with it. And it was this past that was suddenly put in question» (51-52).¹ He recognizes that he can lose his self-identity before he loses his life. Rubashov had his identity-feeling in his youth, when he committed himself to serve the Party's cause. He internalized it together with its relevant value system. Goodenough (1965) describes the type of a believer for whom religion is a primary source of legalism. Religion says what is good and bad, and shows us how to choose and decide. For a legalist, religion is a ready-made doctrine to which he is obliged to keep. On the other hand, a supralegalist turns to an ideal human world: he puts down the law-book which is the basis of a legalist's belief.

The more Rubashov feels that the ideas and values of the Party are identical with his own self, the more he is unable to see that his behaviour – which he thought to be based on mere rationality – was in fact of a religious type. And the more he becomes a supralegalist the more he feels that he

¹ *Darkness at Noon* quotations are all taken from Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975.

has behaved in accordance with his own standards. So now Rubashov is in his own prison. He is compelled to take the path of self-examination. Even if he were able to nullify his past, he would have no future. He can win only if he is able to die and preserve his identity. His task is to find a reason for his death.

The real Rubashov does not defend himself through repression: he recalls those acts of his which caused the death of innocent people and faces up to his guilty feeling. In the eyes of the former Rubashov everything should have been eliminated which was contrary to «the logic of history»: not only emotions and «the first person singular» as a «grammatical fiction» are shocking, but also intelligence, if it is unable to get rid itself of the contamination of subjectivity.

For a long time Rubashov did think himself free of such subjectivity, but this was no more than mere rationalization. The real Rubashov who strives to develop consciously all the inner nuances of his mind indicates the extent to which strong and deep repressions helped him to be firm. In fact, the former Rubashov was defended by irrational processes more than the one who admits his doubts to himself.

We could profitably think of the earlier Rubashov as his Stalinist self and the real one as his Rubashovian self. But his Stalinist self has not suddenly turned anti-Stalinist; Rubashov has not yet undergone his conversion to be from Saul to Paul (cf. Halász, 1994). His dilemma is just this. Can he achieve the balance necessary to avoid changing himself? His dividedness is manifold. The exploited remainder of his earlier resolute self is coping with the Stalinist one as it now works, interrupted by the (re)discovered self which is antagonistic to both of them.

One of Rubashov'selves even now thinks correct that «(...) we presented the seeds of evil not only in men's deeds, but in their thoughts» as the Inquisition did. And while the Rubashovian self shudders with horror at the destruction of huge numbers of people and at the more than Byzantine cult of the leader, the other Rubashov is on good terms with that leader. And in the opinion of this latter self, «History has taught us that often lies serve her better than the truth» (82).

There is a grotesque case of doubling of self in which a split-brain patient pushed his wife away with one hand and wanted to embrace her with the other (Rotenberg, 1981). Although lacking pathological elements, Rubashov's behaviour with the examining magistrate is somewhat similar during the second hearing. First he rudely rebuffs him, and then listens to him attentively. He considers the case together with him and considers the case against himself. It is not one Rubashov who faces the examining magistrate, but two Rubashovs or possibly three. Even the arguments which he rejects comes from him, and he feels that he can change places with his interrogator, who rightly tells him that «(...) my way of thinking and arguing is your own and you are afraid of the echo in your own head» (121).

When we first encounter this, we might interpret it as merely identification with an aggressor: after all, Rubashov has good reason to fear his interrogator. Reducing the psychological distance between them is a method of self-defence. But owing to the splitting of Rubashov's mind, the aggressor is within him also. Consequently, he needs to defend himself primarily against his own inner forces. His longing for identification can also be regarded as – using Freud's term (1963) – an anaclytic identification with the object of love and security through reliance upon his «better» (i.e. his more naive, purer) self. In their momentary situation the distance between Rubashov and his interrogator resembles that between Earth and Heaven, although this is not true of their mentalities. Rubashov's interrogator is himself a Rubashov fixed in an earlier state of self-organization. Accordingly, those things to which he knows an unambiguous response, Rubashov already does not.

Rubashov's selves are connected with his Messianism. The actual Rubashovian self by his exhausted Messianism reproaches his earlier and the actual other selves for their unsuccessful service to Messianism. By virtue of the superiority of their intact Messianism, the latter selves accuse the Rubashovian self and reproach him for wavering. Rubashov can choose much less than he thinks. His questions are rhetorical. Yes, he would sacrifice his lover again. Yes, he will

denounce himself. If he acted differently, it would be tantamount to confessing that his whole life had been deceit and self-deceit.

Rubashov's strong guilty feelings stem from those of his deeds which were against social utility and historical necessity. But beneath a cool exterior, he is imbued with passion. When his new interrogator – whom he has despised on account of his brutal nature – calls him «Comrade Rubashov», «he felt a hot wave rising in him, against which he was helpless» (191). And the words of his interrogator express a high regard for Rubashov's inner-directed self-devotion in accusing himself of terrible crimes he has never committed, in full knowledge that «(...) the Party holds out to you no prospect of reward.» His last public words in the show trial were not merely directed by the desire to render one final service to the Party. «There is nothing for which one could die, if one died without having repented and unreconciled with the Party.» (199) The speaker of these words is a heretical believer who, repenting of his sins, wishes to return to the Holy Mother Church. It is not difficult to see that Rubashov's strong guilty feelings are behind his remorse; he travels the whole length of his Via Dolorosa without self-pity.

Nevertheless, Rubashov's last service to the Party in the show trial does not bring him inner peace, not even in his final hours. His existence appears in a negative form; he is unable to break with his past. He is unable not to yield to the Party's command. He does not feel that his sacrifice would redeem the Party and himself. In vain his desire to make this sacrifice flare up, in vain his deeds. The mystic union can be reborn only for some moments. During the third interrogation, with regard to himself over the last years he sees that in the show trial he had denied himself: «it was not only his shadow» (176). And in the show trial by denying himself «He was a man who had lost his shadow» (201).

If shadow were a mere denial, it would express the idea that someone who had been positive (good, true, strong, complete) had been less positive for a time and that now even this was evaporating. But Rubashov the intellectual was influenced by the more complicated meaning of the term shadow, at least tacitly. If we can suppose that there is something archetypal, it is precisely shadow. Shadow, Jung (1976) teaches, the inferior part of one's self. It is the dark side of our psyche. It is repressed, hidden and guilt-ridden, but it can contain some creative impulses and socially acceptable drives.

It is probable that Rubashov experienced himself as one whose self broke into two. Shadow and one who shadows are not the same. Rubashov first thought of the metaphor of shadow during his third interrogation, conducted by his new interrogator. During the second interrogation Rubashov to all intents and purposes knew that it was a mere circumstance that had determined who was the interrogator and who the interrogated. Even his interrogator, earlier a friend of Rubashov's, emphasizes that «(...) our position might equally well be reversed» (79). And he, too, could not escape his fate either.

Rubashov's new interrogator gradually measures up to his task, his predecessor and to Rubashov. (This is not a good omen for him either.) In fact, despite his earlier contempt, Rubashov realizes the community of their selves. The interrogator is himself one of Rubashov's selves: the unbroken one: «Flesh of their flesh, grown independent and become insensible» (183). But Rubashov should feel that he had become insensible as well, surely. Borderlines between reality and unreality, which should be clear, merging together in this reality-obscuring background experience. It is not surprising that Rubashov sees himself as a shadow, and then, as a result of giving up his self, he fails to see even his shadow. «He was a man who had lost his shadow, released from every bond» (201). (When Peter Schlemihl dissociated from his shadow, he felt «detached from life».) But Rubashov's ego strength overcomes even this state of mind. Because of his intellectual commitment, his doubts emerge again but without finding reassuring responses. He is still trying to find them in the darkness at noon, when he goes to his death deprived of his own shadow but supplied with the huge, spread shadow of the Party, father-figure, No.1.

In his autobiography Koestler stresses that the «Rubashov theory of the confessions» «(...) could be only applied to a certain type of old Bolshevik with an absolute loyalty to the Party »

(1969: 488). And as a shocking test of the validity of the fundamental idea behind his novel he reports us how one of his earlier comrades, Otto Katz, behaved in the Slansky trial in 1952 in Prague. Katz was charged with being a British spy, a saboteur and a Zionist agent. «In his last statement before the Tribunal», says Koestler (1969: 493), «Otto Katz quoted Rubashov's last speech as textually as he could probably remember it (...). Rubashov's last speech, with its emphasis "on rendering a last service" and serving as a warning example was a paraphrase of Bukharin's confession at the Moscow trial of 1938 – and Otto knew that. The phrasing by Otto of his last statement was clearly intended as a camouflaged message, to indicate that he, too, had been brought to confess crimes as imaginary as Bukharin's and Rubashov's.» But this is only the beginning of a shuttle-service from non-fiction to fiction, from a historical narrative to a literary one, and back.

Arthur London was one of the few comrades of Otto Katz to survive the trial. And in his book, which was first published in 1968, he states: «I have read in Kierkegaard what I experienced then: "The man who worries whether that he can be guilty, although he is not becomes guilty, indeed"». Being in solitary confinement is itself enough to manipulate free-flee-floating anxiety and to arouse guilty feelings. And those who felt that to preserve consciousness of their innocence would result in their losing the Party and their identity, in the long term chose dissociation of their selves, through ongoing repression of the innocent self. When London met some political prisoners months after their trial, he found that «(...) there were those who had guilty feeling even then. They spoke to us as if they had committed everything that they were accused of and deserved their punishment by the Party».

At this the point we can pass from the non-fictional world of show trials to a Kafkaesque fictional world. K. is arrested even though «he did not commit any crime», and the investigation prompts him to ongoing self-examination as he searches for deeds which could justify the accusation. But in contradistinction to the world of show trials – whether Koestlerian or Stalinist –, in a Kafkaesque world we know next to nothing about the protagonist. Even his full name is unknown, as is the substance of the charges against him, even to the investigatory and judicial authorities. What happens to K., or to Joseph K., happens just in the same way that anything else may happen, regardless of his innocence or guilt. Or the Law itself is also guilty.

To the Castle K. means nothing. But Bukharin, Rubashov, London and Rajk were on trial for their lives. This a powerful difference. If someone is considered «nothing», then no action against him seems warranted; on the other hand, if someone has to be destroyed, then all machinations and violence are appropriate. The Kafkaesque world is mildly absurd. Although K. accepted the absurd rules of the game without understanding them, he gave no sign that self-identity and the unity of his personality was questionable for himself. However, the main criterion of a post-Kafkaesque world is the manipulation of self, the splitting of personality into contradictory selves, and the incitement of these against each other.

Koestler described a post-Kafkaesque world in *Darkness at Noon* but not as fully as that which came into being in the non-fictional world. In 1992 there was published in Hungary the transcript of a tape-recorded secret night time conversation between János Kádár and László Rajk, a week after the latter's arrest in 1949. To understand the situation it is enough to know that Rajk had been one of the deputies of the General Secretary of the Party and Minister of the Interior, i.e. police minister : he certainly would have had some idea of how the system worked. In his capacity as Minister of the Interior he more than once violated the law to influence the tribunal to pass the death sentence, but he was convinced that he was right because he saw the defendants as enemies of the system, even if they were not involved in any conspiracy. He knew clearly that he was a man of the system; he was unwilling to believe that his arrest was possible. He denied all the charges, even after a week of torture.

«I have only limited time for you», said Kádár, «you can speak to the Party for the last time». Thus, Rajk was forced into a perfectly hopeless situation: confessing to treason he did not commit, and accepting his non-being as a top US secret agent. «Do you believe that our Party leadership is

taken in by all the stories you've been telling here for a week? Do you believe?» Rajk replied:« (...) I believed, and I still believe, in the Party (...) The Party should believe me when I say that I am telling the truth.»

«You started off by saying that you are a honest man. Your first words are a lie»: this would have been envied by the Sophists. The repetitions of «our Party», «is taken in by», «your story», and «Do you believe?» – which were followed by the denial of Rajk's honesty five times in one minute – were the instruments of his humiliation.

Though Rajk castigated his so-called political faults nine times to verify his trustworthiness, he denied he was an agent of imperialism. «You do not have the strength and courage to confess it and this shows what an obstinate enemy of the Party you are.» In other words, Rajk could prove his loyalty to the Party only if he admitted to acts indicating his disloyalty to it. If continued to protest his innocence, this would be seen as a sign of his guilt, and if he admitted his guilt he would betray himself.

Since in spite of everything, Rajk was for the time being unwilling to give up his resistance, in accordance with «Rubashov theory of the confessions» we can expect that the harsh and aggressive treatment was followed by a much milder and more humane one. So it was: «None of us thinks you guilty and the Party would very much appreciate it if you, as one of the most tested of our comrades were willing to undertake this unusual task as an exceptional Party mission.» But instead of words of appreciation for Rajk's heroism during the Spanish civil war and in the anti-fascist resistance in Hungary, disparaging Rajk's honesty were used right through to the end of the interview. Kádár used a long list against Rajk's moral integrity: «not-trustworthy» thirteen times, «the enemy's man» twelve times, «dishonest» eleven times, «troublemaker» ten times and so on. And the manner in which the repeated insults were delivered was also shocking:

«In whichever situation you were in your life, you brought curses and dishonour to the Party. Did not you flush with shame when you spoke of your honesty? (...) You have been lying indiscriminately for days. You may be a poor fellow, but you may have been a conscious and stubborn enemy of the labour movement from the first moment you set your foot in it (...) Tell me that you are insane (...) There is a possibility that you were driven on by your towering ambition (...) We know that you were not born a scoundrel (...) You are not a stupid man. Why do you think us idiots?» When Rajk again attempted to distinguish between a mistake and dishonesty, Kádár interrupted him: «We are not market-women.»

Finally Rajk had to see that Kádár dared to speak to him like this only because the Party had finished with him. Even then he held out against new torture for almost two weeks; only then was he prepared to be a protagonist in a show trial. He gave meaning to his situation in a meticulous cooperation with the Soviet-Hungarian KGB not only to facilitate his trial, but also to make it a success. And in the moments before his execution – although nobody asked him to do so and despite there being only a few witnesses – he called out «Long Live Stalin and Rákosi», proving that he believed in the Party – i.e. its top leaders and his murderers – as much as they did in themselves.

With regard to all this I do not find it proper to see show trials as theatrical performances. Diderot (1864) says that an actor does not have to feel what he says but because of the rehearsals, he pretends that he feels it. In opposition to this, I take the view that not only the defendant-protagonists, but also the constructors of a show trial can play their role successfully only by pretension, but only with the appearance of this. All those involved were captive to a Messianistic idea with a totalitarian reality-assertion which temporarily increased the power of fiction in an unlimited way. Reality and illusion, belief and lie, fanaticism and cynicism, deceit and self-deceit, self-interest and self-sacrifice, repression and dissociation were inseparable components in it. It was not by chance that fiction could be degraded as an absurd construction of a show trial, which was, however, considered by the actors to be an inevitable expression of an ultimate truth, that is, the truth behind all kinds of occasional and never essential fact-appearances.

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Cracking the Code in «A Country Doctor»: Kafka, Freud, and Homotextuality

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1. INTRODUCTION

Franz Kafka's «Ein Landarzt» («A Country Doctor»), written in 1917, is the most dream-like and probably the most obscure of his short stories. This dream-like quality is no accident. I will show that Kafka borrowed much more extensively from Sigmund Freud's *Traumdeutung* (*Interpretation of Dreams*), first published in 1899, than anyone has realized. Secondly, I will show how Kafka used dream techniques described by Freud to deliberately encode a homoerotic subtext. My main purpose here is to decode the homoerotic content, using a linguistic approach in which I rely heavily on a lexico-semantic analysis of the German and to a lesser extent on intertextuality with other contemporaneous publications in German. It is clear, though, that it would be essential to address the interplay of the homoerotic subtext with the rest of the text in a later analysis. For example, this strictly delineated approach could be enhanced by integrating the theme of «the healer unable to heal himself» in any of various domains such as medicine, psychoanalysis, philosophy, religion or politics. Ideally, this analysis could also be extended to address issues of intertextuality within the broader Kafka corpus.

Guenter Mecke's book, *Franz Kafka's Offenbares Geheimnis: Eine Psychopathographie*, published in 1982, argues that the majority of Kafka's work can be distilled to an explicitly pornographic «Klartext» (clear text). Wolfgang Popp introduces a note of caution (368):

... clearly I would like to warn against misunderstanding Kafka's literary message by locating it solely in this «clear text». Kafka's message is to be found rather in the oscillation between the various textual levels and meanings.¹

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¹ This translation and others in this paper are mine unless otherwise indicated.

... deutlich moechte ich vor dem Missverstaendnis warnen, die «literarische Botschaft» Kafkas laege bereits und allein in diesem «Klartext». Sie lebt aber gerade im Oszillieren der unterschiedlichen Textebenen und Bedeutungen.

Mecke's examples of homoeroticism taken from a broad Kafka corpus are convincing because of erotic allusions and semantic resonance in the original German – information often lost in translation. Mecke seeks to explain these phenomena using psychoanalytic categories and allusions to related metaphors in German. He accurately notes recurrences of homoerotic symbolism as did Ruth Tiefenbrun in her 1973 book *Moment of Torment*. But he fails, as did she, to show how the words themselves systematically tie into German slang, pornographic jargon, semantic fields and phonetic associations. Each code word, phrase or idea generally has a predominantly heterosexual referent with a subsidiary homosexual one. This bivalent organizational principle explains why the text has tended to affect readers as erotic, but ambiguously so.

2. KAFKA AND FREUD

In order to understand how Kafka constructed his code it is necessary to look closely at his relationship to Freud. Though Kafka's diaries reveal an apparent distrust of psychoanalysis, his literary works frequently allude to Freud. In this section I will briefly discuss how Kafka used Freudian symbols and dream analysis techniques to encode homosexuality within heterosexuality.

Part of Kafka's strategy in «A Country Doctor» is a deliberate use of the code to organize the story at the macro level. A detailed analysis of Lines 1 and 3, as I will demonstrate shortly, reveals that the country doctor is masturbating throughout the story.²

Autoeroticism thus provides a kind of frame or «Rahmenerzählung» at Level I for the doctor's «day»-dream. Kafka then uses the Freudian concept of manifest and latent content to organize the dream itself into Levels II and III respectively. According to Freud, the storyline or manifest content of the dream (Level II) is much less elaborate than the latent content of the dream (Level III). While the daydreamer is masturbating in real time (Level I), he is remembering material from a day in the life of a country doctor, that is to say, the manifest content of the dream (Level II). This manifest content is itself divided into a two-part sequence. The first part begins at the country doctor's house: the doctor has been called out by the night bell to save a dying boy; he has no horse to travel there; a stable groom appears magically out of the pigsty with two horses; the country doctor travels by carriage to the dying boy's bedside while the stable groom remains at the house and rapes the servant girl Rosa. The second part begins when the doctor steps down from his carriage at the patient's house and is met by the boy's sister, mother and father; the doctor is astonished by the fatal wound in the boy's side which is rose-colored or «rosa» in German («Rosa» being, additionally, the servant girl's name); finally the doctor is unclothed and placed in the bed beside the boy before returning home.

The third level is the latent content of the dream – allusions to heterosexual intercourse which camouflage various forms of homoeroticism.

Critics have overlooked the fact that Kafka based «A Country Doctor» on the reversal of a dream found in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* entitled «Durch die Blume» (sic).³ Kafka transformed the heterosexual white/red scheme of purity vs. sexuality to a homosexual one. White is now associated with snow and clouds as a symbol of semen. Red, the color of menstrual blood and defloration, now refers to the innocence of the boy anally deflowered, that is to Rosa, and then to the wound or anal opening itself.

The lexical similarities between the two texts cannot be coincidental. In the dream described by Freud, the young girl goes into the kitchen of her parent's house (Haus) to check on the maid servants who have piled up the dishes (Geschirr) to dry. When the maids go to get water they must

² Line designations are taken arbitrarily from the typesetting of «Ein Landarzt» in *Das Franz Kafka Buch*.

³ *Traumdeutung* 263ff; 289-290. In Strachey's translation, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he says the dream «might be entitled "The Language of Flowers"» (Strachey 350 ff; 382-4).

step into a river, which overflows into the court (Hof). There is an allusion to the father who had many interactions with the servant girls (Dienstmaedchen). In the main part of the dream she steps down and must place her foot (Fuss) carefully so as not to sully her dress. A manservant (Hausknecht) is holding a piece of wood (Holz). She is reminded of white flowers which the angel Gabriel is holding at the Annunciation and she carries red camellia blossoms (Kamelien), supposedly signifying her period and possibly the loss of her virginity.

In «Landarzt», the dishes (Geschirr) have been changed to a harness (Geschirr) which not coincidentally also means sexual organs. The «Kamelien» (camellia) blossoms are now horses compared to «Kamele» (camels) in Line 27. Furthermore, there is the echo of the words «Haus, Hof, Dienstmaedchen» and during the transition from Part I to Part II, a form of «steigen» from a higher to a lower place. In Line 52 the carriage is whisked away like wood in a rush of fresh water (wie Holz in der Strömung) echoing the references to water and wood in the dream reported by Freud. Both texts are centered around a floral symbol and exemplify a frequent two-part sequence observed by Freud: the «Vortraum» or preliminary dream and the «Haupttraum» or main dream, which is a longer more detailed portion. According to Freud, the relationship of the two parts is always important, though it may simply be the same material presented from different points of view (*Traumdeutung* 263). This is the case in «A Country Doctor». The rape of Rosa in the protagonist's house in Part I is the more apparent overlay, in which the underlying image is the deflowering of the boy in Part II. In other words, Part I is also the climax or focal point of Part II.

Kafka also appropriated Freud's observation that dream figures other than the dreamer are really multiple selves or facets of the ego of the dreamer (*Traumdeutung* 269). The unravelling of the code seems to show that the stable groom, the servant girl Rosa, the horses, and the boy patient in «Country Doctor» are all fragments of the protagonist.

Kafka exploits several other dream censorship devices such as displacement and condensation. Displacement is based on syntagmatic organization, while condensation is based on paradigmatic organization. In displacement the accent is shifted to an unimportant element via an association. For example, in Line 183 of «A Country Doctor», «Aermel» (sleeve) stands for «Arsch» (ass) via the slang euphemism «leck mich am Aermel» which means literally «lick me on the sleeve» whereby «Aermel» has been substituted for «Arsch». In Line 15, «Fuss» (foot) stands for «Faust» (fist) via sound similarity, rather than the more obvious Freudian phallus.

Condensation occurs through either omission or fusion, such that the latent content is always more elaborate than the manifest content. Freud compares condensation to a composite or multiple exposure photograph.

The outcome of this superimposing of the separate elements that have been condensed together is as a rule a blurred and vague image, like what happens if you take several photographs on the same plate. (*Introductory Lectures* 211)

Kafka cleverly appropriates this idea to extend vaginal symbolism to the anal.

3. EXAMPLES OF CODE

Before beginning my analysis of the code, I wish to emphasize that I believe Kafka deliberately encoded homoeroticism in a pornographic light as ironical self-deprecation in response to fin de siècle homophobia. He was perhaps expressing his sense of self-alienation with regard not only to his sexuality, but also to his Jewishness and fragmented ethnic identity as a German Czech.

Sander Gilman argues that anti-Semitic attitudes at the turn of the century linked Jewishness with homosexuality in the German-speaking cultural milieu. John Fout discusses the «ongoing complication in the daily lives of homosexuals, namely, the fear of discovery and blackmail» (399). While Hirschfeld and the homosexual rights movement fought for the abolition of Paragraph 175 which criminalized acts of sodomy, the moral purists sought to expand it.

3.1. Autoeroticism as Story Frame

«Homosexuality was frequently presented by the moral purity advocates as closely akin to and a product of another evil, namely, masturbation, or self-abuse» (Fout 413). The following close analysis of Lines 1 and 3 will show that the subtext is really about the tabu subject of masturbation, undoubtedly an ironical gesture on Kafka's part.

Willa and Edwin Muir's standard translation of Line 1 is the following:

*Ich war in grosser Verlegenheit: I was in great perplexity.
eine dringende Reise stand mir bevor; I had to start on an urgent journey;*⁴

One slang meaning of «Verlegenheit» means sexually aroused; another meaning comes from the Middle High German «verligen» meaning to become sluggish from too much lying around (Canning 201). «Dringen(de)» (urgent) has the connotation of penetration, based on the word «draengen». A synonym for journey, «Reise», is «Fahrt» which can mean coitus. In German, the journey literally «stands before him» as in the expression «ihm steht er» which means that the penis is erect.

The standard translation of Lines 3-4 is the following:

starkes Schneegestoeber fuellte den weiten Raum zwischen mir und ihm; a thick blizzard of snow filled all the wide spaces between him and me;

A euphemism for masturbation is «Phantasie mit Schneegestoeber» (fantasy with a thick snow blizzard, i.e. semen). So I arrive at the following decoded reading:

I was sexually aroused and had become sluggish from too much lying around and masturbating; I had an erection/ejaculation and sperm was everywhere between me and my imagined partner.

3.2. Condensation of Rosa and Wound

In Lines 123-127 the word «Rosa» links the servant girl and the color of the wound to form a condensed vaginal and anal image.

*In seiner rechten Seite, in der Hueftgegend (123)
In his right side, near the hip,
hat sich eine handtellergrossse Wunde aufgetan. (123-4)
was an open wound as big as the palm of my hand.
Rosa, in vielen Schattierungen, dunkel in der Tiefe, (124-5)
Rose red, in many variations of shade, dark in the hollows, ...
offen wie ein Bergwerk obertags. (126-7)
open as a surface mine to the daylight.*

An «offene Wunde» in slang is the vagina, but «rosa» today signifies homosexual. «Rosette» has referred to the anus since 1900. «Rosarot» took on the connotation of homosexual around 1900. Slang terminology revolving around the left side («Linker», «linksgewebt», «linksrum» and «seitenverkehrt») developed homosexual connotations in the early 1900s. So a wound in the right side would signify a weakening of his heterosexual side.

Detlef Kremer believes Kafka intended «Bergwerk», an open strip mine, to be the vagina because of a famous painting by Alfred Kubin (95). A gigantic nude is lying in a landscape with her legs spread, such that her vagina opens in the form of an open pit mine. However, «Bergwerk»

⁴ All English translations of «Ein Landarzt» are taken from Willa and Edwin Muir as found in *Selected Short Stories of Franz Kafka*.

also means anus in slang; «im Bergwerk krabbeln» means anal intercourse or anal masturbation. So the Klartext might read:

a wound had opened up in his hip region, in his right heterosexual side, that is s/he had been vaginally or anally deflowered; rose-red color (the color of homosexual and heterosexual love), in many variations of shade, deep in the hollows (as the vagina and the anus); open as a surface mine inviting heterosexual or homosexual intercourse.

In Lines 129-132 worms are described inside the wound.

Wuermer, an Staerke und Laenge meinem kleinen Finger gleich, (129)

Worms, as thick and as long as my little finger,

rosig aus eigenem und ausserdem blutbespritzt, winden sich, im Innern der Wunde festgehalten... (129-132)

themselves rose red and blood-spotted as well, were wriggling from their fastness in the interior of the wound...

If the wound may mean either the vagina or the anus, then the worms wriggling inside as obvious phallic symbols signify either heterosexual or homosexual intercourse. Worms are also frequently associated with fecal matter. «Finger» is also slang for «Knabbenpenis» (boy's penis). «Rosig» refers back to «Rosa» and anal defloration. «Blutbespritzt» refers primarily to vaginal defloration, although non-procreative sperm, i.e. wasted sperm, is referred to as blood in the Judaic tradition. Furthermore, the worm as a phallic signifier is also a hermaphroditic creature – a symbol of same sex love. So the Klartext would read:

*phalluses [of young boys]
rose-red the color of heterosexual or homosexual activity,
splattered with the blood of vaginal defloration or the
sperm and blood of anal defloration,
moving around inside either the vagina or the anus*

4. FURTHER EXAMPLES OF CODE

I must first digress here briefly to provide background concerning allusions to Venus in «A Country Doctor». Eros Uranios (Venus Urania) was one of the code words used by the homosexual movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to refer to same sex love.⁵ Venus' dual nature stems from classical mythology: Venus Urania is described as having arisen non-heterosexually from the foam surrounding the castrated genitals of Uranus, whereas Venus Pandemos arose from the heterosexual union of Zeus and Dione. Plato's *Symposium* emphasizes the superior nature of Venus Urania as the goddess of «pure and spiritual love» (Morford 114-115). Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus im Pelz* (Lady in Furs), first published in 1870, from which the term masochism is derived, plays on this Venus duality. A «lady in furs» figures prominently in Kafka's «Metamorphosis». I believe Venus Urania is alluded to when the country doctor puts on his fur coat.⁶ In the novel *Venus im Pelz*, the dominatrix, Wanda, wears her fur coat (Pelz) when she wishes to arouse her love slave Gregor through flagellation and other mistreatment. Of course, the country doctor, with his fur coat, suggests gender reversal of the Lady in Furs. A recent homoerotic reading of Sacher-Masoch's novel dovetails with my present interpretation.⁷

⁵ An example is Benedict Friedlaender's Book *Eros Uranios* published in 1904.

⁶ In «The Metamorphosis», Gregor, as the traveling salesman turned beetle, soothes his hot underbelly on the glass-covered picture of a fur-clad lady resembling Sacher-Masoch's «Venus im Pelz».

⁷ Albrecht, Thomas, Manuscript, University of California, Irvine. Presented at the Fourth Annual Germanic Studies Graduate Student Conference at Yale, April 1993.

With «Venus Urania» in mind, I would now like to examine the slang or pornographic meanings of Lines 5-7.

in den Pelz gepackt, (5)
muffled in furs,
die Instrumententasche in der Hand, (5-6)
my bag of instruments in my hand,
stand ich reisefertig schon auf dem Hofe; (6)
I was in the courtyard all ready for the journey;
aber das Pferd fehlte, das Pferd. (6-7)
but there was no horse to be had, no horse.

The word «Pelz» in German, besides meaning fur coat or furs is also the word for skin. It also means female pubic hair (Schamhaar). Thus, *Venus im Pelz (Lady in Furs)* may be pornographically transposed to «Venus in the Pubic Hair Area». Although I cannot fully elaborate here, a comparison of all the usages of «Pelz» in the text points to «Pelz» as the skin in or around the anal opening. «Pelzen» means to have intercourse. Although «packen» may mean male masturbation, it also means coitus. Furthermore, «in den Pelz» implies entering something. I therefore believe that the country doctor is intended as a reversal of the heterosexual *Venus im Pelz*, i.e., «Venus in the pubic hair area» to «Venus in the anal area».

«Reise» is a synonym of «Fahrt» meaning intercourse. «Hofe» is associated with Huefte (hips) via acoustic metonymy and also via «Scheidenhof». Thus the latent meaning or the Klartext emerges as follows:

my hand, moving into the anal opening, (5)
my hand around my penis and scrotum, (5-6)
I was beginning to get an erection in my hip area (6)
but I did not have a male partner (6-7)

The assumption of anal masturbation becomes clearer through analysis of Lines 13-18 below. He may also be latently envisioning penetration. Further analysis of the text after Line 24 indicates that the doctor is latently «dreaming» of intercourse with a partner in front and back, which correlates with the doctor manually stimulating his penis and anal area.

Ich durchmass noch einmal den Hof; ich fand keine Moeglichkeit; (13-14)
I strode through the courtyard once more; I could see no way out [solution];
zerstreut, gequaelt stiess ich mit dem Fuss an die bruechige Tuer des schon seit Jahren unbenuetzten Schweinestalles. (14-16)
in my confused distress I kicked at the dilapidated door of the year-long uninhabited pigsty.
Sie oeffnete sich und klappte in den Angeln auf und zu. (16-17)
It flew open and flapped to and fro on its hinges.
Waerme und Geruch wie von Pferden kam hervor. (17-18)
A steam and smell as of horses came out from it.

Foot as Phallus is a well-known Freudian heterosexual symbol as is Door for vaginal opening. The vaginal allusion is reinforced through the word «stiess» since «stossen» in slang means to have intercourse. «Stall», besides obvious unsavory connotations associated with «Schweinestall» (pigsty) may also refer to the opening of a man's pants or to the vagina, in connection with rape, sexual surrender or defloration. Given the horse smells coming from the pigsty, it appears to be a condensed image of the vagina superimposed on the anus. «Hof» (court) becomes «Huefte» (hips) and «Fuss» (foot) becomes «Fausst» (fist = hand) through displacement based on acoustic metonymy. If the assumption of Line 5 is correct, that his hand was already in his anus, then he would have had to retract it before breaking down the door. Pferde (horses) refers to the male active or passive partners, as is evident from Lines 24-5.

«Holla, Bruder, holla, Schwester!» rief der Pferdeknecht... (24-5)
«Hey there, Brother, hey there, Sister!» called the groom.

Brother is a well-known name for homosexual and one of the meanings of sister is the feminine homosexual partner. The word field for «Klappe» is predominately homosexual since it either means a bar for homosexuals, prostitutes etc., or a public toilet where homosexuals seek partners. The words «Angel» and «Angeln» are predominately heterosexual, with the meanings of penis and coitus. However, a subsidiary connotation of «Angeln» is masturbation.

It can be seen from the various word fields that each word was selected with care to allude ambiguously to heterosexual and homosexual intercourse. The Klartext for Lines 13-18 thus reads:

I moved my hand across my hip; I could see no solution, in my confused sexual need I pushed my hand into the opening of my anus which had not experienced penetration in years. It opened and, anally masturbating, [or through imagined anal coitus] it snapped open and shut and steam and the smell of the anal opening came forth.

As a last example of the code, I have chosen Lines 195-200 at the end of the text. The excerpt below echoes «Eros Uranios» since the word «irdisch» (earthly) was used in a 1910 translation of Plato's *Symposium (Gastmahl)* to describe heterosexual love as inferior to love between men. There may even be a faint echo of Venus' chariot in «A Country Doctor». So the unearthly horses are either the country doctor's male partners (Uringe) or homoerotic drives and the earthly wagon would be his body.

Nackt, dem Froste dieses unglueckseligsten Zeitalters ausgesetzt, (195-6)
Naked, exposed to the frost of this most unhappy of ages,
mit irdischem Wagen, unirdischen Pferden, treibe ich mich alter Mann umher. (196-7)
with an earthly vehicle, unearthly horses, old man that I am, I wander astray.
Mein Pelz haengt hinten am Wagen, ich kann ihn aber nicht erreichen, (197-8)
My fur coat is hanging from the back of the gig, but I cannot reach it,
und keiner aus dem beweglichen Gesindel der Patienten ruehrt den Finger. (198-9)
and none of my limber pack of patients lifts a finger.

Using the lexical clues «treiben» for either heterosexual or homosexual intercourse, and «Ruehrer» (stirrer) and «Finger» for penis, along with «Pelz» as anus and patient as the homosexual, I arrive at the following Klartext:

Naked, exposed to the lack of sexual partners in old age, with an apparently heterosexual body, but homoerotic drives, old man that I am, I try to find male partners where I can. I can't reach my anal opening (to masturbate)
And none of the sexually active young men will penetrate me

The bivalent principle is strongly evident in the last two lines of the text which follow:

Betrogen! Betrogen! Einmal dem Fehllaeten der Nachtglocke gefolgt (200)
Betrayed! Betrayed! A false alarm on the night bell once answered

In slang «die Glocke laeuten» can either refer to orgasm in the female during heterosexual intercourse or to arousal in a man by fondling his testicles. «Fehlkonstruktion» or a «flawed construction» appears to refer self-deprecatingly to homosexuality. So the Klartext reads:

Deceived! Deceived! From the first fateful time I was seduced by the feel of another man's testicles or another man touching me (or that I brought a woman to orgasm).

5. CONCLUSION

Of interest is a diary excerpt which Kafka wrote in 1917:

I can still get occasional *satisfaction* from works such as «Country Doctor», on condition that such a project is successful (very unlikely). A stroke of luck, however, if I am able to bring the world closer to *purity, truth and immutability*.⁸

Obviously, he says himself that there was some kind of *satisfaction* in the writing process, perhaps a sort of erotic catharsis. But even here Kafka continues to write in code. Mecke speculates that some of Kafka's friends must have understood the code. If so, they would have appreciated the irony in Kafka's statement, that he hoped «Country Doctor» would bring the world closer to purity and truth.

In a jarring way, Kafka's inner turmoil is reflected in the tension between the homoerotic subtext, the network of heterosexual allusions, and the surface narrative. Thus, «A Country Doctor» may be variously interpreted as an evocation of bisexuality or homosexuality and the alienation of the sexual Other from heterosexual society.

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⁸ My translation of excerpt quoted in Hiebel 137 (T534), my emphasis.

Zeitweilige *Befriedigung* kann ich von Arbeiten wie «Landarzt» noch haben, vorausgesetzt, dass mir etwas Derartiges noch gelingt (sehr unwahrscheinlich). Glueck aber nur, falls ich die Welt ins *Reine, Wahre, Unveraenderliche* heben kann.

Actually «Landarzt» here refers to the whole *Landarzt* collection of stories.

Das Ewig-Weibliche – *Die Sorge des Hausvaters*

Franz Kafkas Erzählung psychoanalytisch-feministisch gelesen

ASTRID LANGE-KIRCHHEIM (*)

In diesem, «Kafkas berühmtestem Prosastück» (Adorno 1963, 329) und einem seiner meistgedeuteten Texte (E 170-172) hat die Figur Odradeks die Deutungsenergien in einem Maße auf sich gezogen, daß man geneigt ist, sie als gestaltgewordenes Rätsel, ja als Allegorie des Rätsels selbst zu bezeichnen. Walter Benjamin (431) hat Odradek den «sonderbarste[n] Bastard» genannt, «den die Vorwelt bei Kafka mit der Schuld gezeugt» habe, und ihn mit dem «bucklicht Männlein» aus dem Volkslied verglichen. Anderen galt er als Ware im Sinne von Marx, als Zeug im Sinne Heideggers (Bense 65f.), oder er geriet zur Metapher des Textes selbst.¹ Die Dechiffrierungen Odradeks bewegen sich vorzugsweise im hochabstrakten und männlich konnotierten Bereich. Und selbst wenn «*Das Sorgenkind Odradek*» als Titel eines germanistischen Aufsatzes figuriert (Hillmann), besteht kein Anlaß, auch vom weiblichen Kind zu handeln. Das Tabu, das männliche Geschlecht als Metapher des weiblichen zu lesen, hat bisher keine Interpretation gebrochen, und das, obwohl Adorno (1953, 256) von Kafkas Werk als «Schrift gewordener Turandot» gesprochen hat und der Titel unseres Prosastückes ausdrücklich «*Die Sorge*» heißt. Eher hat man sich um die männliche Sexualität Odradeks Sorgen gemacht – «Odradek ist von erstaunlicher Asexualität» – und ihm, analog zu Papagena, eine bessere Hälfte namens Odradka anphantasiert (Holbein 165). Neben dieser geschlechtsspezifischen Einäugigkeit ist den meisten Deutungen vorzuwerfen, daß sie die *Beziehung* Hausvater-Odradek mißachten, die im Zentrum des Textes stehe, wie bereits Hillmann hervorgehoben hat. Doch auch dies ist zu kritisieren. Die Ich-Form präsentiert uns die Erzählung als Rede eines Ichs über Odradek, die wir nur mit Rücksicht auf die Überschrift als Rede eines Hausvaters zu bezeichnen Anlaß haben. Da das Ich im Text sich nie ausdrücklich als Hausvater ausweist und da außerdem auf Grund der Ich-Form – die sich bekanntlich zur Beglaubigung von Lügengeschichten phantastisch eignet – keine Verifizierung des Mitgeteilten erwartet werden kann, haben wir letztlich nur die *Phantasien* eines

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¹ Vgl. die Übersicht bei Neumann in: *Kafka-Handbuch*, Bd. 2, 342-44.

Ichs zu Odradek vor uns. Es als «Hausvater» vorzustellen, also in einer bestimmten männlichen Rolle, unternimmt die Überschrift bereits in deutender, sc. ironischer Absicht.

Der Versuch, den Deutungen der Figur Odradeks eine neue hinzuzufügen, in der ich die Sorge des Hausvaters als eine durch das Weibliche verursachte Sorge lese, geht auf Reflexion und Fortführung folgender Akzentuierungen durch die Kafkaforschung zurück. Als Exponent der Thematik von Kunst/Literatur und Tod ist Odradek wiederholt herausgestellt worden: wie erwähnt, gilt die Figur als Chiffre des dichterischen Textes, als Chiffre des Autors Kafka, schließlich als Chiffre eines bestimmten seiner Werke, nämlich des «mißratenen Kindes» *Der Jäger Gracchus* (Pasley 125f.). Odradek repräsentiert das unsterbliche Werk gegenüber der Sterblichkeit des Autors. Als hermetischer Text stellt er an den Leser den Anspruch, er möge in der stets zu erneuernden Reflexion auf seine Auslegungskategorien letztlich auch seine eigene Sterblichkeit reflektieren. Der Deutungsreihe Kunst und Tod kann man aus der Sicht der kulturkritisch, feministisch und psychoanalytisch verfahrenen Literaturinterpretation als drittes Glied die Weiblichkeit hinzufügen: «Nur über ihre Leiche. Tod, Weiblichkeit und Ästhetik» (Bronfen) – diese Optik rückt das lebendig-tote Wesen Odradek unweigerlich auf weibliches Gebiet. Von hierher kann nun die These, die Relation Hausvater-Odradek sei als Paradigma der Leser-Text-Beziehung zu verstehen (Saße), als männliche Phantasie gewertet werden. Georg Groddeck's Ausspruch z. B.: «Lesen ist, symbolisch gefaßt, Phantasie über das Weibliche» (11), macht diese Tradition der Metaphorisierung der Frau durch das Buch offenkundig. E. R. Curtius (339) hat, im Rahmen historischer Metaphorik, auf Othellos Formulierung seiner Zweifel an Desdemonas Reinheit hingewiesen:

Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write «whore» upon? (*Othello*, IV, 2, 70)

Genau gelesen, greift Kafkas Text diesen Topos sogar selber auf, klingt doch Odradeks Lachen «wie das Rascheln in gefallen Blättern» (E 171), nämlich Schrift-Blättern.² Die Sündenfall-Allusion verbindet Kafka und Shakespeare, rückt Odradek neben Eva; die Mehrdeutigkeit von «Blätter» (auf Bäume, Blumen, die Defloration und den Schreibprozeß beziehbar) impliziert einen männlichen Schöpfungsmythos und einen entsprechenden Weiblichkeitsentwurf: die schwarze Schrift auf dem unschuldigen Papier («fair») macht die Schrift-Blätter zu «gefallenen». Der Schreiber aber imaginiert sich als Schöpfergott, ist doch das «most goodly book» eine Anspielung auf die Bibel, das Buch der Bücher. Im gleichen Akt, in dem der Schreiber sich seiner Unsterblichkeit versichert, wird der sündhafte weibliche Körper im «beschriebenen» Blatt seiner Gefährlichkeit entkleidet und zum Schrift-Körper deanimiert.

Die topische Apostrophierung der Frau als Kind rückt Odradek ein weiteres Mal in die Nähe des Weiblichen. «[Schon Spinoza schloß] Frauen von der Ethik aus mit der gleichen Begründung wie Kinder und Irre» (Kristeva 84). Odradek aber figuriert für den Hausvater als Kind und sinnloses, sc. «wahn-sinniges» Gebilde. Der Titel evoziert die Familienkonstellation von Vater – Mutter/Frau – Kind und zitiert im «Hausvater»³ den pater familias in seiner Herrscherrolle gegenüber dem gesamten Haus, d. h. gegenüber der Hausmutter und den Hausgenossen (das sind die Kinder und das Gesinde). Der gottgleichen Allmacht entspricht die Ich-Erzählsituation, die in der monologischen Ichrede den Erzähler als vermittelnden Dritten eliminiert. Die am konsequentesten verallgemeinerte Deutung Odradeks «als der zur Erhellung üblichen Daseins eigens eingeführte und zweckvoll konstruierte Gegenentwurf» (Binder 1975, 231), läßt sich somit präzisieren: das «übliche Dasein» meint das einer hausväterlich-patriarchalisch organisierten Kultur, der

² Die Verbindung «gefallene Blätter» – Schriftblätter – Sündenfall zieht bereits Pasley (126), ohne jedoch die weibliche Konnotation zu beachten.

³ Daß er patriarchalische Herrschaft suggeriert, hat zum ersten Mal Kurz (92) gesehen und den Bezug zur «Hausväterliteratur» hergestellt. Zu deren feministischer Analyse vgl. Bovenschen 138-149.

Gegenentwurf besteht, so meine These, da der wirkliche Andere fehlt, in der phantasierten Andersartigkeit von Frau, Kind, Irrem (und per implicationem der Kunst).

Die weibliche Konnotation Odradeks ergibt sich schließlich auch aus den zu Kleinheit und Weiblichkeit neigenden kryptischen Selbsteinschreibungen Kafkas in seine Texte. In seiner Winzigkeit steht Odradek den kleinen Wesen wie Käfer, Maus, Maulwurf als Identifikationsfiguren Kafkas nahe⁴, die besonders im Spätwerk dezidiert weiblich sind: *Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse, Eine kleine Frau*. Besonders letztere Erzählung – die eines ebenfalls männlichen Erzähler-Ichs – bündelt noch einmal die Themen von Kunst/Literatur und Tod in einer gleich Odradek mit dem Attribut des Hölzernen – als Verweis auf Papier und Buch – versehenen Frauenfigur. Breit entfaltet ist in ihr zudem die Idee des Verfolgtwerdens, die sich bereits in den unablässigen Bestimmungsversuchen des Hausvaters gegenüber Odradek und in dessen ständiger «Wiederkehr» manifestiert. Mit der Figur des weiblichen Verfolgers hat Kafka bereits zwei Jahre zuvor, in der Erzählung *Blumfeld, ein älterer Junggeselle* (1915), verdeckt experimentiert, in der die beiden Zelluloidbälle – deutlich in der Funktion von Ersatzliebesobjekten – mit den «zwei kleinen Mädchen des Hausmeisters [!]» (KKAN 1, 248) parallelisiert werden.⁵

Die Bestimmung Odradeks als Text bzw. seine Analogisierung mit dessen Präformen wie dem Traum oder den «ins Unbewußte verbannten Energien und Botschaften» (Ehrich-Haefeli 250, 246) leistet einen weiteren Beitrag zur Femininisierung der Figur, als gezeigt werden konnte, daß bei Freud das Unbewußte weiblich konnotiert ist (Rohde-Dachser 143). Andererseits muß nun die mittels der Freudschen Kategorien vorgenommene Deutung Odradeks – in feministisch-metakritischer Perspektive – korrigiert werden, indem auf die in die Konzeption des Unbewußten eingegangenen patriarchalischen Weiblichkeitskonstruktionen reflektiert wird.

Von den vorangegangenen Überlegungen her bestimmt sich nun mein weiteres Vorgehen, die Sorge des Hausvaters als eine durch das Weibliche bedingte Sorge zu akzentuieren. Ich werde dies unter drei Aspekten tun:

1. Im ersten Durchgang durch den Text verbleibe ich innerhalb der Fiktion und versuche, einmal, die Rede des Ich über Odradek als ein Symptom- und Abwehrsprechen zu verstehen, und zum anderen, die Relation Hausvater-Odradek als eine phantasierte Objektbeziehung zu deuten.

2. Im zweiten Durchgang stelle ich die Relation Hausvater-Odradek als eine inszenierte und vielfach ironisch gebrochene Beziehung heraus. Meine These ist, daß in den Phantasien des Ich über Odradek patriarchalische Weiblichkeitsentwürfe vorgeführt und destruiert werden. Könnte der Titel der Erzählung vielleicht sogar eine ironische Replik auf «Hausvater» Freud sein?

3. Im dritten Durchgang stelle ich die Verbindung zur Biographie Kafkas her.

1.

Der Text beginnt als Ich-Rede über das Wort Odradek. In fünfmaligem Ansatz, vom abstrakten Wort ausgehend und beim Eingeständnis des körperlichen Schmerzes endend, umkreist dieses Ich das sprachlich anscheinend nicht zu beherrschende Wesen Odradek. Das mit invertierter Satzkonstruktion pointiert ans Ende des Textes gerückte Epitheton «schmerzlich» stellt den affektiven Höhepunkt der Rede dar. Hier bricht sie ab, als sei der Sprechende sich selbst zu nahe auf den Leib

⁴ Das Textfragment *Der Quälgeist* (Oktavheft D, März/April 1917, KKAN 1, 367f.) kann als Vorstufe für *Die Sorge des Hausvaters* angesehen werden. Dort heißt es: «Kleiner als die kleinste Maus, unsichtbar selbst einem nahegebrachten Auge, drückt sich der Quälgeist in einen Winkel». Schon hier ist zwischen Quälgeist und Ich kaum zu trennen, da beide «den Winkel» aufsuchen.

⁵ Die Phantasien vom Tierwerden, Kindwerden, Frauwerden, schließlich Nichtswerden erscheinen als Prozeß fortschreitender (Selbst-)Deterritorialisierungen Kafkas, worin sich freilich nur die gesellschaftlichen Ausgrenzungen spiegeln.

gerückt und könne das, wofür Odradek steht, nicht mehr von sich fernhalten. Der Redeverlauf zeigt, daß das Hausvater-Ich mit immer neuen Abwehrstrategien – dazu gehört eine quasi wissenschaftliche Systematik der Beobachtung und Schlußfolgerung –, aber mit stetig abnehmendem Erfolg versucht, Odradek aus dem Bereich des Wißbaren, Sinnhaften, Vernünftigen auszugrenzen, ja ihn geradezu zu psychotisieren.⁶ Odradek ließe sich daher begreifen als die Art und Weise, in der sich für das Ich das Unbewußte manifestiert: das Verdrängte betreibt gebieterisch seine Rückkehr aus dem «Un-Ort der Vergessenheit»⁷, aus den Randzonen und Übergangsräumen des Hauses, um seine Zugehörigkeit zum «Heim», zum «Haus des Ichs» unter Beweis zu stellen. Im Symptom des Schmerzes hat sich das Verdrängte quasi eingekörpert, sich für das Ich unabweisbar zur Wahrnehmung gebracht. Odradek kann also zunächst als Allegorie des Freudschen Unbewußten, als narrative Antizipation seiner Bestimmung des «Un-heimlichen» gelesen werden. In Odradek konkretisieren sich die abgespaltenen Selbstanteile des Ichs, auf Odradek projiziert es, was es an sich selbst nicht wahrnehmen möchte. Odradek ist der Spiegel, welcher einerseits Zeitlichkeit, Zerrissenheit, Unordnung, ja Wahnsinn, im Ich aufdeckt, ihm andererseits ein kohärentes Selbst – ein «Ganzes», ein Etwas ohne «Bruchstellen» (E 171) – zurückspiegeln soll, in der Konzeption Lacans: imaginäres Ich und zerstückelter Körper in einem.

Als allegorische Personifikation des Unbewußten kann das Wesen Odradek jedoch seine Herkunft aus dem mütterlichen Nähkorb einerseits, dem Kinderzimmer andererseits nicht verleugnen. Unter dem Aspekt einer psychoanalytischen Entwicklung bzw. Konstitution des Subjekts lassen sich «Riß» und «Bruch» im Äußeren der Figur, die durch Zwirn, Spule, Faden weiblich konnotiert ist,⁸ auf die Kastration beziehen; im Denken Lacans verweisen sie auf die Spaltung, welche die Sprache im Ich hervorruft; gilt doch das Wort als Mord an der Sache, als Mord am mütterlichen Körper, als Mord am Soma.⁹ Die Spule als Metapher des mütterlichen Phallus, die (verleugnete) Zerbrochenheit als Manifestation der Kastration, machen Odradek zum Bild sowohl der kastrierten Frau wie der phallischen Mutter. Er ähnelt damit jenen besonders raffinierten Fetischen, in deren «Aufbau sowohl die Verleugnung wie die Behauptung der Kastration Eingang gefunden haben» (Freud 1925, 387).¹⁰ Das Ich bewegt sich imaginierend in einer narzißtischen Objektbeziehung, der phallischen Phase, in der die Anerkennung des Geschlechtsunterschieds bewältigt werden müßte.¹¹ Dieser Entwicklungsschritt ist dem Ich offenbar nicht gelungen: Odradek figuriert weiterhin als «er», als männliches Doppel; darin wird die Frau in ihm so verleugnet wie sie im Vergleich mit dem unvernünftigen, der Sprache kaum mächtigen Kind entwertet ist (E 171f.). Der Preis für die Nicht-Anerkennung des Geschlechtsunterschieds ist das lustarme, depressiv und zwanghaft eingeschränkte Dasein eines Hausvaters, den man zu «Kafkas unermüdliche[n] Rechner[n]»¹² zu zählen hätte. Das surreale Kunstwesen Odradek ist Exponent eines tendenziell wahnhaften Weltbezugs.

⁶ «Das Ganze erscheint zwar sinnlos, aber in seiner Art abgeschlossen» – dieser Satz mutet wie ein verdecktes Shakespearezitat an: «Ist dies schon Tollheit, hat es doch Methode» («Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't») *Hamlet* II, 2, 208f.). In dieser Weise kommentiert Polonius, wahrhaftig auch ein «Hausvater», Hamlets Wahnsinn.

⁷ Verena Ehrich-Haefeli 243; sie hat diese Deutung Odradeks als Manifestation des Unbewußten im Anschluß an Benjamin breit entfaltet (243-246).

⁸ Mit Blick auf Ariadne, «die Moira als Signatur des Weiblichen», bezeichnen Pohlen & Bautz-Holzherr das Spinnen als «maternelle Signifikation schlechthin». Die Spindel mit dem Faden sei damit «Attribut des Weiblichen» (205).

⁹ Vgl. hierzu die kritische Analyse des «Fort-da-Spiels» bei Bronfen (28-60: «Eine Dame verschwindet»).

¹⁰ Diese Einheit von Gegensätzen signalisiert schon der Name «Odradek». Dessen «Oxymoron-Struktur» entwickelt einleuchtend Ehrich-Haefeli (241f.).

¹¹ Irene Fast (58) weist nach, daß das Phantasiebild der phallischen Mutter in der Phase vor der Anerkennung der Geschlechterdifferenz entwickelt wird und der Kastrationsangst korrespondiert.

¹² So der Titel eines Aufsatzes von Jürgen Born. – «Lust, verführen, natürlich, gefallene Blätter» (E 171) – dieses Wortnetz im 4. Absatz akzentuiert deutlich die Triebnatur des Menschen, gegen die sich der Hausvater in der iterierenden Reflexion und im Gestus des unpersönlichen «man» abriegelt.

Sehen wir in Odradeks Neigung zum Verstummen einen Spiegel der eingeschränkten Sprach- und Symbolisierungsfähigkeit des Hausvater-Ichs, kehren wir zur Zwirrspule als Kinderspielzeug zurück, was für uns als Nachfahren Freuds und Lacans eine Situierung Kafkas im Kontext des «Fort-da-Spiels» nahelegt.¹³ Spule, Faden, zeitweiliges Verschwinden und Wiederauftauchen, ja sogar die Lautfolge o – a im Namen Odradek, stellen die Korrespondenz her. Für einen extensiven Vergleich fehlt hier der Raum, doch scheint offensichtlich, daß es dem Ich in Kafkas Text nicht gelang, sich in der Spule ein Symbol für die Mutter zu erschaffen, von deren unmittelbarer Präsenz es sich durch das Fort-da-Spielen unabhängig machte. Odradek schrumpft nicht zum (Sprach-)Zeichen, sondern bleibt ein Wesen, welches das Ich einerseits verfolgt, dessen Anwesenheit das Ich andererseits beinahe gebieterisch verlangt: «unweigerlich»(!) (E 171) kehrt Odradek ins gemeinsame «Haus» zurück. Unabgelöst kann dieses Ich deshalb nicht wahrhaft sterben, es phantasiert sich angstvoll als jemanden, der «überlebt» (E 172), d. h. verlassen wird, von Odradek, dem *puer aeternus* als Verschiebungersatz für die allmächtige Mutter.¹⁴ Kann Odradek in der phantasierten Objektbeziehung des Hausvaters sowohl das Objekt wie auch das Selbst vertreten, können wir auch Odradek in der Position des nicht abgelösten Kindes sehen: ortlos irrt er zwischen den wechselnden Häusern umher, als suche er allererst eine Bindung an ein Heim, eine gute Bindung. Diese hätte der Trennung vorauszugehen; sie fehlt aber ihm genauso wie dem Hausvater. Repräsentiert die Spule die Mutter wie das in ihr fortlebende unabgelöste Kind, das sie einmal war, dann läßt, in der Mehrgenerationen-Perspektive, das innerlich zerbrochene, nach außen abgeschlossene Wesen Odradek an eine wenig einfühlsame Mutterfigur denken, die, im eigenen Leid eingeschlossen, unfähig ist, das Kind in seiner Eigenart zu bestätigen und sicher zu binden. Die flache, nur scheinbar mit Zwirn bezogene Spule – eine Mutter ohne Wärme und Empathie? Man fühlt sich an die Experimente mit Drahtmüttern erinnert, die R. G. Harlow an Primaten durchführte.¹⁵

2.

Verfolgen wir heuristisch die Hypothese, daß Odradek außer als Allegorie des Unbewußten auch als Allegorie der Frau gelesen werden kann, ironisiert und kritisiert die Gestalt dieses koboldartigen Wesens die Weiblichkeitskonstruktionen des Patriarchats und der Psychoanalyse, die in der Figur des Hausvaters repräsentiert zu sein scheinen.¹⁶ Es wäre dann als grandioser, eine wissenschaftliche Konstruktion prospektiv vorwegnehmender künstlerischer Einfall zu werten, zur Allegorisierung des «Rätsel[s] der Weiblichkeit» (Freud 1933, 545) die Rätselfigur Odradek entworfen zu haben, die in eben der Weise zur Projektionsfläche der Deuter wird, wie das Weibliche das Projektionsfeld des

¹³ Unabhängig voneinander – «Jenseits des Lustprinzips» erscheint 1920 – machen Kafka und Freud ein typisches Kinderspiel zum Paradigma der Konstitution des Ich. Der Spielzeugcharakter der Figur Odradek ist mehrfach herausgestellt worden (z. B. von Backenköhler). Zu ergänzen ist, daß die Zwirrspule auf zwei Beinen als «Kopffüßler» anzusprechen ist, das früheste Menschenschema in der Zeichnung von Kleinkindern (vgl. die Abbildungen bei Stern, 319).

¹⁴ Odradek wäre also, in der Sprache Lacans, «lebendiger Signifikant» geblieben, das Ich wäre als traumatisiert vorzustellen. So sehr Odradek dem Lacanschen «Objekt klein a» gleicht, so wenig scheint das Hausvater-Ich zum Spiel fähig zu sein, nicht fähig dazu, Odradek als «kleines Etwas vom Subjekt» sowohl abzulösen, wie zu bewahren (Lacan 1978, 68f.).

¹⁵ Diesen Zusammenhang bestätigt eine der Deutungen des Namens Odradek: «durch Liebesentzug definiert, nirgends festgeschrieben», was in der Kafkaforschung vorschnell als «väterlicher Liebesentzug» verstanden und festgeschrieben wurde (Pierre 39; Neumann 342f.).

¹⁶ «Gedanken an Freud» sind Kafka, wie wir seit dem *Urteil* wissen, «natürlich» (KKAT 1, 461). Im Text *Ein Landarzt*, welcher der *Sorge des Hausvaters* 1917 unmittelbar vorausgeht, haben Marson & Leopold Anspielungen auf Freud nachgewiesen. Freuds einschlägige Schriften zur Weiblichkeit erscheinen zwar erst nach 1917, doch hat er bereits in der *Traumdeutung*, die Kafka wahrscheinlich kannte, das zum «Ungebändigten und Unzerstörbaren in der Menschenseele, dem Dämonischen» mythisierte Unbewußte geradewegs mit dem Weiblichen in eine Reihe gestellt: «das ewig Weibliche, die Unsterblichkeit unserer Affekte» (Freud 1900, 582, 437). Vgl. auch Schlesier 32.

Mannes darstellt. Des weiteren scheint die Irrealität der Figur förmlich für den Zweck ersonnen, die phantasmatischen Momente in der Freudschen Konzeption des Weiblichen aufzudecken. Die Fülle der Verneinungen z. B., die der Hausvater zur Bestimmung Odradeks einsetzt, entspricht den in Freuds Theorie der Weiblichkeit angehäuften Negationen. Diese Theorie entwirft das Bild einer Frau

- die *keine* vom Mann unabhängigen Wünsche und Interessen hat;
- *keine* vom Mann unabhängige Lust;
- *kein* autonomes sexuelles Begehren;
- *keinen* anderen wertvollen Besitz;
- *keine* Überlegenheit und *keine* Macht über den Mann;
- die *keinen* anderen (d. h. *keinen* Rivalen) an ihrer Seite hat;
- und die – last not least – *keinen* Vorwurf erhebt (Rohde-Dachser 64).

Die zahlreichen Verneinungen dokumentieren – nach Renate Schlesier (166) und Christa Rohde-Dachser (63ff.) – die «Unabgeschlossenheit des Aufklärungsvorgangs», in dem – abwehrbedingt – vermieden wird, positiv zu bestimmen, was das Weibliche sei: ein Vorgang der Mythisierung also. Darin zeigt sich paradigmatisch, daß unsere Kultur das Weibliche nicht repräsentiert, ihm keinen eigenen Ort gewährt, sondern es nur als Anderes des Männlichen zuläßt. Das Abwehrbedingte dieser negativen Zuschreibungen stellt Kafka durch das *Lachen* Odradeks und durch *Zitation* der *Negation* heraus: «"Unbestimmter Wohnsitz", sagt er und lacht» – auf die Frage nach seinem Zuhause. «Die Vorsilbe "un" an diesem Worte ist aber die Marke der Verdrängung», hat Freud gelegentlich seiner Schrift über «Das Unheimliche» festgehalten (1919, 267). Das Defizienzmodell des Weiblichen wird auch dadurch bestätigt, daß Frau/Odradek keinen Nachnamen besitzt. Der Mangel des Patronymikons plaziert Odradek ebenso «außerhalb der Ordnung», wie dies schon sein Vorname tut, für dessen gemischt deutsch-tschechische Bildung die Bedeutung «kleines Wesen außerhalb der Ordnung» (Backenköhler 211) vorgeschlagen worden ist. «"Unordnung" und "Chaos" [sind] innerhalb des phallischen Diskurses alles Zuweisungen an das Weibliche» (Rohde-Dachser 270).

In kaum zu überbietender Weise hat Otto Weininger das Weibliche als negatives Syndrom, als ein Syndrom von Defekten gefaßt. Seine Dissertation von 1903, *Geschlecht und Charakter*, war Kafka bekannt und prägte die Gestaltung seiner Frauenfiguren, besonders im *Proceß*, nachhaltig. Antizipierend ironisiert Odradek auch das Defizienzmodell des Weiblichen bei Lacan, dessen «Zurück zu Freud!» hier zuweilen wie ein «Zurück zu Weininger!» anmutet. Das zeigt das «Wesen des Geschlechtsgegensatzes [...], Subjekt - Objekt = Form - Materie = Mann - Frau» bei Weininger ebenso wie die Reihe folgender Bestimmungen: «Der Mann als das Etwas, die Frau als das Nichts» – «Das Nichtsein des Weibes» – «[Ihr] Trachten nach Existenz» (Weininger XXI). «Der Sinn des Weibes ist also, Nicht-Sinn zu sein. Es repräsentiert das Nichts» (ebd. 398). Bekanntlich steht auch bei Lacan die Frau für das Nicht-Existierende, für «das, was vom Symbolischen ausgegrenzt wird, [...] was sich durch den Logos nicht einfangen läßt» (Widmer 96). Dieses Unbestimmbare symbolisiert nun seinerseits das Wesen Odradek, das «außerordentlich beweglich und nicht zu fangen» ist (E 171); den kategorialen Netzen des Hausvaters entgeht es mit Notwendigkeit.

Weininger und Lacan verbindet das dualistische Denken und die Metaphorik. Zwar meint der Gegensatz Mann – Frau einen logischen bzw. typologischen, doch enthüllt die affirmative, schlachtrufartige Sprachgebung – «La femme n'existe pas» – den zugrundeliegenden Affekt. Wenn zudem die Metapher, wie die Psychoanalyse gezeigt hat, immer auch ein Fragment einer unbewußten Phantasie enthält, liegt der Theoriesprache von Weininger-Freud-Lacan jene Knabenphantasie zugrunde, daß die Frau kastriert sei. Nicht nur Weininger erweist sich damit als «der treue und klarblickende Chronist der Phantasmen seiner Kultur» (Calasso 666)! Als Repräsentantin des «phallischen Monismus» kann, darf Odradek also nur männlichen Geschlechts sein. In den grotesken Zügen seiner Figur stellt Kafka das Zentralphantasma einer Kultur, die noch die unsrige ist, als Phantasma selbst heraus. Die primärprozeßhaft strukturierte Figur Odradek legt die Herkunft des Phantasmas aus dem Vergangenheitsunbewußten, dem präoperationalen Denken offen. Odradek allegorisiert darüberhinaus den «doppelten Weiblichkeitsentwurf» der Psychoanalyse Freuds (Rohde-Dachser 137-141), den der kastrierten *und*

der dämonischen Frau, wobei die dämonische Seite ihre bannende Kraft zu verlieren beginnt. Bestimmt Weininger noch «Das Weib als die Schuld des Mannes» (XXI), so mindert sich ihre Aggressivität bei Kafka zur «Sorge des Hausvaters». Gleichwohl läßt sich im lachenden Odradek, der die Häuser wechselt und so beweglich ist, noch das Bild der furchtbaren Frau, der großen Hure erkennen, deren Nähe zum Tier und zum polymorph-perversen Kind Tradition hat. Das legen die Aufenthaltsorte von Flur bis Dachboden nahe, welche die Frau/Odradek einerseits buchstäblich «an den Rändern des Symbolischen» (Gölter) ansiedeln, sie andererseits in den bei Kafka durchgängig sexuell konnotierten «Verkehrs»-räumen beheimaten. Auch in Kafkas Roman *Der Proceß* sind Dachböden und Treppenhäuser Orte sowohl des Gerichts wie der hemmungslosen weiblichen Sexualität, Orte des – sadistischen – Über-Ichs und des Es. Odradek als Allegorie des Weiblichen koinzidiert mit einer Allegorie des Es und des Unbewußten, welche bei Freud weiblich konnotiert sind (Rohde-Dachser 143).

Im Lachen Odradeks nun, das dem Hausvater seine Zuschreibungen zurückgibt, scheint sich eine andere Frau zur Geltung zu bringen, jene *andere*, die sich nicht mehr in komplementär-narzißtischer Position als Supplement, Metapher oder Container des Mannes verorten läßt. Es ist die Frau mit einem eigenen Genitale, wenn man hier an das Lachen der Frauen denkt, wie es der Mythos von Baubo und Demeter überliefert. Dort ist das Lachen als Externalisierung mit dem Gebärvorgang analogisiert und Zeichen empathisch-teilnehmender Verständigung unter Frauen (Rohde-Dachser 247). Das Verb «hervorbringen» scheint diesen Bezug des Lachens zum Gebärvorgang zu bestätigen, und zwar im gleichen Moment, in dem die Gebärfähigkeit männlich usurpiert wird: im Rascheln der (Schrift-) Blätter schreibt sich das männliche Autor-Ich, Kafka, in den Text ein, indem es sich, wenn auch um den Preis des Lebens – «ohne Lungen» (E 171) –, als Gebärender unsterblicher Werke imaginiert. Dieser Vorgang kommt einer Selbstgeburt gleich. Die Ablehnung des Weiblichen – manifest in der Kastrationsangst – manifestiert sich erneut in dem Wunsch, nicht vom Weibe geboren zu sein.

Diesem männlich geprägten Unsterblichkeitsmodus entspricht der Mythos quasigöttlicher männlicher Zeugungs- und Gebärfähigkeit, wie er topisch die abendländischen Theorien einer nur dem männlichen Genie vorbehaltenen Kreativität durchzieht. Es «gibt kein weibliches Genie, hat nie ein solches gegeben und kann nie ein solches geben», erklärt Weininger (242). Einer als ich- und seelenlos vorgestellten Frau gegenüber wirft sich das männliche Ich zum Schöpfer auf. «Der Wille des Mannes schafft erst die Frau, er gebietet über sie und verändert sie von Grund auf [...]. Der Mann formt also nicht nur sich, sondern auch, ja leichter noch, das Weib. Jene Mythen der Genesis und anderer Kosmogonien, welche das Weib vom Manne geschaffen sein lassen, haben eine tiefere Wahrheit verkündet als die biologischen Deszendenzlehren, die an ein Hervorgehen des Männlichen aus dem Weiblichen glauben» (Weininger 396). Diesen Schöpfungsmythos nach dem Modell der Genesis hat Kafka seinem Text eingeschrieben. Uns Lesenden wird vorgeführt die Geburt der Schöpfung aus dem männlichen Wort: «Am Anfang war das Wort» – hier das Wort Odradek. Auch die weiteren vier Absätze laufen den Phasen der biblischen Schöpfungsgeschichte parallel. Stern und Gegenständlichkeit der Spule verweisen auf die Schöpfung des Kosmos und der Materie. Im 3. Absatz geht das «Gebilde» Odradek in organisches Leben über (Stichwort: «fangen»). Mit der Initialsetzung des Pronomens «Er» im 4. Absatz ist die Mensch- bzw. Mannwerdung Odradeks erreicht, Eva ist nur metaphorisch vorhanden. Im 5. Absatz sind die biblischen Folgen des Sündenfalls, «Arbeiten sollst du und wieder zu Erde [zerrieben] werden», von Unsterblichkeitsvorstellungen flankiert. Im latenten Todeswunsch des Hausvaters gegenüber Odradek bekundet sich das Eingeständnis, daß die Verdrängung des Todes *durch* die Phantasie der kastrierten Frau, *durch* die Phantasie einer unendlichen männlichen Zeugungskraft – «Kinder und Kindeskinde» – *und durch* die Phantasie der Selbstgeburt in der Kunst mißlungen ist.

Bei aller Faszination von der Gleichsetzung dichterischer Kreativität mit quasi göttlicher männlicher Gebärfähigkeit – er hat seine eigenen Werke selbst als Geburten, sich als Gebärenden imaginiert und beschrieben – durchschaut Kafka doch – anders als Benjamin¹⁷ – souverän den Ver-

¹⁷ Siehe Sigrid Weigel: «Von der Tötung des Weiblichen im Schöpfer-Mythos» (Weigel 237-240).

drängungszusammenhang zwischen der Idolisierung des Genies und Schriftstellers und der Ablehnung des Körpers und des Weiblichen. Nicht nur ist das Teufelchen Odradek eine Ironie auf die *altera creatio* der Kopf- und Wortgeburt, einer Geburt auf Papier, sondern Kafka erfährt die Tödlichkeit dieser narzißtischen Phantasie, sich selbst gebären zu können, in seiner Krankheit am eigenen Leib, die zu einem Schwinden des Körpers führt: «lachen», gebären, kann der Mann nur «ohne Lungen», als Gestorbener, als Autor. Diese tödliche Wendung der Phantasie gegen das Leben läßt – als Wiederkehr des Verdrängten im Verdrängenden – das Ausmaß der Enttäuschungsaggression erahnen, der sie ihre Entstehung verdankt. Es ist dies eine Enttäuschung über den erfahrenen Mangel an primärer Mütterlichkeit, die in unserer vom Primat des Phallus geprägten Kultur buchstäblich nicht zu haben ist, impliziert sie doch den Weiblichkeitsentwurf der «toten Frau» und damit der «toten Mutter»¹⁸.

Kastrations- und Unsterblichkeitsphantasie gehören zusammen. «Der Weiblichkeitsentwurf der „kastrierten Frau“ kann als eine (männliche) Phantasie verstanden werden, mit der der Mann seine Todesangst zu bändigen sucht, indem er den Tod – wie auch schon die Kastration – der Frau zuweist. Sie ist es dann, die ihn erleidet, während er – Besieger des Todes – auf der Seite des Lebens steht. [...] *Der phallische Monismus ist in letzter Konsequenz [...] eine Strategie der Todesverdrängung und in Verbindung mit der Vateridentifizierung die zentrale Unsterblichkeitsphantasie der Psychoanalyse*» (Rohde-Dachser 136). Der bloße Wort- und Objektcharakter Odradeks, Korrelat der «toten Frau», sowie Alter, Spule und Faden als Embleme der Parzen bekräftigen, daß auch Odradek eine Art Apotropäon gegen die Todesangst darstellt, welches jedoch schließlich seinen magischen Dienst versagt. Odradek zu töten, käme der Tötung des Todes gleich. Zur verstörenden Einsicht des Kafka-Textes gehört auch, daß parallel zur Reproduktion der Rolle des Vaters und Kastrators (Rohde-Dachser 119) – das Ich imaginiert sich als Progenitor einer unendlichen Reihe von Kinder- und Kindeskindern – auch die Entwirklichung der Frau zur Trägerin des Todes im Gewande der Unsterblichkeit reproduziert wird, im unsterblichen Odradek. Dies ist eine Fortpflanzung von Wahnsinn oder «Tollheit», wie der «kollernde» Odradek mitzuteilen scheint: Der phallische Monismus – ein veritabler Tantalidenfluch, in dem das Verdrängte sich forzeuge!¹⁹

Die Psychoanalyse hat die Kastrationsphantasie als eine Deckphantasie für die Todesangst erkannt. Sie wäre damit aufgefordert, den Begriff der Kastration, insofern er als Metapher für Verlust und Trennung, Kulturation und Symbolisierung fungiert, aufzugeben; stattdessen wäre, wie Bronfen im Anschluß an Luce Irigaray vorgeschlagen hat, der «Nabel» «als Ort eines universellen, geschlechtsunspezifischen „kastrativen“ Moments tatsächlichen Seins in den Mittelpunkt» zu stellen (Bronfen 56, 82). Dieses neue Paradigma würde die Privilegierung des Phallus vermeiden und die doppelte Tötung der Frau als Mutter und als Geschlechtswesen aufheben. Daß die Geschlechterdifferenz kein geeignetes Begriffsinstrumentarium darstellt, um die Sterblichkeit zu thematisieren – auch diese Einsicht hat Kafkas Text bereits ins Bild gesetzt: die Kette der Geschlechter wird weder durch den Phallus, noch den ewig fruchtbaren Schoß veranschaulicht, sondern den «nachschießenden Zwirnsfaden» Odradeks, eine Metapher für die Nabelschnur. Beinahe notwendig kommt Kafkas Text hier an sein Ende, denn nun müßte – als Folge der Aufhebung der Verdrängung – hinter Odradek die Mutter und hinter ihr die Frau wieder sichtbar werden.

Odradek allegorisiert die Frau als Zeichenträger für die in unserer Kultur aus der Selbstrepräsentanz des Mannes ausgeschlossenen Selbstanteile, vornehmlich seiner Todesangst. Hier wäre nun ausführlich von Odradek als ironischer, antipathetischer Replik Kafkas auf die Allegorie der

¹⁸ «Der Komplex der toten Mutter» (Green) wäre damit nicht nur eine vereinzelt für die Depression verantwortliche psychische Struktur, sondern müßte, analog der «bösen Mutter» der psychoanalytischen Objektbeziehungstheorie, als «Ausdruck für das Maß der Entbehrung» gewertet werden, «das eine Gesellschaft ihren Mitgliedern [...] auferlegt» (Rohde-Dachser 205).

¹⁹ Siehe oben Anm. 6. Zu den intertextuellen Bezügen scheint mir auch Goethes «Parzenlied» zu gehören, von dessen Schluß her der Hausvater und «der Alte», «der Verbannte», in Analogie treten: «Es horcht der Verbannte/ [...] / der Alte, die Lieder,/ Denkt Kinder und Enkel/ Und schüttelt das Haupt» (*Iphigenie*, V. 1762-66).

Sorge in Goethes *Faust* zu handeln (*Faust* II, V. 11380ff.). Diese tritt bekanntlich als eine der «Vier graue[n] Weiber» und als Schwester des Todes in Fausts letzter Stunde auf, der ihr die Anerkennung ebenso verweigert wie der Hausvater seiner Sorge, d. i. Odradek. Dieser intertextuellen Spur nachzugehen, erforderte eine weitere Abhandlung, hier bestätigt sie jedoch erneut die weibliche Konnotation der Figur. Odradek kann damit schließlich als Allegorie der – in Kunst und Literatur mittels des Frauen- körpers dargestellten – allegorischen Personifikation betrachtet werden.²⁰ Odradek setzt *buchstäblich* die Struktur der Allegorie ins Bild: denn in ihr wird der Körper der Frau entsinnlicht, entlebendigt, in Teile zerlegt, um ihn als Zeichenträger herzurichten. Odradek potenziert das Verfahren der Allegorie als eines Entlebungsvorgangs, da wir aus den Details von Spule, Zwirnstücken, Stern, Faden, Beinen erst den semiotisierten Frauenkörper erschließen müssen. In der Meta-Allegorie Odradek wird quasi vorgeführt, daß die allegorische Personifikation die Tendenz verfolgt, den Körper der Frau und die in ihm vermuteten Gefahren zu verdrängen und die Frau als Subjekt zu negieren. Damit hat Kafka die Spur gebahnt für eine Entmythisierung «des schönen Frauenkörpers als schöner Leiche», eine Spur, die nun, fast 80 Jahre später, mit Hilfe der feministischen Psychoanalyse-Kritik sichtbar gemacht werden kann. Daß damit auch eine Entmythisierung der schönen Künste zu den «nicht mehr schönen», zu objet trouvé und Maschinenkunst einhergeht – freilich auch deren Remythisierung –, ist ein weiteres Thema. Die intimen Beziehungen des Apparätchens Odradek zu Marcel Duchamps' «Junggesellenmaschinen» wie der «Schokoladenreibe» des «Großen Glases» wären zu untersuchen.²¹

3.

Zur Erhellung des lebensgeschichtlichen Hintergrundes und der in die Odradek-Figur eingegangenen Phantasien sollen einige der Entstehungszeit des Textes entsprechende Briefe an Ottla und Felice herangezogen werden sowie ausgewählte Textfragmente der Oktavhefte von Anfang 1917. Wie *Eine kleine Frau* basiert auch *Die Sorge des Hausvaters* auf einer «Wohnungsgeschichte» Kafkas (F 749). Beide Texte entstehen offenbar zu dem Zeitpunkt, als ein Mietverhältnis zuendegeht. Der Erzählung *Eine kleine Frau* geht die Kündigung der Steglitzer Wohnung durch Kafkas Zimmerwirtin voraus, das Vorbild der «kleinen Frau». *Die Sorge des Hausvaters* entsteht in der letzten Aprilwoche 1917, als Ottla – von Kafka «Meine Hausherrin» genannt (O 31) – den Bruder gerade verlassen hat, um nach Zürau zu gehen (Brief an Ottla vom 19. 4. 1917; O 32). Sie hatte das Haus im Alchimistengäßchen gemietet, es als «Arbeitswohnung» (F 752) Kafka zur Verfügung gestellt und ihn «mit allem Nötigen versorgt» (F 751). Ottla erfüllt also die einer Zimmerwirtin vergleichbare Funktion, Kafka steht deutlich in einem Abhängigkeitsverhältnis zu ihr (F 752): «Ich lebe in Ottlas Haus» (F 745). Beide Erzählungen verwandeln eine biographische Situation der Ohnmacht in eine von Überlegenheit und Macht: der Ich-Erzähler beansprucht selbst die Initiative, das Verhältnis zur kleinen Frau durch Trennung zu beenden, das Hausvater-Ich geriert sich, zunächst jedenfalls, keineswegs als ein Verlassener, sondern als ein Bleibender im gemeinsamen Haus – «unser Haus», heißt es (E 171) –, in das der, besser die, Verlassende «unweigerlich» zurückkehrt. In beiden Erzählungen wird das kränkende Gegenüber verkleinert und entwertet. *Die Sorge des Hausvaters* entspringt gewissermaßen der Sorge Kafkas, nicht mehr von Ottla versorgt zu werden: «der erste Abend ohne sie und schon verloren» (O 32). Dieses tödliche Verlassenheitsgefühl entspricht dem Schmerz des Hausvaters, von Odradek überlebt zu werden. Kafkas Wohnungsgeschichten gestalten sich also mehr und mehr zu Frauengeschichten: «mein Gang in das Wohnungsbureau war eine nicht zu verachtende Leistung. Seitdem umschweben mich 3 Frauen in unverdienter Freundlichkeit, die Inhaberin des Wohnungsbureaus, die Hausmeisterin des Hauses [...] und das Dienstmädchen [...]. Seit gestern hat

²⁰ Vgl. hierzu Sigrid Weigel: «Exkurs über die weibliche Form der Allegorie» (Weigel 167-173).

²¹ Siehe zu diesem Zusammenhang Sigrid Weigel: «Junggesellenmaschinen» (Weigel 87-92).

sich ihnen noch meine Mutter[!], wirklich sehr gütig, angeschlossen» (F 742). Von den Frauen erwartet Kafka Beheimatung (F 750), eine «Unterkunft, [... die sich der] Vollkommenheit nähert» (F 745), von Ottila erhält er schließlich das Haus, das «mir ganz und gar [entspricht]»; «[...] alles in Ordnung und schön» (F 751). Ottila, die «kleine[!] Fürsorgestelle» (O 35), wird als Ersatz für die Mutter zum «guten Objekt», das die Ordnung, den Zusammenhalt des Ich, gewährleistet (O 32): «Liebe Ottila, vorläufig ist noch alles hier in beiläufiger Ordnung, aber wie lange es noch so bleiben wird, weiß man nicht; [...] Rede ich von “allem” so meine ich natürlich mich» (O 32). Derart zum Garant der Ordnung gemacht, muß ihr «Weggehen» (O 32) Ottila ins Gegenteil verkehren, zum «Sturmwind», der mit Zusammenbruch droht, oder zu Odradek, dem Wesen «außerhalb der Ordnung». Die Klangassoziation Odradek/Ottila(weg) stellt sich ein. Kafka analogisiert Ottila mit Kind, Mutter und Ehefrau²² – «Mit Ottila lebe ich in kleiner [!] guter Ehe» (B 165) –, unterhält mit ihr eine Beziehung von Nähe auf Distanz, wie sie auch für den Hausvater und Odradek gelten könnte. Doch wie diese ist sie von Anfang an durch Ambivalenz gekennzeichnet und droht bei Belastung, sich in ihr Gegenteil zu verkehren. Der Idealisierung Ottilas im Brief an Felice vom 19. 10. 1916 läßt Kafka beinahe umgehend ein Dementi folgen: «Ich wollte aus ihr nicht etwa ein hohes Muster machen» (F 732). Der Bruder antizipiert Ottilas «schlechte Laune» (F 752) und nimmt das Verlassenwerden prospektiv vorweg: «an eine spätere Zukunft denkend [...] habe ich mir gesagt: sie wird mich also doch verkommen lassen» (O 35). Kafkas Bild von Ottila ähnelt damit der Oxymoron-Struktur des Wortes Odradek, in dem «das Sanfte und das Harte nebeneinander[liegen]» (F 748),²³ ähnelt der Widersprüchlichkeit dieses Wesens, das ein Ganzes darstellt, aber «zerbrochen», als ein Ensemble von Teilen erscheint. Damit wiederholt sich in Ottila, die doch die unzuverlässige, zu Zeiten gehäßte Mutter zu ersetzen hatte, die Spaltung des mütterlichen Objekts, welches die Rockfalten bietet, an die sich das Kind hilfesuchend hält, welches aber schließlich verdirbt und tötet wie die Tuberkulose. In der Phantasie sieht sich Kafka von der Krankheit ebenso überlebt, wie sich der Hausvater von Odradek überlebt imaginiert (F 757).

In den drei Oktavheften zwischen Januar und April 1917 experimentiert Kafka vielfach mit der Motivid und Thematik des Hauses. Identifikationsfiguren seiner selbst gestaltet er z. B. in der Rolle von Mietern und Untermietern – so einen Schreiber, dessen Figur und Mietverhältnis dreimal variiert wird – oder in der Rolle eines Hausbewohners, der Besuch erhält (KKAN 1, 323-333). Diese beiden Rollen sind nach Macht-Ohnmacht, Größe-Kleinheit einander entgegengesetzt. Während der kleine Schreiber in äußerster Enge als Submieter «mitten in dem Nest [eines] fremden Ehepaars und seiner sechs Kinder» wohnt (331), empfängt das Ich in «Riesengestalt» einen «Chinesen» als Gast, der, «klein, schwach», «gleich wieder hinaususchte» (324). Doch verkehren sich diese Macht- und Größenverhältnisse, als eine Dame als Gast erscheint. Zwar behauptet sich das Ich zunächst, indem es die «große Dame» mit «eine Ohnmacht» benennt und einführt: «Gestern kam eine Ohnmacht zu mir. Sie wohnt im Nachbarhaus» (327). Im Laufe des Besuches verliert das Ich jedoch seine Macht an die mit «langen, alten Fechterhandschuhen» phallisch ausgestattete Dame. Die Wiederaufnahme der Vogelmetapher indiziert nun die Kleinheit des Ich: «Mir war, als sei ich ein Spatz, übe auf der Treppe meine Sprünge und sie zerzause mein weiches flockiges graues Gefieder» (328). Hier erscheint die Umkehrung der Machtverhältnisse zwischen Hausvater und Odradek vorgebildet: der zunächst zur Winzigkeit reduzierte Odradek rückt am Schluß kraft seiner Fähigkeit zu überleben das Hausvater-Ich so in die unterlegene Position, wie die Dame das Ich zum Spatz macht. Dame und Odradek treten in Parallele. Eine Reihe weiterer Details erweisen dieses Oktavheft-Fragment als Experimentierfeld für *Die Sorge des Hausvaters*, verblüffend ist aber vor allem die Allegorisierung der «großen Dame» zur «Ohnmacht». Sie ist deutlich als «femme fatale» stilisiert. Ein lautliches Experimentieren mit der o-a-Reihe ist unverkennbar: Ohnmacht, große Dame; «Anton», rief sie mit

²² Vgl. zum Zusammenhang Binder (1968, 403-456).

²³ In dieser Weise hat Kafka – anders als der Hausvater – über einen Namen Felice gegenüber reflektiert, über den Namen «Blumstein» (F 748).

hohler und doch sich rühmender Stimme, «ich komme, ich bin da!» Die Nähe zu Odradek scheint gegeben, die oben vorgeschlagene Deutung, Odradek als Allegorie der Frau zu lesen, eine Bestätigung zu erhalten. Odradek allegorisiert wie die «große Dame» den doppelten Weiblichkeitsentwurf des Patriarchats, wie ihn die Psychoanalyse Freuds aufgreift, den der dämonischen und der entmächtigten, sc. kastrierten Frau. Das Äußere der großen Dame – «mit lang fließendem Kleid und breitem, mit Federn [!] geschmücktem Hut», dazu «lange alte Fechterhandschuhe» – stellt die Verbindung sowohl zu Kafkas älteren Schwestern und der Mutter wie auch zu Felice her,²⁴ denn im gleichzeitigen Briefwechsel ist wiederholt von Handschuhen die Rede, die Kafka verspricht, an Felice zu schicken, und zwar als «Muster ohne Wert»[!] (F 745, 746, 747). Ein *terminicus technicus*, die Versandart, wird hier zur vielsagenden Metapher.

Was die «große Dame» mit dem anderen ungebetenen Gast der Oktavheft-Fragmente, dem Chinesen, und des weiteren mit einem verdächtigen Mieter/Schreiber verbindet, ist die Betonung der Augenpartie, deren latente Bedrohlichkeit durch die Erwähnung der *Sehprothesen*, der Brillen, verstärkt wird: der Chinese trägt eine Hornbrille und «hielt den Kopf geneigt und lächelte mit halbgeschlossenen Augen» (KKAN 1, 324); die Dame «sah mich den Kopf geneigt augenzwinkernd an» (328); der Schreiber ist ein Mann mit «einer weit auf der Nase vorgerückten Brille» (333). Chinese und Schreiber lassen sich als Figuren des unheimlich gewordenen Inneren des Ich bestimmen. Die gebrechliche, schwache, kränkliche («mit nicht ganz fester Lunge», 333), unmännliche («freundliches Männchen», «kleiner Ziegenbart», 324, 333) Natur dieser Figuren läßt sich, folgt man dem Verweisungszeichen *Sehprothese*, auf die mangelnde Spiegelung durch den mütterlichen Blick zurückführen. Die augenzwinkernde Dame indiziert das unstete und einfühlungslose Wesen des Mütterlichen, wie es Kafka in seinen Texten mittels des *aggressiven Auges* immer wieder gestaltet hat.

Daß sich dieses Auge auch in der Gestalt Odradeks manifestiert, soll abschließend gezeigt werden, und zwar im Vergleich mit einem im Tagebuch berichteten Traumbild von einer Brille, für dessen Entstehung Kafka das rezente Ereignis des Vortages exakt benennen kann: Er erinnert sich, «daß die Brille im Traum von meiner Mutter stammt, die am Abend neben mir sitzt und unter ihrem Zwicker während des Kartenspiels nicht sehr angenehm zu mir herüberschaut. Ihr Zwicker hat sogar, was ich früher bemerkt zu haben mich nicht erinnere das rechte Glas näher dem Auge als das linke» (2. 10. 1911. KKAT 1, 52). Man beachte, daß der zweimal erwähnte Zwicker eine lautliche und semantische Parallele zur augenzwinkernden Dame herstellt.

Eine schreckliche Erscheinung war heute in der Nacht ein blindes Kind scheinbar die Tochter meiner Leitmeritzer Tante die übrigens keine Tochter hat sondern nur Söhne, von denen einer einmal den Fuß gebrochen hatte. Dagegen waren zwischen diesem Kind und der Tochter Dr. Marschners Beziehungen, die, wie ich letztlich gesehen habe, auf dem Wege ist, aus einem hübschen Kind ein dickes steif angezogenes kleines Mädchen zu werden. Dieses blinde oder schwachsichtige Kind hatte beide Augen von einer Brille bedeckt, das linke unter dem ziemlich weit entfernten Augenglas war milchgrau und rund vortretend, das andere trat zurück und war von einem anliegenden Augenglas verdeckt. Damit dieses Augenglas optisch richtig eingesetzt sei, war es nötig statt des gewöhnlichen über das Ohr zurückgehenden Halters, einen Hebel anzuwenden, dessen Kopf nicht anders befestigt werden konnte als am Wangenknochen, so daß von diesem Augenglas ein Stäbchen zur Wange hinuntergieng, dort im durchlöcherten Fleisch verschwand und am Knochen endete, während ein neues Drahtstäbchen heraustrat und über das Ohr zurückgieng (KKAT 1, 50f.).

Die Ähnlichkeit zwischen der Gestalt Odradeks und dem Brillengestell springt in die Augen: hier wie dort die Verbindung des Runden mit dem Geraden, der Vertikalen des Stäbchens; hier wie dort das Bildfeld des Visuellen. Die Verben «aussehen, scheinen, erscheinen» machen Odradek

²⁴ Vgl. die Photographien der Familienmitglieder bei Wagenbach (80f., 129).

zwar mehr zum Gegenstand des Sehaktes, doch stellt die zweimalige Nennung von «Stern» und «Ausstrahlung» den assoziativen Bezug zu Augenstern bzw. strahlenden Augen her. Beide Gegenstände sind Objekte minutiöser Beobachtung und detaillistischer Beschreibung, welche ihre Herkunft aus dem Blick des Wissenschaftlers, ja des sezierenden Anatomen nicht verleugnen können. Das «durchlöcherte Fleisch» im Traumbild setzt in der Tat den ärztlichen Eingriff am Körper voraus. – In diesem Zusammenhang ist beachtenswert, daß die «große Dame» des Oktavhefts mit einem Arzt verglichen wird, der zu einem Kranken eilt. – Die minutiöse Beschreibung dient der Minderung des «Schrecklichen» der «Erscheinung» und des Unheimlichen des «Wesens» Odradek. Die phantasierte Bedrohung durch das Weibliche in den Gestalten von Tante, Töchtern, kleinem Mädchen ist eklatant; in der Phantasie des «Durchlöcherns» – im Falle Odradeks abgemildert zum «Zerbrechen» des «Gebildes» – geht das Ich zum Gegenangriff über, nicht unähnlich Jack the Ripper.²⁵ Das Weibliche wird als kastriert – «blind», «schwachsichtig» – und kastrierend erlebt. Die Kastrationssymbolik durchzieht den ganzen Traumbericht, vom Kopf, der in ein falsches Loch gelegt wird, über die Blindheit, den gebrochenen Fuß, die prothetischen Stäbchen, Halter und Hebel bis zur Verwandlung der Söhne in Töchter. Repräsentiert das Auge das furchterregende weibliche Genitale, so muß sein Anblick mittels der Augengläser «verdeckt» oder schlecht sichtbar gemacht werden («milch[!]grau»). Die Mortifikationsstrategien der wissenschaftlichen Beobachtung und der ärztlichen Operation scheinen seine absolute Kontrolle zu versprechen. Im verdrahteten Auge ist das Weibliche ebenso gebannt wie im lebendig-toten Kunstobjekt auf zwei Beinen, Odradek. Die Verbindung zur – männlichen – Kreativität stellt auch der Traumbericht her. Für den Kafka von 1911 besteht offenbar die Phantasie, durch den kastrierenden Blick der Mutter am Schreiben gehindert zu werden. Das schwachsichtige Kind ist Korrelat der eigenen kreativen Schwäche, des wenig und schlecht Schreibens, eines Zustandes, den Kafka «bei einiger Männlichkeit» (KKAT 1, 52) zu überwinden hofft. *Die Sorge des Hausvaters* ironisiert diese Phantasie, indem die «schreckliche Erscheinung» der kastrierten Frau und phallischen Mutter zu einem Spielzeugwesen verkleinert und zum Gegenstand der unproduktiven Sorge eines Hausvaters fiktionalisiert wird. Für Kafka selbst hat also 1917 die Obsession durch das aggressive Mutterbild nachgelassen; der «bewegliche» Odradek ist Korrelat einer befreiteren, selbstbewußten Kreativität, wenn auch in der vielfach antizipierten Lungenwunde die Bedrohung gegenwärtig bleibt. So kann Odradek als Allegorie des Weiblichen und als Allegorie der Kunst nur eine Scheinversicherung gegen die Kastrations- und Todesangst gewähren, was Kafka deutlich genug gesehen hat.

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SIGLEN

- B** Franz Kafka. *Briefe 1902-1924*. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1958 (Gesammelte Werke. Hg. von Max Brod).
- E** Franz Kafka. *Erzählungen*. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1952 (Gesammelte Werke. Hg. von Max Brod).
- F** Franz Kafka. *Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit*. Hg. von Erich Heller und Jürgen Born. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1967.
- GQ** German Quarterly
- JDSG** Jahrbuch der deutschen Schiller-Gesellschaft
- KKAN** Franz Kafka. *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Hg. von Malcolm Pasley. 4 Bände. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1992 und 1993 (Kritische Ausgabe: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe).

²⁵ Zu den männlichen Phantasien des «blutigen Loches» und des Körperinneren der Frau als Ort des Geheimnisses von Leben und Tod vgl. Rohde-Dachser (119) und Bronfens Ausführungen zum Gemälde *Der Anatom* von Gabriel von Max (13-27).

- KKAT** Franz Kafka. *Tagebücher*. Hg. von Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller und Malcolm Pasley. 3 Bände. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1990 (Kritische Ausgabe: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe).
- O** Franz Kafka. *Briefe an Ottla und die Familie*. Hg. von Hartmut Binder und Klaus Wagenbach. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1974.
- ZfdPh** Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie

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The Use of Defense Mechanisms in a Short Story by Thomas Mann

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In 1897, at the age of 22, Thomas Mann published his first volume of short stories, the title of which was *Little Herr Friedemann*. This predated the first publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud by two years. Freud had said that for greater understanding of psychology we must «go to the poets». This wisdom on Freud's part is supported by the ability of Thomas Mann in «Little Herr Friedemann» to describe the existence of unconscious motivation, long before scientific inquiry began to make such claims.

Thomas Mann was born in 1875 in the North German city of Lubeck. His father was a successful grain merchant who later became a senator, and his mother was part German and part Brazilian Creole. It was mother who encouraged his interest in music and the violin was the instrument he chose. In high school, he was a reluctant and rebellious student who barely satisfied the requirements for graduation. Perhaps the death of his father when he was fifteen was a factor in his restlessness at this time. After high school this future winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, did some military service, moved to Munich and became an apprentice clerk in a fire insurance company. Except for a brief period of study of literature and art in Italy where Mann joined his brother in 1900, he was mostly self-educated. He acknowledged the influence of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Wagner on his thinking, and he was particularly interested in Schopenhauer's speculation about the impact of unconscious motivation on human behavior. As this group is well aware, the psychological sciences which focus on human thought and behavior have long recognized this fact, that fiction is one of the richest and most profound sources of a realistic view of humankind. Sigmund Freud, on one occasion, speaking of creative writers said, «One may heave a sigh at the thought that it is vouchsafed to a few with hardly any effort, to salve from the whirlpool of their emotions, the deepest truths, to which we others have to force our way». And at another time Freud said, «Imaginative writers are valuable colleagues... in the knowledge of the human heart they are far ahead of us common folk, because they draw on sources that we have not yet made available to science.»

Thomas Mann's interest in, and understanding of, psychology are evident in his entire body of work, but for purposes of this discussion, we will confine ourselves to his short story, «Little Herr Friedemann» and the role defense mechanisms play in Johannes Friedemann's life and death.

In the story, Friedemann was born in a small German city, the son of the dutch consul, who died shortly before his birth. As an infant he was dropped by his wet-nurse and permanently

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injured. Although his mother and sisters were aware that the nurse had a drinking problem, they had not been able to replace her before the accident occurred. As a result of a spinal injury caused by the fall, Johannes Friedemann developed «a humped back, pigeon breast and disproportionately long arms». Before he started school, his life was gentle and peaceful. He spent his days in the garden watched over by a loving mother and three older sisters.

Once he started school, life became less pleasant. Although he was sometimes invited to his classmates' homes after school, he could not take part in their games and they often showed embarrassment at his deformity. When the boys got a little older and began to talk about girls and sex, little Johannes understood that this, like the ball games and gymnastics was not for him. He made a pretty good adjustment to his situation, except for occasional feelings of sadness, until he fell in love with the sister of one of his classmates. He feels «strangely embarrassed in her neighborhood» and she treats him with such «artificial cordiality» that it makes him feel sad. When he chances on her kissing and hugging one of the boys, he suffers such powerful jealousy that he resolves to «never again let himself in for any of it. To others it brings joy and happiness» thinks the 16 year-old Johannes, for him «it can only mean sadness and pain. I am done with it», he resolves, «for me it is over. Never again.» At this point Johannes has made a conscious decision to suppress his sexual yearnings because he can't handle the pain of rejection and jealousy.

He went home and took up a book or else played on his violin, which despite his deformed chest he had learned to do. The latter is of course, compensation, because young Johannes has unconsciously chosen an instrument, the playing of which is more difficult because of his deformity. The turning to literature and music in place of sex are examples of the unconscious use of the defense mechanism of sublimation.

It wasn't until many years later that Freud described this process as a break-through scientific finding. Freud says:

The instinct draws back, as it were, on its first collision with the objectionable impulse, it debar the impulse from access to consciousness and to direct motor discharge, but at the same time the impulse retains its full cathexis of energy. I named this process repression, it was a novelty, and nothing like it had ever before been recognized in mental life. It was obviously a primary mechanism of defense.

As a young businessman, Johannes Friedemann comes to believe that life can be rich in enjoyment of nature, art and literature. In Mann's words:

He learned to understand that to everything belongs its own enjoyment and that it is absurd to distinguish between an experience which is happy and one which is not. With a right good will he accepted each emotion as it came, each mood, whether sad or gay. Even he cherished the unfulfilled desires, the longings. He loved them for their own sakes and told himself that with fulfillment the best of them would be past. The vague sweet, painful yearning and hope of quiet spring evenings are they not richer in joy than all the fruition that summer can bring?

Here we find an example of rationalization by a young man yearning to satisfy his need for sex and romantic love, but telling himself that longing is sweeter than satisfaction.

Johannes Friedemann's «real passion» however, is for the theatre. «At a telling theatrical effect or the catastrophe of a tragedy, his whole small frame would shake with emotion.» This, once again, is an example of his sublimation of his repressed sexuality to an expression which is more acceptable to him. As for Johannes's sisters, because they were unattractive and had no dowry, they had little or no chance to find suitable husbands in their small community. «Whenever an engagement was announced in their circle, they with one voice said how gratifying it was.» This is either conscious hypocrisy or unconscious reaction formation.

Classic reaction formation is clearly present, however, when Johannes Friedemann reaches his thirtieth birthday:

He had a good cigar in his mouth and a good book in his hand. But sometimes he would put the latter down to listen to the sparrows chirping blithely in the old nut tree and look at the clean gravel path leading up to the house between lawns bright with summer flowers... Once as he let the book fall on his knee and looked up into the sunny blue sky, he said to himself: «Well so that is thirty years. Perhaps there may be ten or even twenty more, God knows. They will mount up without a sound or a stir and pass by like those that are gone; and I look forward to them with peace in my heart.»

Friedemann sincerely believes he is speaking the truth, but as we later learn, his real feeling about his life is exactly opposite.

When the new district commandant and his attractive young wife arrive in town, they cause a minor sensation. Everyone is talking about Gerda von Rinnlingen and her unusual way of relating to men. The women of the social set in which the Friedemanns have a place, dislike her because she is «not a flirt» and is «entirely wanting in feminine charm». We don't know what Johannes Friedemann's reaction was, when she was first pointed out to him. He «stared before him at the pavement»; when asked a question by his companion who seemed to take great pleasure in observing Frau Von Rinnlingen. «Presently (Friedemann) started, looked at his companion, and asked, "What did you say?" Had the first sight of her caused him to retreat into the defense mechanism of fantasy?» The reader isn't certain, but three days later when Herr and Frau Colonel von Rinnlingen came to call, Johannes hesitated at the door to the room in which they were being received by the Friedemann sisters. Then he «drew back, turned round, and slowly returned as he had come. And spoke to himself, for there was no one else there, and said, "No, better not."» When his sisters described the visit in great detail, Herr Friedemann failed to respond to direct questions from them. He «had not heard at all; he was eating his soup with a hushed and troubled air». It was «as though he were listening to some strange noise he had heard». Again we have the possibility that he is in deep thought or perhaps is employing the defense mechanism of fantasy.

The next evening at the opera, he finds himself sitting beside Frau von Rinnlingen. With a quick sidelong glance, he is able to take in almost every detail of her body and posture. At one point she drops her fan and they both stoop to retrieve it:

Their heads were quite close together and just for a second he got the warm scent of her breast. His face was drawn, his whole body twitched, and his heart thumped so horribly that he lost his breath. He sat without moving for half a minute, then he pushed back his chair, got up quietly, and went out. ... Suddenly he was quite overpowered by the strength of his tortured longing. Giddy and drunken he leaned against a lamppost and his quivering lips uttered the one word: «Gerda!!!»

According to psychological theory, the purpose of defense mechanisms is to protect the ego. In order to protect his ego, Johannes Friedemann had unconsciously denied the power of his libido, had ignored his sex drive and had convinced himself that he was content with his life. Because this entire process, after the original boyhood suppression, was unconscious, he is taken completely by surprise by his powerful reaction to Gerda von Rinnlingen. He gazes «horror struck within himself beholding the havoc wrought with his tenderly cherished feelings».

When Friedemann returns home after leaving the opera, he falls «into a heavy fever-burdened sleep». (Perhaps a form of regression) when he awakens he resolves to recapture control of himself and his emotions. He takes note of the beautiful morning, the birds singing, the comfortable familiarity of his surroundings. He sends his sisters off to pay their courtesy call on the von Rinnlingens without him, saying that he is not feeling well. And then quite suddenly the thought comes to him, «suppose I were to go to her». And, «suppressing, as though by actual muscular effort, every warning voice within, he decides: "I will go to her!"»

As Johannes waits for the maid to announce him to Gerda, he steals a look at himself in the mirror. He sees that his «face is pale, the eyes red, his hair sticking to his brow, the hand that held

the top hat trembled». But because he is unconsciously using the defense mechanism of denial, he doesn't see his pigeon breast, his humped back, his disproportionately long arms. When Gerda enters the room, Mann lets the reader see what Johannes has denied. When he speaks to her he must look up because he «comes only as high as her chest».

When Gerda confides in Johannes that she is «ailing a good deal but nobody notices it; that she is nervous and sometimes has strange feelings», he moves into a dreamlike world of fantasy and scarcely hears what she is saying.

After he leaves Gerda, Johannes, sensing the hopelessness of his longing, goes to sit by the river. «He was weary, he was worn out; and yet within him all was tumult and anguish.» Thomas Mann has named this character Friedemann. *Friede* in German means peace, and all this little man wants is to recapture the peace he knew on his thirtieth birthday. «Were it not better», he thinks, «to take one last look and then go down into that quiet water; after a brief struggle, to be free and safe and at peace?»

But Johannes's peace has been derived from suppression and then repression of his most basic needs. It was built on a fragile network of unconscious defense mechanisms. Now with his defenses gone, his repressed yearnings have «seized him with frightful, irresistible power, and flung him to the earth».

Here, in this moment at the riverbank, Mann shows us the struggle going on in Johannes Friedemann between his id, and his super-ego: «But why struggle then and why torture himself?» Friedemann thinks. «Let everything take its course. He would go his appointed way, closing his eyes before the yawning void, bowing to his fate, bowing to the overwhelming, anguishingly sweet, irresistible power.» The id has won.

A few days later when Herr Friedemann goes to the dinner party at the von Rinlingens, there is an «astonishing change in his appearance». «His cheeks looked sunken, he made a more crippled impression even than usual, and his inflamed eyes, with their dark rings, glowed with an inexpressibly tragic light.» When Gerda asks him why he didn't come to play his fiddle for her, he scarcely understands what she is saying. He is completely absorbed in looking at her in her «light colored frock with a low neck that left the white throat bare; a rose in full bloom fastened in her shining hair. Her cheeks a little flushed.»

Johannes, too, dressed for the event with great care: «His evening clothes were irreproachable, his shirt was dazzlingly white, his slender well-shaped feet were encased in patent-leather pumps which now and then betrayed the fact that he wore red silk stockings.» Is this denial of his grotesque appearance or compensation for it? Perhaps a little of each.

Throughout the meal, and afterwards in the living room, Johannes sat «rather drooping and looked at Gerda. There was no passion in his gaze nor scarcely any pain. But there was something rather dull and heavy there, a dead weight of impotent, involuntary adoration.»

At Gerda's invitation Johannes joins her in a walk into her garden and down to the riverside where she says she often goes. When Gerda asks him if he was born with his infirmity he replies that it «comes from their having let him fall when he was an infant». When she asks if his life has been happy, he replies that the belief that they were happy years was «all lies and his imagination». Almost all of his defenses are gone now. Rationalization, sublimation, compensation, denial, fantasy, reaction formation, they are no longer there to protect the fragile ego which has hidden behind his defenses for thirty years. If his ego had been less defended, if he had been forced to deal with some of the realities of his situation, if he had faced the anger he must surely have felt at the mother who left him in the care of an inadequate nurse, if he had spoken of his anger at the drunken nurse who let him fall, and at the sixteen year-old girl who gave the affection he craved, to another boy, perhaps he would not be so vulnerable now. But given thirty years of hiding behind his defense mechanisms, the touch of Gerda's hand as they sit together on a bench by the river's edge, sets loose the tremendous force of his repressed sexuality. In Mann's words, «seizing her other hand as he knelt before her, this little cripple, trembling and shuddering buried his face in her lap and stammered between his gasps in a voice which was scarcely human, «You know, you understand... let me... I can no longer... my god, oh, my god!»

How well the reader has come to understand Johannes Friedemann. The limited omniscient observer has allowed us to understand almost all of his thoughts and feelings. But Gerda is completely mysterious. We know nothing about her except for what she says and does, what others say about her, and the way Johannes Friedemann sees her. We never once are given an objective view, and certainly never enter her own consciousness. Is she the *femme fatale* so many literary critics have labeled her? Is she an unhappy woman who sees in Johannes a likely victim of her cruel nature? Or is she, perhaps, a lonely woman who sees in him the possibility of a confidante and friend who can understand her unhappiness and pain? Is she sorely in need of a companion who shares her love of music and interest in theatre? Women don't like her and men want to flirt with and perhaps seduce her. Does she hope that in Johannes Friedemann, the deformed little man whose head scarcely reaches as high as her breast, she has found the friend and companion she needs so badly? If the latter interpretation of her character is the right one, we can understand her disgust and revulsion when Johannes Friedemann responds to her willingness to understand him and to share her own secrets about herself, by revealing his lust and yearning, and showing no interest at all in her as a person who needs a friend.

Whichever is the right reading of Gerda, and I am always surprised by my students' (both male and female) willingness to see her as a bitch, rather than a lonely woman, she tore her hands from his burning fingers, clutched his arm, and flung him sidewise upon the ground. Then she sprang up and vanished down the wooded avenue.

As for Johannes, he lay there with his face in the grass, stunned, unmanned, shudders coursing swiftly through his frame. He pulled himself together, got up somehow, took two steps, and fell again, close to the water.

What were his sensations at this moment? Thomas Mann speculates that perhaps he was feeling that same luxury of hate which he had felt before when she had humiliated him with her glance. This had happened the first time they met at the opera. As they sat in the box, he had been forced to meet Frau von Rinnlingen's gaze after he felt her eyes upon him. «As their eyes met, hers did not swerve aside: she continued to gaze without embarrassment until he himself, deeply humiliated was forced to look away.» Why is he humiliated? It was the embarrassment about his deformity on the part of his classmates, especially the girls, which had caused him so much pain and sadness as a boy. Why has Gerda not looked away in embarrassment? Is it because she is cruel and arrogant, or is it because she has a remarkably wholesome interest in that which is different? Mann doesn't tell us. He simply has Johannes «turn a shade paler and feel a strange sweet pang of anger and scorn». At whom is he angry? This woman whom he hardly knows? The mother who allowed him to be cared for by a clearly inadequate wet-nurse? The nurse who did the damage? The girls who found him embarrassing? Is this a use of displacement of his anger at his mother, to women in general, and this one to whom he is so powerfully attracted in particular? And then there is the question of his scorn. Is it a projection of his feelings about himself onto Gerda? This is, perhaps, further evidence that this is old anger which Johannes is allowing himself to feel for the first time: a hatred of his mother who was responsible for his care as an infant.

But back to Johannes on the ground by the river. His anger and hatred escalate now to an «insane rage which must at all costs find expression even against himself». A lifetime's accumulation of anger at the need to repress his sexuality and his resentment of the unjust lot life had given him, has surged up into his awareness. All of his defenses are gone and he has no object for his rage except himself. «On his belly he dragged his body a little further, lifted its upper part, and let it fall into the water. He did not raise he head or move his legs which still lay on the bank.»

«The crickets stopped chirping a moment at the sound of the little splash.» In the great world of nature, human tragedy makes only a little splash. Then «the crickets went on as before, the boughs lightly rustled, and down the long alley came the faint sound of laughter.» Is Mann saying that in the great and wonderful world of nature, the psychological complexity of human beings receives only faint laughter as we struggle to protect our fragile egos with complex mechanisms with which we fool even ourselves?

Le Complexe de Virilité de Pierre Drieu La Rochelle (*)

SOLANGE LEIBOVICI (**)

En 1939, alors que commence la drôle de guerre, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle a quarante-sept ans. Il est physiquement mal en point: il souffre d'une maladie de coeur, d'une maladie de foie, d'une hernie, d'une sciatique, d'une aortite, de crises d'urémie, il se sent vieux et fatigué. Il s'éloigne de plus en plus de sa dernière maîtresse Christiane Renault: il est presque totalement impuissant. Son célèbre *Journal*¹ révèle des traits qui peuvent être rapprochés du délire de persécution – il se croit haï de tous ceux qui l'entourent – ainsi que de la névrose obsessionnelle. Il établit sans cesse des listes: des femmes qu'il a aimées, des juifs qui jouent un rôle dans la presse. Il y énumère ses crimes, ses péchés, ses «tares de vieux prophète couvert d'ordures». Il fait des bilans de sa vie passée ou des choses devant être réalisées dans l'avenir. Ces bilans semblent être ceux d'un homme qui se prépare à mourir et qui une dernière fois veut commémorer les événements importants de son existence: quelques femmes aimées, quelques oeuvres d'art, quelques livres, quelques paysages, la «charge de Charleroi» lors de la Première Guerre mondiale. En fait, Drieu est de plus en plus attiré par l'idée du suicide, comme toujours quand il a été confronté à ses propres échecs. Dépressif et mélancolique, il s'enferme dans la solitude, l'amertume et l'auto-accusation.

Pierre Drieu La Rochelle a eu une enfance solitaire et malheureuse, marquée par un lien jaloux et possessif avec sa mère et une haine vivace pour son père. Bien qu'il ait toujours répété qu'il détestait sa mère, celle-ci ne l'ayant selon lui pas suffisamment aimé et lui ayant préféré un père violent mais faible qui avait dilapidé la fortune familiale et restait attaché à une autre femme, Drieu s'est identifié à ces deux êtres dont il surtout intériorisé les traits de caractères que d'autre part il déteste le plus, les retrouvant en lui-même: la jalousie obsessionnelle de la mère, l'incapacité sociale et le manque de volonté du père. Il est élevé en partie par une grand-mère insatisfaite de sa condition de mère et d'épouse, qui lui apprend le culte de la force morale et physique. Dès l'enfance, le modèle de l'homme fort lui est offert non pas par le père, mais par ses lectures, la légende napoléonienne en particulier.

Adolescent timide qui déteste son corps faible et se réfugie dans la lecture et la rêverie, Drieu vit ses premières expériences sexuelles («sordides» selon lui) avec des prostituées. Le bordel

(*) J'ai résumé pour cette communication certaines parties de mon livre *Le sang et l'encre. Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Une psychobiographie*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.

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¹ Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, *Journal 1939-1945*, Paris: Gallimard, 1992.

restera cependant pour lui le seul endroit où il se sent homme, alors qu'il notera dans son journal les nombreux fiascos qui marquent ses conquêtes.

Soldat de la Première Guerre mondiale, où il a été plusieurs fois blessé, Drieu a connu à la fois l'horreur des tranchées et l'expérience unique du combat et de la solidarité dans une communauté masculine. Il a fait partie du groupe des Surréalistes où il fut introduit par son ami Aragon, et pendant l'entre-deux-guerres il devient l'un des grands «prophètes de la décadence». Ses oeuvres, qu'elles soient fictionnelles ou politiques, révèlent une forte tendance à la projection: Drieu y mélange toujours l'introspection à une réflexion pessimiste sur son pays et sur son temps, il assimile selon les mots de Daniel Halévy «l'être personnel» à «l'être national».²

Il adhère à partir de 1936 au fascisme et il entre au Parti Populaire Français de Jacques Doriot, dont il a été l'un des principaux idéologues. Il prend pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale la direction de la Nouvelle Revue Française et il se suicide en 1945.

Son oeuvre peut être caractérisée par plusieurs thèmes qui renvoient à des aspects importants de sa personnalité: le donjuanisme et la misogynie, la hantise de la décadence et le rejet du monde moderne, l'antisémitisme et l'obsession de la pureté, la haine de soi qui fait qu'il se présente toujours comme un homme faible, paresseux et décadent, l'esthétisation de la guerre, le conflit entre le sang (la vie active et militante) et l'encre (l'existence contemplative de l'écrivain), le culte de la force et de la virilité qui ont fait de lui un partisan du fascisme.

Les romans de Drieu présentent des hommes forts, et ses oeuvres autobiographiques offrent également des portraits d'hommes décrits à la fois de façon objective, et idéalisés comme s'ils étaient des projections du moi idéal. Cette admiration démesurée de la force a d'ailleurs tendance à se retourner dans son contraire: déçu, Drieu passe facilement de l'adulation de l'homme fort à son exécration, conduite qui répète son attitude envers ses parents.

Le «Préambule» de *La suite dans les idées* (1927) définit sans doute le mieux, sous la forme autofictionnelle qui caractérise les écrits des années vingt, le «complexe de virilité» de Drieu. Etre un homme, c'est se définir de façon négative, car c'est en premier lieu ne pas être une femme. Dès l'enfance, le narrateur a désiré être un homme, soldat, athlète, poète ou prêtre, et la virilité est associée à la pureté physique et morale, l'élan mystique vers l'héroïsme et la sainteté. «Etre un homme», c'est être «debout, fort, celui qui frappe, qui commande, ou qui monte sur le bûcher». (*La suite dans les idées*, p. 10) Mais lui-même est resté assis, il a négligé un corps qui s'est relâché; l'homme qui ne prend pas soin de son corps n'est plus homme. Drieu n'est pas un homme et il n'en a jamais été un. Il a laissé s'échapper de lui la force et l'adresse, il ne sait pas dompter un cheval, il n'est pas un bon amant, il n'est ni un saint, ni un poète. Il a eu peur dans la guerre comme il a maintenant peur dans la paix. Il n'est pas «un chef entre les hommes». «Ni guerrier, ni prêtre, ni athlète, ni amant: sans soldats, sans autel, sans muscles, sans maîtresse, je me suis fait scribe.» (*La suite dans les idées*, p. 12) Il a manqué sa vie, car il n'a pas accompli son désir. Il a donné à l'encre la primauté et négligé le sang.

Le corps, symbole de la décadence physique des Français, va rester l'un des thèmes principaux de ses écrits, et Alice Yaeger Kaplan a parlé à propos de Drieu d'une «géographie humaine» qui lui permet d'exprimer le mépris masochiste qu'il ressent envers son propre corps.³ Le thème avait déjà souvent apparu dans ses livres, et dès sa jeunesse Drieu regrettait la négligence physique et le manque de discipline qu'il observait autour de lui. Dans une lettre à son ami André Jéramec datant de 1912 il conseillait aux parents de «façonner» le corps de leurs enfants et de leur faire contracter de bonne heure «de saines dispositions»: «Malgré les tendances de la civilisation qui apparaît triomphante, le corps reste toujours la pierre de touche de toutes les évaluations par lesquelles les hommes se jugent entre eux. Cela est vrai, même des milieux où la cérébralité prime le plus.»⁴

² Daniel Halévy, préface à Pierre Andreu, *Drieu témoin et visionnaire*, Paris: Grasset, 1952.

³ Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality. Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

⁴ *Correspondance avec André et Colette Jéramec*, Paris: Gallimard, 1993, p. 65.

Le fascisme entrevu en Allemagne confirme ce qu'il avait tant admiré pendant le séjour fait à l'âge de quinze ans en Angleterre, où il avait découvert l'hygiène corporelle et le goût des performances sportives. Le fascisme promet lui aussi une restauration physique par le sport et la vie au grand air. La restauration morale dont rêve Drieu devra passer par la régénération du corps. Dans *Etat-civil* (1921), il écrivait déjà que l'Angleterre a inventé l'hygiène, «cette règle de vie qui remplace la morale», (*Etat-civil*, p. 131) et que «dans le sport l'homme reprend ses droits. Il reconquiert la discipline, la seule liberté qui soit douce» (*Etat-civil*, p. 119). Dans *Mesure de la France* (1922), Drieu voulait montrer que le corps individuel ne peut être séparé du corps national, les deux cohabitent dans une symbiose où l'affaiblissement du premier contamine l'autre et conduit irrémédiablement à une dégénérescence collective. Faisant partie d'un corps national en qui la vie faiblit, l'individu est lui-même «condamné à participer à toutes les déchéances qui l'aviliraient fatalement». (*Mesure de la France*, p. 125) Si la stature de la France se rétrécit, si son sang circule avec de moins en moins de force, c'est parce que le corps est ignoré et dédaigné, et que personne ne le considère «comme un des éléments de l'être» (*Mesure de la France*, p. 121). Seuls les «hommes forts, ceux en qui persiste ou rejaillit la force», sont selon lui à l'abri d'une *contagion honteuse*: «Ils continuent de vivre pleinement, hautement, comme si de rien n'était. Ils se dressent purs, entiers au milieu des décadences.» (*Mesure de la France*, p. 124) Car «en dépit de toutes les atteintes: guerre, alcools, drogues, onanisme, il y avait des Français qui restaient intacts» (*Mesure de la France*, p. 129). Dès les premiers écrits, la pureté est assimilée à la force virile.

Dans les articles écrits pour *Emancipation nationale*, Drieu présente le fascisme comme le seul mouvement politique capable de créer une «révolution du corps» qui serait suivie d'une révolution des mœurs accompagnée d'une dignité et d'un héroïsme nouveaux, qui défendrait l'homme contre la décadence amenée par la vie urbaine et l'ère de la Machine, et le purifierait de l'intellectualisme introduit par les juifs. La création par le Front populaire d'un sous-secrétariat d'Etat à la Jeunesse, aux Sports et aux Loisirs, ne le satisfait pas, car les préoccupations du régime ne visent pas une rénovation totale de la société grâce à la primauté du corporel. Pour Drieu, c'est le corps qui doit devenir le point de départ d'une philosophie et d'une vision du monde nouvelles. La métaphore du corps revient de façon obsédante dans ses livres et ses articles. Redonner leur santé physique aux Français, c'est aussi «refaire un corps à la France», et le P.P.F. devrait être le «parti du corps vivant». Cette attention donnée au physique renvoie toujours chez Drieu au mépris qu'il a de son propre corps, lieu du péché et de la souillure, car le corps est l'endroit où la sexualité se manifeste dans sa différence et dans ses exigences pulsionnelles. En outre son corps vieillissant et maladif représente le symbole le plus cruel de la décrépitude qui vient avec l'âge, et Drieu signale avec insistance les maux dont il souffre dans son journal. Il y revient fréquemment sur son impuissance sexuelle, qui s'accompagne de crises de jalousie lorsque Christiane Renault prend un autre amant. Le corps du vieillard, qui ne peut plus servir ni à l'amour ni à la guerre, se substitue à celui du jeune guerrier. Dans ce corps décrépi, la vie a disparu et le sang est devenu encre. En se penchant sans cesse sur celui qu'il fut, Drieu semble vouloir le vampiriser pour retrouver les forces qui lui manquent. Ces forces, c'est au P.P.F., dans l'ambiance virile qui lui rappelle celle de la guerre, qu'il va penser les trouver.

Le sentiment de la décadence qui hante Drieu, et auquel il oppose la force vitalisante de l'idéologie fasciste, fait partie des thèmes chers à une époque, mais il est vécu chez lui de manière plus personnelle et plus douloureuse. Il lui permet en outre de projeter la haine qu'il ressent envers lui-même, et il fonctionne en tant que tel comme mécanisme de défense. Le choix du fascisme en tant que rite régénérateur est pour Drieu une nécessité existentielle, ainsi qu'un symptôme de névrose obsessionnelle: pour lui, l'apologie du fascisme viril est une façon d'effacer la souillure nationale et individuelle. Si le culte de la force exprime une quête mystique du pur et du sacré, il représente aussi un signe psychopathologique. La décadence est l'une des expressions privilégiées d'une angoisse profonde de la faiblesse physique et de l'impuissance. L'impuissance politique et sociale qui a hanté les intellectuels de son temps est chez lui aggravée par la crainte de l'impuissance sexuelle dont il a souffert dès sa jeunesse.

L'antisémitisme de Drieu fait partie de l'antisémitisme violent des années trente, qui conduira à l'acceptation muette par la majorité des Français des mesures anti-juives prises par Vichy. Si chez Drieu il représente une projection de la haine de soi et de la propre impureté, basée sur une sexualité coupable, à un niveau collectif, il renvoie à l'idée d'une atteinte à l'identité nationale, d'une impureté de l'être national menacé dans son essence même. L'un des premiers objectifs du régime de Vichy sera d'«épurer» la France de ses éléments nocifs, dont en premier lieu les juifs. L'attitude défaitiste et frileuse lors des accords de Munich puis de l'occupation allemande témoigne d'un sentiment de culpabilité, d'une faute collective devant être sévèrement châtiée.⁵ Avec Vichy, la république impure, la «vieuse maquerelle» ou la «République juive», est remplacée par la dictature virile de l'Etat français.

Le donjuanisme de Drieu et son impossibilité à s'attacher ainsi que sa misogynie le rattachent également à une période troublée qui s'interroge sur le rôle changeant de la femme. Le traumatisme des pertes masculines énormes de la Grande Guerre et la montée du féminisme ont créé l'idée d'une nation féminisée et affaiblie. Le donjuanisme renvoie cependant aussi chez Drieu à une relation perturbée avec la mère, ainsi qu'au désir de lutter contre des fantasmes homo-érotiques, sublimés dans la recherche de fraternités masculines et déniés grâce aux multiples conquêtes féminines.

En fait, ces trois aspects: la hantise de la décadence, l'antisémitisme, la misogynie, renvoient au conflit entre le masculin et le féminin, le pur et l'impur. La décadence de Drieu tout comme celle de la France est basée sur la dénonciation de la faiblesse, la féminisation, le manque d'énergie et de vertus viriles. L'antisémitisme de Drieu reprend l'une des caractéristiques de l'antisémitisme traditionnel, qui présente le juif comme un être hybride, homosexuel ou bisexuel, surintellectualisé, n'ayant qu'un corps faible et féminisé. La misogynie est également une projection qui exprime la haine du féminin que Drieu découvre en lui-même.

La vie et l'oeuvre de Pierre Drieu La Rochelle sont marquées par la recherche obsessionnelle d'une pureté individuelle et collective. Au niveau de l'idéologie, cette obsession du pur et de l'impur s'exprime dans la quête d'un remède qui devrait mettre fin à la décadence des sociétés modernes, et provoquer une régénération de leurs institutions sociales ainsi que de leurs formes culturelles. L'impur est un facteur générateur de désordre; il symbolise la faiblesse, le chaos et l'anarchie qui caractérisent les démocraties européennes. Le pur recherché par Drieu et d'autres penseurs de sa génération s'exprime dans le culte de la force et des valeurs viriles. En fait, l'impureté du monde moderne trouve pour Drieu ses racines dans une sexualité intellectualisée, ayant pour unique objectif une jouissance plus cérébrale que corporelle, devenue de plus en plus perverse parce qu'elle ne respecte plus les règles «naturelles» de différenciation entre le masculin et le féminin, parce qu'elle n'est plus axée sur son objectif principal, la procréation. Ces règles, Drieu les a formulées dans son apologie d'une morale sexuelle qui l'a conduit au fascisme. Sur un plan personnel, le désir de purification traduit chez Drieu un sentiment de culpabilité qui s'exprime dans la haine de soi, l'auto-punition et la tentation du suicide qui l'a hanté toute sa vie.

Evelyne Pewzner a plaidé dans *L'homme coupable* pour une approche pluridisciplinaire de la symbolique du péché et du mal, qui devrait permettre de dégager l'articulation entre «l'expression individuelle de la souffrance vécue et les significations fondamentales véhiculées par la tradition occidentale».⁶ Selon elle, la psychopathologie peut être considérée comme une science de l'interprétation, car le trouble mental dévoile le langage que parle une culture. La culpabilité, qui forme

⁵ On découvre la portée de ce sentiment masochiste d'un juste châtement dans les discours de Pétain: « Depuis la victoire, l'esprit de jouissance l'a emporté sur l'esprit de sacrifice. On a revendiqué plus qu'on a servi. On a voulu épargner l'effort; on rencontre aujourd'hui le malheur.» (Appel du vingt juin 1940) «Vous avez souffert, vous souffrirez encore. Beaucoup d'entre vous ne retrouveront pas leur métier ou leur maison. Votre vie sera dure.» (Appel du 25 juin 1940. *Philippe Pétain. Discours aux Français*, édition établie par Jean-Claude Barbas, Paris: Albin Michel, 1989, pp. 60, 66).

⁶ Evelyne Pewzner, *L'Homme coupable*, Paris: Privat, 1992, p. 25.

le thème central de la mélancolie et de la névrose obsessionnelle, est l'une des expressions significatives d'un certain modèle culturel, d'une spécificité symbolique des sociétés occidentales. Le discours de l'obsessionnel ou du mélancolique appartient au champ de significations que dégage une culture. Dans ce sens, «il peut être considéré comme un texte, et, à ce titre, il peut faire l'objet d'une *exégèse*».⁷

La personnalité occidentale est profondément influencée par l'idée chrétienne d'une sexualité coupable; l'impureté de la chair et la souffrance rédemptrice qui sont au coeur de la réflexion chrétienne sur le mal forment la trame du discours du mélancolique et de l'obsessionnel. Le modèle clinique du mélancolique, victime expiatoire, et de l'obsessionnel, qui vise une ascèse purificatrice, sont liés à la personnalité de l'homme occidental. Une culpabilité individuelle provenant en grande partie des conflits de relation intensifiés par le cercle restreint de la famille nucléaire, s'y assimile aux préoccupations collectives dictées par le surmoi culturel. Comme tous les enfants de sa classe sociale et de son temps, Drieu a été élevé dans un climat moral qui redoute les excès d'une sexualité considérée comme menaçante et devant être refoulée.

Pour l'obsessionnel tout comme pour le mélancolique, le mal – l'impur – est plus qu'une saleté superficielle pouvant être éliminée par un lavage. Il représente une souillure profonde et indélébile de l'être, qui en est menacé dans son intégrité. La façon dont le mélancolique se sacrifie et procède à sa propre exécution, ou celle dont l'obsessionnel s'impose la répétition torturante de rituels en fait incapables de le délivrer d'une souillure intime, rejoint l'ensemble des représentations mythiques du symbolisme occidental, qui se caractérise par une culpabilité intériorisée, et par l'idée que le salut passe par la voie de la souffrance.

La névrose obsessionnelle se caractérise par la compulsion de répétition, qui oblige à accomplir obstinément les mêmes actions purificatoires, sans que celles-ci puissent jamais atteindre l'objectif recherché. Chez Drieu, le rite est intellectualisé et il s'exprime dans l'écriture et la répétition des mêmes thèmes obsédants. Il est, comme dans le cas des lavages devant effacer la souillure, voué à l'échec. L'apologie du fascisme viril et le culte de la violence représentent chez lui un rite de purification. La virilité pure du fascisme doit sauver la nation décadente et féminisée. Dans les deux cas, il s'agit des deux aspects conflictuels de la personnalité de Drieu. Le fascisme doit anéantir la décadence, tout comme Drieu veut tuer la femme en lui, de sorte que subsiste seulement un homme pur et fort. Celui-ci n'est pas calqué sur la figure du père, dénoncé comme un homme faible et lâche. L'homme fort glorifié par Drieu est toujours celui qu'il n'est pas et ne peut pas être, mais avec qui il désire fusionner, un Autre inaccessible envers qui il éprouve une admiration mêlée d'attraction sexuelle.

L'oeuvre de Drieu est à la fois l'expression de conflits individuels obsédants, surdéterminés par les conjonctures historiques, et le reflet d'un déchirement collectif, d'un besoin d'action chez des hommes vivant intensément leur époque mais la plupart du temps incapables de s'engager véritablement. Certains éléments caractéristiques de cette oeuvre font incontestablement partie de l'esprit des années trente: l'attitude ambiguë de l'intellectuel envers son rôle social, composée à la fois de mépris anti-intellectualiste et de narcissisme élitiste, la révolte contre l'ordre établi, l'ambivalence politique et la tentation totalitaire, le sentiment de la décadence et la recherche d'une régénération individuelle et nationale, le racisme et l'antisémitisme, la misogynie et l'obsession de la virilité. L'intellectuel des années trente est un être hésitant et déchiré, contraint par les circonstances historiques à faire des choix et à durcir ses prises de position. Son impuissance politique et sa paralysie sociale viennent sans doute de ce qu'il veut à la fois s'engager, participer à l'action, et rester fidèle à des valeurs dont il considère qu'il en est le représentant par excellence, comme le montre le débat causé par *La trahison des clercs* de Julien Benda.

Pour échapper à cette impuissance politique, l'intellectuel des années trente va exalter l'action. L'angoisse profonde de la décadence et le culte de la force ne sont en effet pas limités aux penseurs de la droite fascisante. Les intellectuels de cette période ont eu conscience d'une crise de la civili-

⁷ Pewzner, 1992, p. 37.

sation qui remettait en cause les fondements des sociétés libérales. Cette crise doit être mise en majeure partie sur le compte de la rupture causée dans l'imaginaire collectif par la Première Guerre mondiale. Les progrès techniques sont pour beaucoup de penseurs à la base d'une matérialisation sans âme, et le progrès matériel s'est accompli aux dépens de l'épanouissement spirituel de l'individu. De Bergson à Valéry, de Duhamel à Bernanos ainsi que dans les courants spiritualistes et personalistes autour d'*Esprit ou d'Ordre Nouveau*, l'accent est mis sur l'autonomisation des créations humaines et l'aliénation qui en est le résultat. L'univers futur semble totalement déshumanisé, et forme le cadre d'une vie mécanique où les masses sont absorbées par leurs propres produits.

Les voies nouvelles que cherchent les intellectuels des années trente pour remédier à la crise se définissent dans le contexte d'une angoisse profonde de cette perte de contrôle, attribuée à la faiblesse des institutions démocratiques. Elles expriment presque toujours le désir d'un Etat fort, que ce soit par le planisme économique, l'idéologie technocratique, ou le corporatisme. C'est en particulier les deux modèles antagonistes du fascisme et du communisme qui proposent des solutions à la crise de civilisation et au déclin national. L'idée d'une révolte contre l'ordre établi des sociétés bourgeoises, d'un souffle révolutionnaire qui devrait rendre leur force aux nations décadentes de l'Europe, le culte de la force, le juvénisme et l'appel à la jeunesse, l'idéal utopique d'un homme nouveau et d'un ordre nouveau, se retrouvent dans la gauche tout autant que dans la droite.

L'apologie de la force virile représente un mécanisme de protection contre l'angoisse sociale omniprésente pendant l'entre-deux-guerres. Les crises, la violence de la rue, la menace d'un second conflit mondial, l'idée d'un déclin, voire d'une disparition totale de la civilisation occidentale, sont des facteurs qui créent une crainte profonde de l'avenir.

Le culte de la force qui domine pendant les années trente renvoie chez Drieu La Rochelle à un processus de masculinité compensatoire. Enfant, il n'a pas eu de modèle mâle à imiter; le père, personnage de peu d'envergure, était le plus souvent absent, en outre la haine que l'enfant ressentait envers lui empêchait une identification réussie. Dans la société où vit Drieu, les valeurs attachées à un comportement masculin jouent un rôle fondamental. Pendant l'enfance, par la lecture et le modèle que proposent les légendes comme l'épopée napoléonienne, ainsi que par l'atmosphère rude de l'école de garçons. Pendant la guerre, par la primauté des valeurs guerrières. La militarisation des nations européennes et l'apologie des valeurs viriles trouvent un écho chez un homme qui, sa vie durant, a douté de sa propre masculinité, un «complexé de la virilité» à qui a manqué le père fort et héroïque que lui proposaient ses lectures et les modèles donnés en exemple. Ce père idéalisé, il continuera de le chercher, pour s'identifier à lui et s'attribuer sa force. Poussé par les exigences culturelles et sociales de son temps, Drieu est porté à exagérer les caractéristiques masculines de sa personnalité: la force, la domination, la compétition, l'agressivité. De même, il doit camoufler des tendances féminines inquiétantes.

L'oeuvre de Drieu est caractéristique de son temps en ce qu'elle exprime la «crise de la modernité» qui a affecté l'Europe entière à partir du tournant du siècle. La problématique de la fin du XIXe siècle s'organise autour d'une transformation de la morale sexuelle, d'une bipolarisation des principes féminin et masculin. La Belle Epoque, période de l'enfance et de l'adolescence de la génération de Drieu, a deux visages: alors même qu'elle se lance avec un élan plein d'enthousiasme dans la modernité et qu'elle joue avec l'idée de mondes meilleurs où la science aura triomphé des souffrances, de la misère et des maladies, elle se laisse aussi aller à une vision catastrophique de l'avenir. Le corps social est présenté comme affaibli par ces mêmes progrès scientifiques et techniques ayant provoqué une baisse de l'efficacité de la sélection naturelle, encore aggravée par des mélanges entre des races inégales. Des sociétés d'eugénisme pour l'amélioration de la race font leur apparition; elles prônent une sélection artificielle devant restaurer la santé biologique et morale des civilisations tout autant que des individus.

La société étant considérée d'après les principes du darwinisme social comme un organisme vivant, les désordres sociaux dont la Commune forme l'exemple le plus angoissant, semblent être

les marques d'une corruption matérielle et morale qui s'exprime dans la maladie. Le corps social semble livré à des phobies, des symptômes provenant d'un refoulement manqué, des anxiétés devant tout ce qui est différent, étranger et donc étrange et dangereux, projections d'une sexualité elle aussi inquiétante. Dans la vie privée, le corps devient obsédant, la pudeur s'effraie devant les menaces auxquelles elle est exposée de façon permanente. Vers la fin du siècle, l'obsession d'une dénatalité effrayante, car le nombre d'enfants d'une nation est lié à sa force militaire et économique, entraîne une stigmatisation des formes divergentes de sexualité, considérées comme des pertes choquantes d'énergie frappant le corps social et engendrant le chaos.⁸

On a l'impression que l'angoisse devant la sexualité ainsi que le refoulement qu'exige le surmoi culturel sont si forts que la société bourgeoise est amenée à chercher un exutoire en libérant d'autres pulsions, qui sont elles agressives et viennent renforcer l'idéologie nationaliste de la fin du siècle. La laïcisation a créé un vide dans des sociétés où la religion, sans être disparue, cherche des formes nouvelles dans le nationalisme qui prend en partie sa place. Pour beaucoup d'adolescents, qui rêvent d'échapper au milieu familial étouffant, la guerre va donner un sens à l'existence et permettre de satisfaire les rêves de gloire et d'héroïsme qu'avait prôné l'idéologie nationaliste. L'homme nouveau, actif et fort, s'impose alors en tant qu'antipode du décadent passif et efféminé.

L'industrialisation et le travail en usine, ainsi que le renforcement du rôle de l'Etat, qui s'accompagne d'une croissance du nombre de fonctionnaires, ont introduit des formes de travail «non-héroïques»; dans l'imaginaire collectif, celles-ci sont vécues comme l'expression d'une dévirilisation, d'une féminisation du monde moderne, encore renforcées par le fait que dans le système méritocratique républicain, les femmes commencent à accéder à des fonctions qui leur étaient autrefois impossibles à acquérir. Le déclin de l'autorité paternelle dans les sociétés industrialisées est lui aussi à la base d'un sentiment de féminisation; la hantise d'une perte de la virilité déjà introduite par une démographie stagnante va inciter à chercher un idéal de masculinité et de pureté qui s'oppose à ce que beaucoup ont vécu comme une indifférenciation sexuelle, un mélange angoissant du masculin et du féminin, voire une féminisation totale.

Les aspects pathologiques qui s'expriment chez Drieu La Rochelle sont un agrandissement de tendances existantes en son temps, mais celles-ci doivent être également considérées dans l'expression singulière qu'elles prennent dans l'itinéraire d'un individu. Celui-ci, ainsi que son époque, peuvent être mieux compris par l'analyse du langage caché que véhiculent ces symptômes névrotiques. La psychobiographie, qui veut montrer la façon dont l'expérience individuelle est surdéterminée par les conditions socio-historiques, s'attache à explorer et à interpréter une existence pour mieux éclairer les obsessions, les passions, les désirs et les angoisses d'une époque. Dans le cas de Drieu, elle pourrait jeter un jour nouveau sur la fascination des régimes totalitaires qui a été si forte chez nombre d'intellectuels de sa génération.

⁸ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Normal and Abnormal Sexuality in The Nineteenth Century*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 1982, 17(2).

La Présence de Sido dans *Chéri*

HAN VERHOEFF (*)

On connaît mal Colette. Malgré l'admiration que suscite son oeuvre, on a peu discerné sa richesse ambivalente. Ses aspects «positifs» bien connus, l'amour de la nature et sa vision nuancée de l'émancipation des femmes, se compliquent par les aspects moins fastes déterminés en particulier par les cruautés, les angoisses et les hontes de la passion amoureuse. Ces complications touchent encore la grande figure maternelle de son oeuvre. Comme on sait, Sido apparaît tard chez Colette, malgré l'allure fortement autobiographique des romans.

Les livres qui célèbrent la présence et l'action maternelles interdisent une vision trop sereine de la mère. Et, autre paradoxe digne de remarque, dans les romans qui précèdent, l'instance maternelle est encore indirectement présentée et souvent mise en question, ou bien par le biais de personnages qui rappellent son attitude et sa position, ou bien via l'héroïne elle-même qui lui a emprunté des traits dominateurs et envahissants.

Colette a été fortement marquée par sa mère qui l'aimait et admirait selon l'image qu'elle se faisait de sa fille et qu'elle lui a imposée. Anxieuse de se conformer à cette image idéale, Colette s'est toujours montrée dépendante du bon vouloir de son entourage. *La Vagabonde* et *L'Entrave* présentent l'incertitude foncière de l'héroïne dans le dialogue et l'affrontement amoureux. Un thème majeur est l'opposition entre Sido et l'amour maternel d'une part et la passion amoureuse d'autre part. Mais on peut relever aussi chez Colette la tendance contraire, celle d'impliquer la mère ou ses délégués dans les romans dans l'aventure amoureuse – tentative iconoclaste faite par agressivité, par amour et aussi pour accaparer, pour capter à son profit quelque chose de son pouvoir dans ce domaine si périlleux.

Cette présence de la Mère offre une clef importante pour comprendre *Chéri*. On retrouve les thèmes et les problèmes déjà mentionnés avec la double identification de Colette qui sous-tend cette rencontre inédite entre l'enfant et la mère.

Chéri,¹ ce roman d'un comique très original et puissant, est un livre dur et cruel, avec de nombreux moments d'ironie tragique. Ces moments sont réalisés par moyen de recouvrements ou, comme on dit depuis Maury, de superpositions: des aspects et des êtres différents, voire opposés, se rencontrent en une similitude des plus suspectes, ambivalentielles, où des qualités et des vertus s'avèrent être des vices ou des fautes. On y trouve l'amalgame de la réunion des contraires, du pur

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¹ Je prends pour *Chéri* et *L'Entrave* l'édition du Livre de Poche et pour les autres oeuvres de Colette le deuxième volume des oeuvres de Colette, dans la série *Bouquins*, Paris: Laffont, 1989.

et de l'impur, dans le langage de Colette, de la jeunesse et de la vieillesse, du masculin et du féminin et la dialectique de l'abandon qui domine ce roman est marquée par l'oscillation entre *partir* et *rester*, activités, réalités contraires qui s'avèrent pourtant profondément identiques. Dans *Chéri* on rencontre tout Colette, avec son narcissisme, son amour des bêtes et aussi la figure maternelle: c'est un livre où la Mère est célébrée, jalouée et aussi bafouée.²

Comme dans *Phèdre* et *Le Rouge et le Noir* l'amour maternel dans ce roman se trouve lié à la sexualité, par la liaison de Léa, ancienne courtisane de près de cinquante ans, avec le jeune Chéri qui en a une vingtaine. On a fait grand cas de la différence entre Léa, la bonne mère, et les autres figures maternelles dans le roman, dont la vraie mère, Charlotte Peloux. Il est question en effet d'une identification certaine de Colette avec son héroïne. *Chéri* est de 1920 et Colette avait 47 ans. Elle avait la même corpulence et jouait son rôle dans l'adaptation scénique du roman. De plus, l'auteur avait mystérieusement prévu sa liaison avec son beau-fils Bernard, qui allait commencer quelques années plus tard.

La supériorité de Léa est soulignée dans les descriptions «objectives» qui montrent par contraste les déboires de la mauvaise mère –

A quatorze ans, Chéri tâta du collège. Il n'y croyait pas. Il défiait toute geôle et s'échappa. Non seulement Mme Peloux trouva l'énergie de l'incarcérer à nouveau, mais encore, devant les pleurs et les injures de son fils, elle s'enfuit, les mains sur les oreilles, en criant: «Je ne veux pas voir ça! Je ne veux pas voir ça!» Cri si sincère qu'en effet elle s'éloigna de Paris, accompagnée d'un homme jeune mais peu scrupuleux, pour revenir deux ans plus tard, seule. Ce fut sa dernière faiblesse amoureuse. (p. 29)

– avec son cri de coeur qui conclut cette période de l'éducation maternelle:

«Ah! pour nous autres mères, quel calvaire, la vie!» (et elle) passa avec aisance de l'état de plus-heureuse-des-mères à celui de mère-martyre. (p. 31)

Or, il se trouve que les descriptions s'inscrivent dans le champ de vision de Léa. Cette disposition nous invite à supposer que ces peintures d'un humour étincelant représentent des *mots* de Léa que sans doute elle a débités plusieurs fois. Dans la même partie de l'exposition nous trouvons un autre exemple de ce style de parade. Devant quelqu'un qui la traitait de «chère artiste», elle réagit ainsi: «Artiste? Oh! vraiment, cher ami, mes amants sont bien bavards...» (p. 10)

Ces descriptions et ces mots, qui montrent le narcissisme de Léa, servent à souligner sa supériorité envers les autres figures maternelles. Contrairement à Charlotte, elle nourrit bien Chéri pendant sa tournée en Normandie. Bonne mère nourricière et experte en outre dans la gestion de sa maison, elle est comme Sido, infaillible comme elle, avec le même «don de définir, de pénétrer, et cette forme décrétale de l'observation» (*Sido*, p. 759). Elle s'enorgueillit de la nouvelle santé de «son» enfant, comme Sido qui, envoyant sa fille chez sa voisine, lui dit: «Va leur montrer ce que je sais faire!» (*Sido*, p. 773).

Mais Léa est aussi le double de Charlotte; elles mènent la même vie et, de plus, la dernière aventure amoureuse de Charlotte avec son jeune amant n'annonce-t-elle pas l'aventure tragique de Léa elle-même?

L'ambivalence envers la Mère, les critiques indirectes, les parallélismes inattendus avec leurs ironies: nous retrouvons tout cela dans la première scène qui donne le ton du roman, celle du collier de perles:

«Léa! Donne-le-moi, ton collier de perles!» [...] «Pourquoi ne me le donnerais-tu pas, ton collier? Il me va aussi bien qu'à toi, et même mieux!» [...] «Laisse ça, Chéri, tu as assez joué avec ce collier [...] tu fatigues le fil du collier. Les perles sont lourdes [...]

² Il est probable que la nature particulière de l'humour du roman tient à l'originalité de cette attitude iconoclaste.

Léa s'assit sur le lit: «Mais tu ne peux donc pas rire sans froncer ton nez comme ça? Tu seras bien content quand tu auras trois rides dans le coin du nez, n'est-ce pas?» [...] – Ce n'est pas vrai!» cria Chéri, irrité. [...] Léa sourit de le voir tel qu'elle l'aimait, révolté puis soumis, mal enchaîné, incapable d'être libre; elle posa une main sur la jeune tête qui secoua impatiemment le joug. Elle murmura, comme on calme une bête: «Là...là... Qu'est-ce que c'est donc...» (pp. 5-7)

Nous sommes ici dans le registre de l'*avoir* ou, si l'on veut, du *prendre*. Chéri veut avoir les perles, pour lui, elles sont liées à sa beauté, elles servent à la prouver. Nous assistons à la lutte de deux narcissismes, et cela, bien entendu, «fatigue le fil» de leur liaison. Le collier, de par sa nature, emprisonne. Mais il est aussi objet transitionnel, puisqu'il touche la «bonne place» du sommeil de Chéri, dans le coin du cou et de l'épaule de Léa. Seulement la suite du roman ne nous montre que trop clairement que, lié à l'argent et au prestige, le collier, ce «meuble» somptueux, ne se laisse pas «transitionner» comme cela...

Devant cette avidité du jeune profiteuse, de ce petit «vampire», faut-il croire au désintéressement de Léa? Mais elle veut *avoir* aussi! Tout d'abord, elle a Chéri, et elle en est fière. Pour elle, Chéri est un bel animal. Léa aime à dominer les bêtes comme les jeunes gens, pour ce qu'ils donnent, les confidences. En fait, les deux préférences sont liées, comme le montre un passage révélateur du *Pur et de l'Impur*, où Colette nous confie:

De plus, il me reste une facilité à percer, à déjouer le bel artifice que mettent en oeuvre l'enfance et l'adolescence. Par là, je goûte, mieux que beaucoup d'adultes, le plaisir défendu de pénétrer ce qui est jeune [...] Pénétration, don voluptueux de blesser! [...] “Nous n'avons pas chaud sans vous”, m'affirment des amis des deux sexes [...] O innocents! Je tremble qu'ils ne fassent erreur, et que de mendiants ils ne se découvrent donneurs de vie [...] Le scrupule me vint, comme d'habitude, par des voies extra-humaines. J'ai senti naître, croître, le sentiment de ma dette envers les animaux qui m'ont consacré leur brève existence. Tutélaire, moi? Capteuse de sources plutôt [...] Qu'il s'agisse d'une bête ou d'un enfant, convaincre, c'est affaiblir (pp. 946-947).

On le voit, confesser ou consoler, c'est dominer, c'est épuiser, c'est vider. Léa essaie d'y arriver auprès de Chéri, heureusement en vain, et dans cette ambition envahissante elle fait encore penser à Sido. Comme nous l'explique *La Maison de Claudine*, à l'éternelle question maternelle, «A quoi penses-tu?», il n'y a qu'une seule réponse à faire – «A rien, maman» – pour remettre «de temps en temps, avec politesse, les parents à leur place» (p. 221). Nous découvrons donc que ce n'est pas l'enfant qui est vampire, mais la mère...

Et il y a un autre renversement encore. Si les bêtes apportent la vie, elles apportent aussi la mort. Il y a dans *Chéri* l'obsession du cou qui, mal protégé par le collier, est le point vulnérable de la femme vieillissante. Léa s'en est avisée et elle a pris ses précautions. Elle quitte ses perles la nuit, «car Chéri, amoureux des belles perles et qui les caressait le matin, eût remarqué trop souvent que le cou de Léa, épaissi, perdait sa blancheur et montrait, sous la peau, des muscles détendus» (p. 10). Mais, lors de la réunion finale et peu avant la séparation définitive, elle oublie sa prudence et expose au regard de son jeune amant «une maigre torsade de cheveux sur la nuque, le menton double et le cou dévasté» (p. 174). Dans un autre passage encore, au moment de la fugue de Chéri, nous retrouvons une fois de plus le réseau fatal du collier, du cou vieillissant de la femme et du regard du jeune homme:

[...] et il sembla parfaitement heureux, sauf qu'il regarda souvent, avec une fixité pénible et interrogatrice, le cou fané de la Copine, un cou rougi et grenu où luisait un collier de perles fausses (pp. 116-117).

Avec son regard fasciné et involontairement agressif, Chéri fait penser à Batou, la panthère tenue comme animal domestique par Colette, dont elle a peint la réaction inquiétante de bête de proie:

Et puis, une autre fois, vous vous êtes approchée de la petite chienne que je tenais sur mes genoux, vous avez mesuré, sous son oreille, la place exacte d'une fontaine mystérieuse que vous avez léchée, léchée, léchée, avant de la tâter des dents, lente et les yeux fermés (p. 281).

Le regard nous mène une fois de plus à la mère. N'est-ce pas Sido qui dit toujours à sa fille: «Regarde...», pour l'inciter à s'ouvrir aux merveilles de la nature? Dans le roman, on assiste à un travestissement de l'ordre maternel. Sido n'a pas dit: «Regarde-moi»! Ici, porté sur la mère elle-même, le regard est transgression: la mère est vue, regardée, comme objet d'amour, et en tant que tel disqualifiée.

Avoir, prendre, regarder: après les malheurs que comportent ces activités, Colette nous montre encore les complications de la parole. Parler, chez Colette, c'est monologuer. Dans *Chéri* on assiste à l'échec du dialogue. *Parler* peut prendre plusieurs formes. Si l'on parle, on s'en souvient, c'est par faiblesse. Parler, c'est s'ouvrir, se vider, être vampirisé. Mais on parle aussi pour montrer sa force, sa supériorité. Nous avons déjà vu à l'oeuvre cette science des guillemets dans les mots de Léa. On ne parle point pour communiquer avec autrui, on délivre des communiqués. On parle aussi pour manipuler, dominer, devancer. Ici encore, on assiste à la supériorité de Léa et c'est son ascendant sur Chéri et les manipulations qu'il implique qu'elle se prend, très caractéristiquement, à regretter, lorsque la crise décisive entre les amants les a menés au-delà de toute ruse stratégique:

«C'est peu de chose, peu de chose... Il ne faut que deux ou trois paroles bien sèches auxquelles il répondra par quelque grosse injure, puis il boudera et je lui pardonnerai... Ce n'est que cela...» Mais elle ne trouva pas la semonce urgente, qui eût changé l'expression de ce regard. (p. 178)

Mais parler, parler seul, a encore une autre valeur, celle d'une délivrance. Pendant sa fugue loin de Léa, Chéri rompt le silence et parle d'elle avec abandon:

Mais Chéri, tout ensemble circonspect et grisé, ne cessa pas de parler de Léa. Il dit des choses raisonnables, imprégnées d'un bon sens conjugal. Il vanta le mariage, mais en rendant justice aux vertus de Léa (pp. 110-111).

Nous voilà devant une splendide litote, mise en abyme qui résume toute une vie. «Rendre justice aux vertus de Léa»: n'est-ce pas à cela qu'aboutit l'aventure de Chéri: la fixation définitive à la figure maternelle toute-puissante?

Mais ces paroles ont encore une autre signification. Chéri fait ce que Colette n'a pu réaliser dans son oeuvre jusqu'à ce moment: parler de la mère. La volubilité joyeuse, cocasse, de Chéri s'oppose au silence de son auteur. Parler de la mère, parler librement en l'admirant, en la critiquant, pour Chéri, c'est une libération de la tutelle maternelle. Il se trouve que l'auto-affirmation ne signifie pas l'affirmation de l'autre. La louange de la mère s'avère aussi louange contre la mère. Louer Léa, c'est, pour un moment, se délivrer d'elle en l'objectivant, en la fixant à distance.

Et Chéri ne fait pas que parler *de* la mère, il sait encore parler *à* la mère.³ Dans la rencontre décisive entre les amants, Chéri combat Léa en lui empruntant ses propres armes, ses propres termes. Lorsque Léa, exaspérée, se met à critiquer la femme de Chéri, celui-ci répond, non pas, comme le croit Léa, pour défendre sa femme, mais pour défendre Léa contre elle-même:

Chéri se leva, pâle et sérieux: [...] «Je te défends, m'entends-tu bien, je te défends de m'abîmer ma Nounoune! [...] Est-ce que c'est ainsi que Nounoune doit parler? [...] Moi, je sais comment doit parler Nounoune! Je sais comment elle doit penser!» (pp. 181- 182).

³ On retrouve la même nuance distinctive chez son auteur. Colette elle-même parle de la mère dans *La Maison de Claudine* et *Sido*, et elle parle à la mère dans *La Naissance du jour*.

Chéri reprendra les paroles de Léa pour les tourner contre elle et, dernière ironie, c'est en flattant le narcissisme de la Mère que Chéri la réduit au silence.

La liaison commence lorsque Léa, sans arrière-pensées autres que maternelles, invite Chéri à aller avec elle en Normandie. Chéri, par défi, l'embrasse sur la bouche et réussit à surprendre Léa, qui relève le défi. Mais pour Chéri, l'enjeu de l'aventure est bien différent:

«Pas de femmes... Chouette... Léa, dis, es-tu un frère? Oui? Eh bien, partons, les femmes... j'en suis revenu... Les femmes... je les ai vues» [...] «Pas de femmes! déclara Chéri comme en songe. Donc... embrasse-moi!» [...] Elle haussa les épaules et mit un baiser sur le front tout proche. Il noua ses bras au cou de Léa et la courba vers lui. (pp. 34-35).

Comme pour respecter la vraisemblance de l'histoire, les débuts de l'inceste sont quasi-oniriques. Il est lié au sommeil, au rêve et à la régression. Seulement on assiste à un quiproquo: cette Mère n'est pas un frère, comme le croit Chéri, mais une femme, et l'aventure amoureuse n'est pas nouvelle, mais trop ancienne. Et Léa se trompe aussi. S'attendant à affronter un adversaire ou un rival, elle trouve un enfant:

Mais il lui tendit les bras, ouvrit ses belles mains incertaines, renversa une tête blessée et montra entre ses cils l'étincelle double de deux larmes, tandis qu'il murmurait des paroles, des plaintes, tout un chant animal et amoureux [...] un chant qu'elle écoutait penchée et pleine d'anxiété, comme si elle lui eût, par mégarde, fait très mal (p. 38).

«Par mégarde...»: ces mots soulignent la supériorité écrasante de la Mère.

Cette mère est femme et même femme amoureuse et au moment de la crise Colette souligne cruellement chez son héroïne toutes les laideurs de la passion:

A mesure qu'elle parlait, elle accroissait son mal, le changeait en un chagrin cuisant, agressif et jaloux, un chagrin bavard de jeune femme. Le fard, sur ses joues, devenait lie-de-vin, une mèche de cheveux, tordue par le fer, descendit sur sa nuque comme un petit serpent sec (p. 181).

Et c'est encore là que nous retrouvons Sido qui, elle, aime aussi un adolescent et qui, comme Léa, est marquée par la passion:

Me voici contrainte, pour la renouer à moi, de rechercher le temps où ma mère rêvait dramatiquement au long de l'adolescence de son fils aîné, le très beau, le séducteur. En ce temps-là, je la devinai sauvage, pleine de fausse gaieté et de malédictions, ordinaire, enlaidie, aux aguets... Ah! que je la revoie ainsi diminuée, la joue colorée d'un rouge, qui lui venait de la jalousie et de la fureur! (p. 589).

Sur le plan des événements comme sur le plan de leur présentation: dans l'un et l'autre cas, on sent l'effort pour subjuguier la Mère, pour lui infliger, si l'on peut dire, la passion amoureuse. A la précision du narrateur de *La Naissance du jour* – «pour la renouer à moi» – répondent les initiatives de Chéri: «il noua ses bras au cou de Léa et la courba vers lui».

Après son début «rêveur» la liaison, pour Chéri, continue à être marquée par le sommeil. On dirait même que s'il revient chez Léa vers la fin, c'est pour dormir de nouveau près d'elle, contre elle. Mais après les retrouvailles des amants où ils se jurent de ne plus jamais se quitter, Chéri, installé dans sa position favorite contre l'épaule de Léa, ne s'endort pourtant pas et le chapitre final qui relate les événements du lendemain matin, de même, commence par la phrase ominieuse: «Eveillé depuis un long moment, il se gardait de bouger» – début, «péripétie», qui symbolise chez lui la fin de la régression heureuse et, partant, de la liaison.

L'oeuvre de Colette, et *Chéri* en particulier, est dominée par la dialectique de l'abandon, où l'on voudrait abandonner sans le pouvoir et où abandon actif et passif finissent par être confondus. Comme Colette n'en retient que les aspects négatifs, les deux versants de l'abandon sont marqués

aussi bien par la solitude que par l'emprisonnement. L'événement traumatisant dans la vie de Colette a été son mariage, où elle a abandonné Sido pour Willy. Lorsque Colette a enfin pu parler de sa mère, dans *La Maison de Claudine*, elle évoque «un monde dont j'ai cessé d'être digne» (p. 208). Elle est marquée par le sentiment de sa déchéance: en fait, l'abandon de la mère a été un abandon de soi, de son idéal narcissique tel qu'il a été imposé par Sido.

De ce traumatisme font état bien des confusions dans les romans. Ainsi, dans *Claudine s'en va*, ce n'est pas Claudine, mais Annie qui s'en va. Dans *La Vagabonde*, l'amant n'est pas abandonné pendant la tournée de l'héroïne, moment de la mobilité et de l'émancipation, mais lorsqu'elle est rentrée dans sa maison vide, non chauffée et encore pleine de la présence de son amant. S'emprisonnant ainsi, la vagabonde fait figure de femme abandonnée. Dans *Chéri*, l'abandon est essayé plusieurs fois; on assiste aux fugues de chacun des deux amants. Après son mariage Chéri part pour son voyage de noces et lorsqu'il rentre, Léa est partie à son tour - abandon maternel qui amène une nouvelle fugue de Chéri, qui quitte sa mère et sa femme pour vagabonder pendant quelques semaines dans Paris.

Pour éclairer les contradictions de l'abandon une superposition est nécessaire de la fin de *L'Entrave* avec celle de notre roman. *L'Entrave* qui raconte le grand amour de la vagabonde, finit ainsi:

Il me semble, à le voir s'élaner sur la vie, qu'il a pris ma place, qu'il est l'avidement vagabond et que je le regarde, à jamais amarrée... (p. 190)

Voici la fin de notre roman:

Chéri reprit son chemin vers la rue, ouvrit la grille et sortit. Sur le trottoir il boutonna son pardessus pour cacher son linge de la veille. Léa laissa retomber le rideau. Mais elle eut encore le temps de voir que Chéri levait la tête vers le ciel printanier et les marronniers chargés de fleurs, et qu'en marchant il gonflait d'air sa poitrine, comme un évadé. (p. 190).

«Amarrée», «évadé»: les mots de la fin sont cruels et éclairent l'un comme l'autre le malheur de la femme. Ayant perdu sa dignité de femme émancipée, de vagabonde, l'héroïne de *L'Entrave* fait figure de femme emprisonnée et aussi, paradoxalement, d'abandonnée: l'élan de l'homme, qui a pris sa place, l'éloigne de la femme qui reste en arrière. Ainsi, avec ou sans amant, l'issue de l'aventure est également malheureuse. Renée finit par rejoindre Léa, qui voit, elle aussi, s'éloigner l'amant vers la liberté.

Mais, si Léa souffre de l'état d'abandon, Chéri est frappé aussi et même davantage. La double identification de Colette, avec la mère et l'enfant, réunit les deux amants sous le sceau de l'abandon. Le commentaire d'un départ analogue de Chéri après son entrevue ultime avec Léa, qui figure dans la suite du roman, *La Fin de Chéri*, nous apprend ce qu'il faut penser de cette émancipation apparente du jeune homme:

[...] et parce que l'heure devenait fraîche, et que traîtreusement le souvenir qu'il emportait se retirait au fond de lui-même pour y prendre sa force et sa dimension définitives, il crut qu'il avait tout oublié et il se sentit heureux (p. 537).

Si Chéri croit abandonner Léa avec soulagement, il se trompe, il n'est toujours pas libre, il est même emprisonné dans une éternelle fixation, et si Léa reste en arrière, c'est, ironiquement, dans l'âme même, dans l'inconscient de Chéri. Tous ces retournements se retrouvent dans le dernier chapitre de *Chéri*, qui relate le *morning after* qui suit la rencontre heureuse de la veille. Or, Chéri, dégrisé, découragé, a perdu son enthousiasme, il est éveillé:

Il ne bougea pas. Il craignait, en remuant, d'émietter un reste de joie [...] Son grand bonheur de la veille lui semblait réfugié, fondu et tout petit [...] «Comme c'est long, cette matinée... se dit-il. Je vais me lever!» Mais il demeura tout à fait immobile (p. 173).

Emprisonné sous les draps, craignant de se trahir, épiant Léa, qui s'expose à son regard et, après cela, forcé de subir durant de longs moments l'allégresse, l'énergie et l'amour de la maternelle Léa, il l'a abandonnée déjà.

On le voit, chez Colette, avec *Chéri*, abandonner n'est pas une preuve de force, ni de vitalité ni même de jeunesse. Abandonner, ce mouvement qui n'en est pas un, signifie la fixation et l'impuissance définitives – et c'est là le dernier paradoxe, la dernière ironie tragique du roman.

Mammies, Milkbrothers and Milksisters in the interface between Southern History and Literature (*)

INEKE BOCKTING (**)

1. BETWEEN HISTORY AND LITERATURE

This article discusses the importance of stories about mammies, milkbrothers and milksisters as a way to a deeper understanding of the «peculiar» history of the American South. Thus it is situated, one could say, in the interface between literature and history and in the context of the American Deep South – more specifically in what James C. Cobb has called «the most southern place on earth»: the Mississippi Delta. The well-known historian C. Vann Woodward has concerned himself with this relation between history and literature in the context of the American South. In «The Historical Dimension» of 1956, Woodward argues that the Southern historian should stop being so arrogant and pretend to «know it all», but instead «make his bow», as he puts it, to the Southern man of letters (1989:27), and acknowledge what they have in common: a tremendous preoccupation with the past, perhaps never put into words more elegantly than by William Faulkner's character Gavin Stevens, in *Requiem for a Nun*, who said: «The past is never dead. It's not even past» (1975:80).

The idea of the importance of history for the study of literature was an open door, at least until the rising of New Criticism in the 1930s, but the reverse position, the importance of literature for the study of history, was quite a new idea. Woodward, a Southerner himself, was extremely dissatisfied with the state of the art of his own profession. One might look, for a moment, at what he was working against. Until the 1930s, actually, Southern history, with as its main protagonist the historian U.B. Phillips, was by and large either a celebration or a defense of the South. The «peculiar situation» of the South with regard to the question of slavery revolved around narratives of denial, projection, justification, or at best disclaiming of responsibility; in other words «stories» that explained how «it never happened», «was all the fault of the Yankee», «was necessary to protect a primitive people», or «could not have been avoided». Within the profession, no fresh voices challenged these «peculiar» ideas. Woodward mentions several reasons for the lack of interest in Southern history among the younger generation: for instance their desire to show themselves as Americans rather than Southerners, not to seem provincial and backward, but to be «abreast of the times».

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What was most important, however, was the fierce taboo on criticism that had taken hold of the South around the turn of the century, and that made it impossible for young people to analyze their past critically. What had started in the growing tension before the Civil War had only increased after the South was defeated. White Southerners felt that they had been humiliated far beyond the call of duty, and many believed that their defeat had been honorable – a «glorious undefeat» – as they had fought for a just cause: the values of family, of honor, of dignity and responsibility, against the «barbarious Yankees» with their snobbism, their money-hunger and their utter disregard of family and friendship. As they saw it, the black people who had been their faithful servants and often friends, and of whom they had taken such good care, were now starving in the ghettos of the big cities of the North. Thus, if someone dared to criticize just one small thing in the South, it was taken as a total refusal of all that the South stood for, and this was not taken lightly. The journalist and social critic W.J. Cash speaks of the «savage ideal»: «that ideal whereunder dissent and variety are completely suppressed and men become, in all their attitudes, professions, and actions, virtual replicas of one another» (1969:93-94). This «savage ideal», Cash writes, totally paralysed the South. Tolerance, on any issue, was as good as extinguished and conformity was universal. Analysis and criticism, even the smallest degree of detachment – «to stand aloof a little» – were seen as «high and aggravated treason» (Cash 1969:139) that must be resisted at all cost. No wonder that young people could not be bothered. In such a climate, scholarly endeavor simply cannot flourish.

In the 1930s, however, things started to change, not so much in the historical profession, but in the literary. Within the next decade, William Faulkner wrote what are generally considered his masterpieces: *Flags in the Dust*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary*, *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*; something Woodward calls «a one-man renaissance» (1989:29).¹ Mostly long and complex, these novels uncover the tragic consequences of the «savage ideal» and the «lost generation» it created (Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* is the example) and constitute a critique of his native region in many important ways. And there were others, as well, who were able to provide what Bertram Wyatt-Brown calls «an indirect way of criticizing a society that traditionally recoiled in pain and anger from a blunt censure». To John W. Aldridge it seemed that «in the South... the sensitive child is faced early in life with a grim alternative: he either must live inside his imagination a great part of the time, or else he must surely go mad. The South hurts him into the habits of mind congenial to fiction...» (1956:144).

In his article, Woodward urges his fellow historians to use this material to help reinterpret Southern history; to him it is clear «that the new Southern writers had something special to say to the historian, something that no other living American writers – and few dead ones – seemed to say» (1989:30). But for all his belief in the worth of literature for the study of history, Woodward held on to the great gap between the two professions. As he puts it, his discussion, «is no plea for the relaxation of the severe limitations of the historian's discipline», and he concludes: the historian should never pretend he can borrow «the novelist's license» (1989:38). The claims of Woodward, then, are in themselves quite moderate, yet they look towards those of modern historians such as Hayden White, who stress, more than he did, the essential similarities between history and literature.

One might further the discussion of the interface between history and literature, therefore, by examining the theory of history-writing as it was developed by White. Briefly, just to create our context here, history, in White view, presents itself to the «perceptive eye» as «stories waiting to be told, waiting to be narrated» (1992:6), because to tell stories is one of the most natural, the most universal, the most human impulses that exist. To give meaning to events, we must put them in story-form, whereby «story-form» implies a beginning, a middle and an end; a texture of sorts that holds these together, and a perspective from which the story is told. Writers of history have at times

¹ The literary awakening of the South in the 1930s is generally known as «The Southern Renaissance».

refused this story-form: the annalists, first of all, whose writings have neither a beginning-middle-end or texture, nor a perspective. In fact, these are simply lists of happenings: good crops, bad crops, floods and fires, births and deaths, and the comings and goings of people. The chronicles, on the other hand, do have at least some sort of beginning-middle-end, as well as a certain texture: a theme such as the life of a king, a country, a people, or a big undertaking, such as a crusade or a war. But what the chronicle still does not possess is a perspective, a point of view, a social center. This is necessarily a center of power – tradition, heritage, law, ideology – bringing in all sorts of tensions, conflicts and struggles, as well as their resolutions, which are the stuff that stories are made of. It is, in the end, the question of morality – the question of the rightness or wrongness of events – that is involved here, as well as the related notions of shame and guilt, of pride, honor and dignity. It is a giving in to the desire to moralize, White argues, that makes the primitive annal and the adolescent chronicle into a full-grown story of the past.

If the desire to moralize, to impose full story-form on historical events, is indeed such a natural and universal human characteristic, it is not hard to see that the need to «tell about the past» can take an enormous flight in a situation where tensions, struggles and conflicts have run rampant, and where the question of rightness or wrongness was repressed so harshly as in the post-Civil War South. Not until after the system of slavery had in fact been abolished did the desire to moralize about it become every man's and every woman's secret preoccupation, even if the taboo on criticism prevented expression. How could they, white Southerners, have held on to a system that was so obviously wrong, morally, or... had it perhaps been right all along to «protect» a people that could not do so itself? Hadn't the early sociologist George Fitzhugh, after all, written in his *Sociology for the South* in 1854:

He [the black Southerner] is but a grown up child, and must be governed as a child, not as a lunatic or criminal. The master occupies towards him the place of parent or guardian.... Let him stand in *loco parentis*, and call him papa instead of master. Look closely into slavery, and you will see nothing so hideous in it... (Inge 1989:310,312)

On the other hand, how could they, black Southerners, have let this happen to themselves. Were they right to practice what Zora Neale Hurston calls, in the introduction to her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*, «feather-bed resistance», which she explains as follows:

We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing... The negro offers a feather-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

The theory behind our tactics: «The white man is always trying to know into somebody else's business. All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind...»²

An old black folksong says the same thing:

Got one mind for white folks to see
N'other for what I know is me
He don't know,
he don't know my mind

But many blacks felt personally that these tactics had been a mistake. Richard Wright's work from the thirties – the collection of stories with the suggestive title *Uncle Tom's Children* and his childhood autobiography *Black Boy* – find a contemporary echo in Eddy L. Harris's complaint to his great-grandfather, in *South of Haunted Dreams: a ride through slavery's old back yard*:

² I thank my colleague Nicole Reith for drawing my attention to this passage.

Great-Grandfather, why did you suffer the hardship and humiliation of slavery? You could have fought against it. The arrogant blood that runs in me, that I took from my father and will give to my children, surely it came from you. Where was your courage and your pride when time came to rise up against injustice and pain? Why did you not think of me and the effect your actions would have on my life? Why this cowardice? Where would we be now if you had stood bravely and said no? (1993:139-140)

As answers to these questions of how and why, narratives of justification, of denial, of projection, of disclaiming of responsibility, and all the other psychological defense mechanisms in story-form, helped people deal with the past – give meaning to what had happened – but also adjust to the present in which economic and political planning sought to replace the system of slavery with those of sharecropping and segregation. Here we are concerned with the second: the system of segregation, and especially with the experience of a specific group of mothers and children under this system: the black mammy and her «milksiblings» of different colors.

2. MAMMIES, MILKBROTHERS AND MILKSISTERS

If we take as a starting-point Freud's assumption that the personality is formed, at least to a large extent, in the first five years of life, it seems worthwhile to focus on a practice that was perhaps not exactly widespread among Southern whites, but certainly very influential, as it concerned the life of those with power, and established a pattern of ideals about *the* Southern way of life: the engaging of a black mammy to tend to one's children, a slave before the war; the daughter or granddaughter of one after the war. Very often these women were wet nurses, in that they breastfed the white babies trust to their care, together with their own babies; and in a time before bottle-feeding and special babyfood, this could go on for several years. The Southern writer and social critic Lillian Smith speaks from her own experience:

It was not a rare sight in my generation to see a black woman with a dark baby at one breast and a white one at the other, rocking them both in her wide lap, shushing them to sleep as she hummed her old songs. Still swinging them from side to side in her arms, she would lay them down on the same pallet underneath a shade tree and leave them there, little black little white together, sleeping in peace.

And thinking of the southern situation of segregation, she continues:

These intimacies fill our memories and do strange things now to our segregated grown-up lives. (1978:130)

It is these «strange things» that Lillian Smith wants to explore in her autobiography *Killers of the Dream*.

The theme of the black mammy and her milkchildren of different colors has been treated from various perspectives in literature. One example is the poem «The Black Mammy» by the black poet James Weldon Johnson, who asks the mammy if she has ever contemplated how the fact that the lovely «golden» milkchild she nurses with so much tenderness is linked to the oppression of her own child and her own race:

The Black Mammy

O whitened head entwined in turban gay
O kind black face, O crude but tender hand,
O foster mother in whose arms there lay
The race whose sons are masters of the land!
It was thine arms that sheltered in their fold,

It was thine eyes that followed through the length
Of infant days these sons. In times of old
It was thy breast that nourished them to strength.

So often hast thou to thy bosom pressed
The golden head, the face and brow of snow;
So often has it 'gainst thy broad, dark breast
Lain, set off like a quickened cameo.
Thou simple soul, as cuddling down that babe
With thy sweet croon, so plaintive and so wild
Came ne'er the thought to thee, swift like a stab
That it some day might crush thy own black child?

Working towards the important question at the end, the poet places himself in the same position, morally, as did Harris in the passage above: that of a relative outsider delivering an emotional, questioning accusation.

Two stories from roughly the same time take the perspective of the woman herself: «Mammy» by Adeline F. Reis, and «The Octoroon's Revenge» by Ruth D. Todd. In «Mammy» a black nurse drowns the child of her white milkdaughter, in her grief over the death of her own daughter, who had been given to her white milksister as a slave. Even though the woman performs the deed in her madness – repeating again and again the phrase «they took her from me an' she died!» – it constitutes, in its effect, a revenge on the white race. In «The Octoroon's Revenge», however, the revenge is much more deliberate. Here the woman is able to swap her own very lightly colored black child for that of her master after this last child presumably died, thereby assuring her own daughter's «passing» into the white world. How the white child died remains unclear, but it was the mammy, most likely, who had a hand in it. Both stories thus focus on revenge, as the outward expression of anger over inequality.

All three examples by black writers, then, moralize the racial situation of the South, but they do not venture into the psychological. They do not go much beneath the surface, to explore what Faulkner calls «the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself» (Fant and Ashley 1964:51), although, of course, the madness of the woman in «Mammy» can be seen as a sign of her emotional duplicity: the mammy had to hate her white milkchild but she loved it as well.

The «problems of the human heart» lie also in the love that is awakened in the child. It is the love of the maternal breast that is the child's first love affair. As Freud has written, «there are... good reasons why a child sucking at his mother's breast has become the prototype of every relation of love» (1986:357). From the work of later Freudians, such as Melanie Klein and Frances Tustin, who focussed on early development and object relations, we have learned about the enormous investments that the child makes in the breast. This is how William Alexander Percy, uncle of the well-known southern author Walker Percy, describes his nanny in his autobiography *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son*.

I loved her devotedly and never had any other nurse. Everything about her was sweet-smelling, of the right temperature, and dozy... Chiefly I remember her bosom: it was soft and warm, an ideal place to cuddle one's head against. (1990:26)

No disharmony seems to cloud the horizon here; especially, there seems to be no contradiction between the great love that Percy feels for this person of color and her inferior position in the Delta.³

This, however, is quite different in the writings of Lillian Smith. She, much more than Percy, probes her inner self, thereby evoking the Freudian sense of the layeredness of the psyche and stressing the importance of the imagination for the recovering of one's personal history: «in the

³ Yet Percy never married, and suffered from severe depression throughout his life (see Wyatt-Brown 1994).

writing, I explored layers of my nature which I had never touched before; in reliving my distant small childhood my imagination stretched and enclosed my whole life» (1978:14). Thus she consciously relates past events in such a way that they can give meaning to her personal experience. One of the most moving instances of this is when she was forced, through the system of racial inequality, to «unlearn» the kind of love that Percy writes about in the passage above – to forsake the breast that was her first love:

I *knew* that my old nurse who had cared for me through long months of illness, who had given me refuge when a little sister took my place as the baby of the family, who soothed, fed me, delighted me with her stories and games, let me fall asleep on her deep warm breast, was not worthy of the passionate love I felt for her but must be given instead a half-smiled-at affection similar to that which one feels for one's dog. I *knew* but I never believed it... I learned the bitterest thing a child can learn: that the human relations I valued most were held cheap by the world I lived in. (1978:28-29; my emphasis)

Let me draw your attention, here, to the attributive verbs *knew*, which have been printed in italics. This verb is a factive, which means that in its unmarked form it signals consent. In other words, the speaker indicates that she agrees with the assertions made in the attribution itself. This rational consent with what for the parents is the «necessary world» of their own defenses, in which the black knows her place and the white child must learn it too, however, is paired with an emotional distance from this same world, as signaled by the attributive verb phrase *did not believe*. It is here that a split in the mind between knowing and believing is created: a form of schizophrenia on a cultural basis, which is also one of the stylistic hallmarks of a great writer of fiction: William Faulkner. It is the way in which Faulkner explores «the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself» (Fant and Ashley 1964:51).

In the works of this novelist the feelings of love between the milksiblings of different colors are explored most deeply. Faulkner's story «The Fire and the Hearth», from *Go Down Moses*, for instance, shows the extraordinary closeness of the two milkbrothers Henry Beauchamp and Roth Edmonds, who were both nursed by Henry's mother Molly. «Then one day», Faulkner writes:

the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, descended on him [Roth]. (1990:107)

This happens when both boys are seven years old and Roth, the white boy, suddenly refuses to sleep with Henry. As usual, a room had been prepared for them with a bed for the white boy and a pallet on the floor for the black. But Faulkner makes it very clear that the two boys always sleep together on the floor. This time, however, Roth for no apparent reason waits till Henry lies down on the pallet, then gets into the bed alone:

[Roth] went to the bed and lay down on it, rigid, staring up at the dark ceiling even after he heard Henry raise onto one elbow, looking towards the bed with slow and equable astonishment. «Are you going to sleep up there?» Henry said. «Well, all right». (1990:108)

Completely confident that this means that Roth wants him to come in the bed with him, Henry, Faulkner writes, «rose and approached the bed and stood over the white boy, waiting for him to move over and make room until the white boy said, harsh and violent though not loud: “No!”». Henry does not move, and asks «You mean you dont want me to sleep in the bed?» Not receiving an answer, he creates the only reason that makes sense to him: «I reckon on a hot night like tonight we will sleep cooler if we →», but he is interrupted by Roth's desperate «Shut up».

Confused and terrified about what he has done, Roth avoids Henry for a month, before he finally understands what he is feeling: shame and grief. He then tries to undo the experience, by coming to dinner at Molly's house and «say it» to them:

There was nothing in her face; he said it the best he could for that moment, because later he would be able to say it all right, say it once and forever so that it would be gone forever, facing her before he entered her house yet, stopping, his feet slightly apart, trembling a little, lordly, peremptory: «I'm going to eat supper with you all tonight». It was all right. There was nothing in her face. He could say it almost any time now, when the time came. «Course you is», she said. «I'll cook you a chicken». Then it was as if it had never happened at all. (1990:109)

But, as Roth soon finds out, the experience cannot be undone. As Faulkner writes: «it was too late then, forever and forever too late». Now the black family insists on Roth eating by himself; to his astonishment, Roth finds «there was just one chair, one plate, his glass of milk beside it, the platter heaped with untouched chicken, and even as he sprang back, gasping, for an instant blind as the room rushed and swam, Henry was turning towards the door to go out of it» (1990:110). By entering «his ancestral pride», Roth has forced Henry to enter his: «Are you ashamed to eat when I eat» Roth cries, with Henry answering: «I aint shamed of nobody... Not even me» (1990:110).

Having lost each other as real brothers, the boys set the pattern for the master-servant relationship with its separate systems of pride, which seem to a large extent built on mourning on each side. By having lost one another, they have lost part of themselves, a loss that cannot be worked through in the context of the South. On the side of the white child, this mourning will undoubtedly revitalize the pain of loosing the black breast, which the child was forced to forsake, and its accompanying feelings of guilt.

3. CONCLUSION

It is not surprising, then, that Lillian Smith was quite pessimistic about the psychological effects of the «Southern situation» on the development of its children. Setting herself the task of explaining the tremendous violence of her South, she focusses on the white child and the source of its hurt, which makes, as she puts it, «the Oedipus complex» almost seem «a simple adjustment» by comparison (1978:131). She does not explain herself clearly here, but what it comes down to, in her mind, is the secret hunkering for the black breast; the highly valued, yet forbidden, paradoxical «inferior» treasure that society offers its children: a hunkering that can be acted out in the world, but may as well become the subject of different kinds of psychological defenses, such as denial, reversion and projection. In this way, much of the «peculiar situation» of the South can be explained: its abuse of women of color, its rape complex, its lynchings. But fortunately, Smith allows for genuine love between people of all colors as well, and coming to the South today, or any another place on earth for that matter, we can only hope and trust she was right.

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Women's Writing and the Politics of Desire: Urgently Learning to Speak

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By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display... [thus achieving] emancipation of the marvelous text of her self that she must urgently learn to speak.

Helene Cixous

From an early age, we are alienated from ourselves as sexual beings by a male society's ambivalent definition of our sexuality; we are sexy, but we are pure; we are insatiable, but we are frigid; we have beautiful bodies, but we must paint and shave and deodorize them.

Linda Phelps

In *A Tale of Two Cities* the code words for the resistance movement are «recalled to life»; in many ways this summarizes the woman writer's experience in the twentieth century, as she begins to write of her desire without the previous necessity of writing an encoded passion. Like Dickens' Madame Defarge who sat in the midst of men planning importantly, knitting the secrets of the revolution, women of the past silently created their own code for sexual expression. Since Augustine's version of ensnaring, entrapping women was adopted by the Christian church, women have had little choice when dealing with their own sexuality.¹ In fiction and in life women have often been mutilated, isolated, scorned, and declared insane to remove the potential volatility of women and sex. As Phelps detailed in the above quote, women often find themselves thought of as desirable but not desiring. But despite continued conflicting sexual standards, women writers are beginning to reveal reclaimed and rewritten versions of themselves. Although efforts at suppression might

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¹ A fascinating conflation of religion and sexuality may be found in the writings of medieval mystic Margery Kempe who described Jesus coming to her bed as a husband to his wife. Kempe's code allowed her to be zealously religious and to experience a modicum of sensuality.

have been an ultimate deterrent, many women are *emancipating* the text of themselves and *urgently learning to speak*. They are openly claiming for themselves a room of their own and are having the courage to demand a room with a view.

In «Uses of the Erotic» Audre Lorde calls attention to the displacement of women's desires, which have often been ignored and «are almost always characterized by a simultaneous looking away, a pretense of calling them something else, whether a religion, a fit, mob violence, or even playing doctor» (58-9). Although desire has been written about extensively, acknowledging a genuinely libidinous female sexuality has rarely taken place. As Adrienne Rich wrote, there exists «a book of myths in which our names do not appear». By writing all around the subject a space has been created, the space of not writing about the space that women have been forbidden to recognize. Cixous encourages women to write about the space and their own sexuality so that there can be a new standard from which Freudian theories are viewed.

One character, quite literally, confronted with her own physicality appears in Fannie Flagg's recent novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*, where the intrepid Evelyn searches to find fulfillment. As a part of the strategy to take control of her life she creates an alter ego, Towanda, who has no fear. For this suburban housewife the struggle for a confident persona leads to religion, fat farms, and self-help groups. When her women's group encourages its participants to use mirrors to look at their vaginas and become comfortable with their bodies, even Evelyn's alter ego can't take the raw confrontation with anatomy and sexuality; as Flagg said, «there she was, too bored for Tupperware parties and too scared to look at her own vagina» (43). Unlike Evelyn, many of today's women writers aren't afraid to bend down and look at their vaginas; they are looking directly into the desire and shouting TOWANDA.

Women's writing about sexual desire certainly did not begin in 1975 with Cixous' rousing battle-cry in «The Laugh of the Medusa», but it seems to have become more ubiquitous since then. As Carol Thurston notes in *The Romance Revolution: Erotic Novels for Women and the Quest for a New Sexual Identity*, even the notorious romance novels have picked up the banner and are *beginning* to present women in roles which allow them to dictate their destinies and explore their desires. She points out that the Barbara Cartland genre, depicting wan, weak, virginal women who are whisked away or overcome, is losing favor among romance readers. Sales had been dropping for two decades, and in 1981 publishers sent word out to their writers that rape scenes and insipid women are not acceptable scenarios. Publishers weren't possessed with a sudden impulse to jump on the feminist bandwagon; they responded to masses of readers' letters complaining about the presentation of passive female sexuality, rape scenes, and compliant characters. Money talks. This is the first lesson in Reader Response Theory.

Calling the most enlightened romance genre the «historical bodice ripper», Thurston asserts that changes began to occur in this genre in the 1970's:

the female persona is no longer split between two archetypal female characters: the plain-naive-domestic-selfless-passive-chaste heroine and the beautiful-sophisticated-worldly-selfish-assertive-sexually active Other Woman. Instead, the New Heroine is both good and sexual, and she possesses a passionate drive for self-determination and autonomy... [exploring] sexual awareness and satisfaction... decid[ing] with whom, when, and how she will be sexually active. (8, 25)

Although romance novels are often thought of as trash reading, Thurston's statistics show that the readers are comprised of all classes. The changes instigated by these readers indicate a mass reclamation and re-inscribing of desires.

Increasing public interest in women's desires is also evident in the growing number of anthologies dedicated entirely to women's erotica. Bookstores find these long-awaited compilations flying off the shelves, and the Book of the Month Club's top ten list more often than not contains the latest erotica collection. A sampling of the titles includes: *Pleasures: Women Write Erotica*, *Erotic Interludes: Tales Told by Women*, *Herotica: A Collection of Women's Erotic Fiction*, *Herotica*

2, *The New Sensual Writing by Women, The Poetry of Sex: Lesbians Write the Erotic, Touching Fire: Erotic Writing by Women...* and the list goes on. A entry from *Touching Fire* illustrates the empowering, insistent erotica being produced today, as one author forcibly resists the image of angular hips common to *Cosmopolitan* models and finds instead an earthy sensuality in her own «big hips», giving an erotic dimension to a formerly scorned anatomy:

«Homage to My Hips»

these hips are big hips.
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places, these hips
are free hips.
they don't like to be held back.
these hips have never been enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

Lucille Clifton (101)

Women are finding themselves connected back to «the body which has been more than confiscated from her», as Cixous says, «the uncanny stranger on display». Clifton's «Hips» wouldn't sell light beer very well, but in the poem her hips are strong, sensual, and free. The undeniable fact is that women are swarming to any book which dares to find erotic the natural curves of a woman's body and dares to discuss openly that which previously required encoding; they are entering the forbidden space and staring directly into the desire. Both reading and writing erotica has become a political act: establishing an authoritative voice in a uniquely individual re-construction.

Early twentieth century examples of women's erotica appeared in more covert ways. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1935) Zora Neale Hurston employed a young girl's observation of bees pollinating flowers as a metaphor for blossoming womanhood. The implied sexuality must be couched in the social safety of marriage but still results in a fiery sensuality:

... ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why?...
She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation.
(chpt 2)

Anais Nin, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, wrote what is now titled *Delta of Venus* for a private collector of erotica. Written in the 40's, it took 37 years for this work to reach publication, but it has been in constant demand since. In *Diary III* Nin describes this work as «tongue-in-cheek», «exaggerated», and «caricatured sexuality», written for a male fantasy. In a 1974 essay, «Eroticism in Women», she spoke of women's attempts to write and a common discrediting tactic by critics. «[M]any times, when women have wanted to reveal the facets of their

sensuality, they have been suppressed. Not in as obvious a way as the burning of D.H. Lawrence's works, or the banning of Henry Miller or James Joyce, but in one long, continuous disparagement by the critics» (118). Like Cixous, she calls for women to express their desires. «One point is established, that the erotic writings of men do not satisfy women, that it is time we write our own» (120).

Two important novels of the 70's are still in demand today; *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown and *Fear of Flying* by Erica Jong set the stage for a changing environment in women's writing. Susan Rubin Suleiman details the importance of these novels, not because of the quality of work but because of their position as «significant gesture[s], both in terms of sexual politics and... sexual poetics» (121). Although filled with a woman's shocking obscenities and explicitly sexual scenes, *Fear of Flying* was published by a major press and became immensely popular. In *Rubyfruit Jungle* Rita Mae Brown also successfully learned to *urgently* speak and claimed a space for lesbian desire in contemporary fiction. Suleiman's analysis is that these novels and other factors such as Shere Hite's reports on women² contributed to the past two decades of «women's reclaiming what had always been theirs but had been usurped from them: control over their bodies and a voice with which to speak about it» (119).

An incomplete list of contemporary writers who have contributed to the «book» of women's desires is Anne Rice, Alice Munro, Audre Lorde, Marge Piercy, Margaret Atwood, Sandra Cisneros, Jeannette Winterson, etc. Terry McMillian, African-American author and a recent addition to the list, has stormed the literary scene with her novel of four women and their often thwarted desires, *Waiting to Exhale*. The women share with each other the details of their intimacies and longings for intimacies. When one of the women sleeps with a man who is gorgeous to look at, but, she finds out, lousy in bed, she thinks to herself, «Damn, I could've had a V-8». Frequently studied in college literature classes, this novel represents the direction women's novels have taken, serving as an open forum discussion of women's desires and the short shrift given to these desires in relationships, both by the lover and the woman who sublimates her needs for another's. In the short story «Touching», McMillian's descriptions of a woman's daydreams about sex reveal just how far women writers have come since the earlier encoding:

as you were standing there on that sidewalk, I kept seeing still shots of us flashing across my eyes: twisting inside each other's arms like worms and caterpillars; you kissing me like you'd been getting paid for it all these years and this was your last paycheck; and my head getting lost all over your body. I could still hear your faint cries echoing in my head right there on that concrete. Saw my tongue moistening your chest and your hands rubbing all across and around my back like I was made of silk. I was silk and you knew it. (*Touching Fire* 42)

Her desire is clear and strong. She openly fantasizes as she walks down the sidewalk, and in her memory she is silky, sensual, and satisfied.

With the proliferation of women's erotica anthologies and the evident atmosphere of freer sexual expression in women's writing in the last few decades, women are creating a history of female responses which is not suppressed by the ego conforming to the reality principle (denying or deferring immediate pleasure to avoid unwanted consequences).³ Women have, for too long, denied or distanced themselves from their pleasure to avoid the painful consequences that society

² Editorial comments in *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality*, new revised edition: «researchers must stop telling women what they *should* feel sexually, and start asking them what they *do* feel sexually» (60).

³ ...to use Freudian terms, although they are inherently male. As Simone Beauvoir points out, «he admits that woman's sexuality is evolved as fully as man's; but he hardly studies it in particular. He writes: "The libido is constantly and regularly male in essence, whether it appears in man or in woman"» (71).

imposes on such *wayward* women, but it's clear that social consequences are changing. Perhaps this is due to «the damned mobs of scribbling women» who ignored Hawthorne's famous revulsion and scribbled despite the scorn. Sankovitch interprets Cixous' fiery message to these scribblers as «giving birth, giving writing. The woman in writing is the woman who is pregnant with text, ready to give birth to it and thus to herself» (130). Because erotica is so completely subjective, writing it (and reading it, as we've seen) is truly an individualizing act which challenges authority and claims the power to be «recalled to life».

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The Double Life of Véronique. An Enquiry into the Existence of Woman (*)

ELLIE RAGLAND (**)

ELIZABETH WRIGHT (***)

One of problems of deciphering *The Double Life of Véronique* (de la Fuente & Kieslowski, 1991), is to decide what elements process it as an inventive fantasy with a mixture of traditional and modern Gothic features – the double or *Doppelgänger*, telepathic communion, the death of a beautiful singing woman (stories by Hoffmann and Mann come to mind), the role of puppets (Hoffmann again, and perhaps Kleist) – and what elements belong to an unconscious search for the being of a woman by a (male) director. The film seems to make a puzzling return to the 19th-century convention of the double. If a further clarification of this phenomenon can be found, not only does the film become more comprehensible, but one can also impute an ahistorical meaning to the on-and-off popularity of the *Doppelgänger* topos.

The film explores the lives of two women, identical in appearance, born at the same moment, though in different countries, one in Poland, one in France. They have the same musical talent – a beautiful singing voice, they both suffer from the same heart disease, have lost the mother at an early age and are brought up by a tender caring father. The film is in two parts, taking place in Poland and France respectively, dealing with the life of each woman in turn. It presents a model of the self not quite settled in one place, one time and one identity. At moments each woman divines the existence of her twin. The doubles syndrome is here startlingly presented in two modes. First, as a symptom of fusion, of not having given up the (m)other: «I feel that I am not alone», says the Polish Véronique, for here the double is experienced as a psychic continuity, covering the loss of the (absent)mother, trying to get back to the same. Second, for the French Véronique, the doubling is experienced as a psychic division: «All my life I was in two places at once», she says.

What, then, are the significant differences in the being of the two women, already indicated above, and why «the double life»? Any attempt to answer the «why» question will have to take account of the remarkable presentation of two different types of woman, achieved via inspired acting (Irene Jacob in the double role) and direction. As the first Véronique, living in Poland, Irene Jacob's being moves back and forth from serene confidence to ecstatic fervency. She exists only in the moment, rejoicing in the flow of rain and other sensuous phenomena of the here and now. The opening shot is of her ecstatic singing, with a blissful climax in the rain, as if she might be weeping tears of joy.

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At the centre of each part is the pure and bell-like singing voice of the first Véronique, which continues to dominate the score, the audience and the mind of the second Véronique beyond the death of the first. The role of the voice and its capacity to move is indeed the crux of the film. The film's titles are prefaced by the (lost) mother's voice as once heard by each tiny girl. The first little girl, who is destined to die, looks at the night and the bright stars upside-down above an autumn fog; the second little girl, who will survive the first, looks at a leaf in spring sunshine right way up.

At a level at which the film exerts a powerful force on the spectator, there is a probing into the question of what a woman is. Such a quest opens out onto matters of desire and *jouissance*, bonding agents between actors and viewers that enter language by means of the voice and the gaze. *Jouissance* effects are libidinal effects produced in the body in the attempt to maintain narcissistic wholeness. Each woman wants to create through the voice a feeling of spiritual and affective oneness with something beyond the experience of everyday life: the mother is the primordial cause of the desire of each. In Lacan's rethinking of Freud the voice is one of the primordial *objets a*, a left-over residue constituted by the effect of lack and loss, a structuring force capable of producing material effects (Lacan, 1977a, p. 315): the voice can evoke union, oneness and symbiosis by its presence, while its faltering or stopping can produce effects of division, discontinuity and sheer panic. Indeed, the voice begins to structure the infant as a desiring creature even before it is born: subsequently the infant begins to build a relation between voice – words and sounds – and the libidinal experiences produced in its body, disorganized and undirected. The gaze or voice is first incorporated by the infant in concrete response to the mother's recognition of it and is experienced by it as coming from outside its body. The result is a locating of the infant as subject of desire in the Other, the field of the social. From then on the scopical drive (associated with the eye) essentially involves the subject's constitution of itself in relation to others: «what is involved in the drive is making oneself seen (*se faire voir*). The activity of the drive is concentrated in this *making oneself (se faire)*» (Lacan, 1977b, p. 195). By the same token the activity involved in the invocatory drive is «*making oneself heard*» (ibid.): in wanting to be heard one demands the narcissistic reassurance of being recognized. Thus, in the invocatory fantasy the subject exists only in relation to an imaginary voice. This does not imply, however, that the voice is imaginary. Rather, fantasy has the power to produce effects in the body, including the «sense» that the voice itself possesses a knowledge, different from that of the other images and words evoked. Together these effects produce an imaginary fantasy picture that is, nonetheless, inseparable from the real of the *jouissance* effects that make the body an imaginary signifier.

The voice in the film functions as *objet a*: one of Lacan's definitions of the *objet a* is the semblance that is taken to fill the void left by the loss of the primary maternal object, which forever after elicits desire. The *objet a* then forms a trap for narcissism, confirming the identity of the first Véronique, and by implication, that of the audience captivated by her singing and the musical score. When she enters an important singing competition, she is supremely confident about her superb singing voice, and she wins to the chagrin of another competitor. But the moment when in the midst of a concert performance her voice falters and the music stops is the moment when her *jouissance* ruptures the apparent cohesion of the symbolic. Premonitions of this possibility are sounded earlier, first in a breakdown in geometrical seeing on the train. The shot begins as if it were taken from a stationary position, until the landscape begins to move; this is indicated by a shift of vertical distorting flaws – present but unnoticed until the movement began – in what turns out to be the window of a train in which she is travelling. There could hardly be a more effective metaphor for the uncanny disturbance of the gaze of the Other. This is followed by her playful attempt to refract reality in a glass ball: the landscape goes the opposite way, as if backwards in time, recovering that which was lost. At the beginning of this take is a brief evocative scene with her father, relevant to the subjectivity of the woman.

In each case the faltering of representation images Veronika's tenuous hold on the symbolic. Most obviously ominous is the slanting of the landscape in a premonitory heart attack. Veronika lives through this heart attack with what amounts to a kind of absentmindedness: the sudden

sensation of the world spinning round her is well captured by the camera as token of the fragility of the geometrical space we normally take for granted. Momentarily the world is out of joint, just as in the previous sequence shot from the train window. It is at this very moment that her upside-down world is harshly invaded by the mark of sexual difference, the sight of the sexual organ of a passing male exhibitionist. The scene ends with her taking out a lipsalve, restoring her face.

Yet such do not enter the consciousness of the first Véronique. Even the sight of her double getting onto a coach at some distance and pointing a camera in her direction is only half registered by her, yet here her mirror image is invading the look, subverting the familiar identification by being too familiar, by becoming subjectified in the place where the self is accustomed to take itself as an object for an instant she fleetingly sees herself. But this first Véronique is immune to omens, so intensely does she live in the continuum of the moment.

In another incident she describes to a much-loved aunt a passionate encounter with her lover. But the aunt abruptly breaks off the talk with her niece, in order to meet her lawyer concerning the making of her will. Here Véronique is brought up short by the arrival of the symbolic (law), interestingly represented in the dwarf shape of the lawyer, fleetingly glimpsed. This, disturbingly, leaves the aunt all the more powerful, giving the appearance that she might be minded to dispossess her. The aunt is a profoundly ambiguous figure: as phallic mother, she towers over the male dwarf and the gentle fathers of the two women.

But Véronique's composure is undisturbed to the end. The fatal moment – the shock of total collapse in the midst of a singing performance – is a shock only for the concert and cinema audience, not for her: she does not heed the ominous faltering and flattening of her bell-like voice as it loses pitch and almost runs down, introducing the discontinuity that betrays automatism when she is at the height of her *jouissance*. Music here and elsewhere in the film provides that supplementary *jouissance* of which, according to Lacan, woman partakes, though she does not know it. Her singing includes a duet sequence with an older woman singer during which they acknowledge to each other their mutual joy. For Véronique this is a moment of unity with the ground of her imaginary (bodily) existence, keeping out the divisive effects of the real that lie unsymbolized within her own knowledge. The moment is short-lived. Note how the the spectator at the end of this take is blacked out along with the victim.

The second Véronique plays out the subjectivity of the woman in a different mode, acting with hesitation and extreme sensitivity. After intuiting her double's death she gives up her own singing. She is shown as feeling great grief at the instant when her double dies. Later, while with her lover, her sadness is intensified on discovering the photograph she unwittingly took of her double while she was in Poland. Her lover's consolation culminates in their sexual union, consummated with her face luminous in grief, streaming with tears, the act punctuated by her fragile and bird-like cries of sexual joy (the nearest she comes to singing), as if outside herself, on the boundaries of the real, rather than squarely in life as with the first couple.

Unlike the first Véronique she embodies the enigma of hysteria, her lack all at the surface. That is to say, the loss with which a hysteric identifies in the real manifests itself in the second Véronique in palpable symptoms of uncertainty: her tentativeness, her wish to please others, her unsure apprehension of a ground for being. She knows her frailty and her proximity to the real of death. Aware of her heart condition, she accepts treatment.

Her lover is a puppeteer and a writer: the relationship began when she first watches his puppet show, in which a dancer puppet dies and is resurrected. He succeeds in provoking her desire, catching sight of her in a mirror at the very moment that he transforms the dead figure into a butterfly-angel.

The two come together via a series of enigmatic clues that he sends her, such as a piece of string and recorded noises on a cassette. He has symbolically «called» her to him by making her decode the messages. But when she finds him she is disappointed because he says he only wanted to know if it were possible that a woman would respond to the call of a stranger'; she runs from

him in panic, thinking he has not chosen her after all and only likes her for her capacity to be manipulated like a puppet.

In what seems like a self-referential image of the film's director, the puppeteer creates two female puppets in her likeness. She stages the uncanny life of one of them by manipulating its rods, while its twin lies inert below. «Why two?» she asks. «I need more than one, they get damaged» is his reply. He thus divines and indeed partakes of the fragility of the feminine, with the woman participating in his exploration. Continuing in the self-referential mode, he tells her the story of the two puppets: «I think I'll call it the Double Life of... I haven't decided what names to give them.»

Clearly the film's director is as fascinated with the question of what woman wants as were Freud and Lacan. Via the centrality of the voice and Woman as its embodiment he searches out an answer that might close the void left by the loss of the primary object, showing that Woman herself is an enigma that man tries to pin down, either directly in relationships or via the substitution of his work. In this particular example of film-writing/directing the writer/director works with the problem of his own perplexity regarding Woman by focusing on the voice as an object that causes desire. He keeps out of the film the primary object, the mother, missing from the family of each Véronique, and substitutes the voice as *objet a*. The haunting score weaving through the film invokes that excess of pleasure/pain which signals an illusory lost plenitude which for the man gives rise to the fantasy of woman as a guarantor of his phallic potency, and for the women continues and preserves her link with the maternal body. In showing the first Véronique as deriving bliss from the vocal and auditory, the director represents the woman's relation to desire as one to the real of the mother's body and hence subject to the death drive, a piece of life retained and re-lived as inert. The death drive emerges where the demands of culture for repression and renunciation are undermined by a drive for the pleasure of oneness associated with the lost object. In each case there is an unconscious fantasy: for man, woman is a symptom of his ontological consistency, she is «all» to him; for woman, man is «not all». Her «heart» disease preserves her existence on the boundaries of the symbolic, closer to death than her male counterpart.

The film poses the question about woman's existence in two different modes. The first Véronique is more on the side of «normality», inclined to close off lack and live in the precarious plenitude of the moment; the second Véronique is on the side of hysteria, speaking her lack through her body, knowing there is no plenitude. Both women express the unhappy truth of the sexual relation: there is a sexual act (crucial in both parts of the film) but its *jouissance* is dependent on unconscious fantasy. And fantasy creates disharmony or difference, not the Oneness of two. Anxiety, doubt and question intrude: for the first Véronique there is the alienating encounter with the aunt; for the second, the intense experience of loss, as she divines her double's death.

The first Véronique burns herself out in persistent repeated ecstasies, a symptom of too close an identification with the lost mother *qua* primary object of satisfaction. In consequence she is unable to define herself adequately in the symbolic; the excess in her *jouissance* is not tamed, except by death. The second Véronique shrinks from demonstrative ecstasy and lives out her loss by surrendering her singing voice to the job of teaching music, unveiling the hysteric's identification with privation.

Her father seems to exercise his paternal function correctly: they talk about her life and his and he speaks of her mother as someone who has sustained his desire throughout his life. Thus she is quite well installed in the Oedipal triangle. Her *jouissance* is transformed into tenderness for both father and lover. Although she also is shaken by the call of *jouissance* through the intimation of her double's death, she is able to renounce a part of it to live with others.

Each woman exists precariously, constantly challenged by the man's unconscious demand that she be all to him, when she cannot, being herself subject to loss. The question of how woman exists is left hanging in the unspoken answer of the death of the first and the continuing life of the second. The intriguing problematic that defines the movement of the story is the writer-director's desire to know how similar women can be so profoundly different one from the other. In psychoanalytic terms he tries to pinpoint the difference between an (ideologically) «normal»

woman and a hysteric – that is, between one who appears to have a strong sense of being and one who has not – by attributing identical physical properties to two different structures of desire. The director’s fascination with woman ends in the impasse that Lacan describes in his axiom «The woman does not exist» (Lacan, 1975, p. 75) – that is, there is no essential woman (except in his fantasy of her). Thus, woman is man’s symptom, and he is her problem.

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Tales of Immortality

ANNELIES VAN HEES (*)

On the short journey which Hans Christiaan Andersen made in 1841 from Sønderborg to Augustenborg, one castle guarding the approach to the island of Alsen, the other across the water in Jutland, he saw a landscape which he would change, as he so often did, into literature. In his journal he wrote:

The castle was a splendid sight in the setting sun; a great multitude of swans was swimming around, I thought of the Greek princesses bathing in «The Swan Plumage». (*Journals II*, p. 438)

Dot Pallis considers this passage to be a harbinger of the tale «The marsh king's daughter».¹

Who were these Greek princesses? The Musäus fairytale «Der gerahte Schleier» (The stolen veil), which was translated and published by the romantic poet Oehlenschläger, and later turned into a play by Henrik Hertz, tells of two princesses who fly from Greece to the North in order to be rejuvenated in a fountain of eternal youth.

Andersen subsequently expanded this motif. In 1848 he wrote:

Thinking of a tale about spring moving through the land – thinking of a tale about the stork who journeys with his family to Egypt. (*Journals III*, p. 438)

It would take ten more years and require a stay at Christmas-time in another castle, Basnæs on the isle of Seeland, before Andersen would combine these two ideas with other literary material to produce an entirely original story in «Dynd-Kongens Datter».

A princess flies from Egypt in swan's plumage in order to search in a marsh for a lotus flower which she has been told will cure her fatally ill father. Out of sheer feminine malice her two companions steal her plumage; she is then dragged down into the marsh by the marsh king and we hear nothing more of her for sixteen years.

All these events are witnessed and recounted by the father stork who lives with his family on the roof of the Viking Castle by the great marsh. These storks are the happy device which reclaim the story from the morass of sentimentality and literary proliferation which threatens to engulf it.

For, in addition to the motif of the swan's plumage and the fountain of eternal youth, Andersen also uses saga and Edda material and a medieval legend, plus the fairytale motif of the enchanted

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¹ Dot Pallis in *Anderseniana*.

princess. A long time after the Egyptian princess' disappearance, the stork finds a little girl in a waterlily flower who must be the daughter of the princess and the marsh king. He takes the child – for once giving substance to popular belief regarding storks – to the childless Viking's wife in the castle.

The Viking's wife discovers that the child has a double nature: during the day she is a beautiful little girl, at night she is a frog; Beauty and the Beast combined in one person. And as if this were not enough, the beautiful girl of daytime turns out to be wild and cruel, while the frog of night-time proves to be a gentle, melancholy creature. A doubling of the double nature.

The little girl is given the name Helga; her stay in the Viking Castle affords Andersen an opportunity to inject a dose of Oldnorse pastiche and Viking romance. The castle and its inhabitants are presented to us in a kind of saga style which is also peppered with quotations and motifs from the Elder Edda.²

The storks have a complex function. On the one hand the father stork serves as a focalizer: he witnesses what happens to the princess and comes home to relate it; on the other he carries the story forward through his actions which he subsequently also relates. In one of his roles he is extradiegetic narrator, in the other he is magical helper.

Mother stork is a commentator, vitriolic and realistic:

«You ought not to tell me such a tale at a time like this. Our eggs may be the worse for it. The Princess can look out for herself. Someone will surely help her. Now if it had been I, or you, or any of our family, it would have been all over with us.»

Eventually the storks' migrations to and from Egypt serve as an elegant device to reconcile the discrepancy in time and place. Before you know it, they've flown there and back so many times that Helga is already sixteen. Time for the following embedded story.

The white Christ, from the prophecy in the *Völuspá*, an Edda-poem, concerning the coming of Christendom to the North, makes his appearance in the shape of a young priest «beautiful as the god Balder» whom the Viking has brought back from a raid and intends to sacrifice.

In her wicked human form Helga eagerly looks forward to the sacrifice. However, at night, as a frog with a good heart, she releases the priest. They flee on horseback but are attacked by robbers who kill both the horse and the priest. Helga tries to bury them; as she scratches cross marks in the earth the webs fall from her frog fingers. She utters the name of the white Christ and changes definitively into a princess. That night the horse and priest appear to her in a vision, in which the priest, who has previously played both an historical and a legendary role, now as a *deus ex machina* assumes the role of magical helper in the tale in order to assist Helga to release her mother from the marsh.

This actually requires little effort as the mother floats up of her own accord. Mother and daughter recognize each other and embrace, the vision melts away.

The stork once again assumes the role of helper, and drops down to them the two sets of swan's plumage which he had vengefully stolen many years before from the Egyptian princess' companions after they had returned to Egypt. He then invites the two princesses to fly with him and his family on the stork migration to Egypt, which elicits the following comment from the mother stork:

«We won't wait for those swans», said the mother stork. «If they want to go with us they had better come now. We can't dilly-dally here until the plovers start. (...) And what kind of stroke do those swans call those that they are making?»

«Oh, everyone has his own way of flying», the father stork said. «Swans fly in a slantwise line, cranes in a triangle, and the plovers in snake-like curves.»

When they arrive in Egypt the king recovers instantly on seeing Helga, the Lotus Flower from the North.

² The quotations are derived in particular from the songs of the Gods *Völuspá* and *Hávamál*.

One night Helga reflects on the legend of the ostrich whose arrogance in flying towards the sun was punished, condemning the bird to remain for ever on the ground. A story insert which we find difficult to classify for the time being, but which is almost an allegory for the blend of high and low style in the story as a whole.

Helga is to wed a fiery Arabian prince with sparkling eyes. But as soon as the reader is reassured by this traditional fairytale ending, he is wrong-footed once more by a new *deus ex machina* in the form of a medieval legend. The priest pops up again and takes Helga away for a quick look into the Kingdom of Heaven; on her return, however, it turns out that not three minutes but three hundred years have passed. Helga dies of shock and rises up to «the Father», leaving only a withered lotus bloom behind.

What is all this, the reader may wonder, this mixture of styles and genres: an experiment in storytelling technique in which animals alternate with the traditional narrator, a fairytale in which the narrator recoils from the happy ending at the last moment, a pastiche on the saga style, a use of intertextuality prescribed by literary historical considerations, or a contemporary employment of the legend in the fairytale?

We should not forget that, in addition to the some fifty fairytales which have rightly made him world famous, Andersen wrote a further hundred which at best are of interest from a literary historical perspective, and are often not even that. They place Andersen in his time context, a literary hack on the one hand, and a sentimental Biedermeier author and sometimes confused mind on the other.

In fact Andersen himself was thrilled with his creation, as testified by his letters in which he called it «his greatest fairytale and probably one of the best».³ His public responded enthusiastically as well. Ingemann commended it, the Norwegian poet Bjørnson praised it to the skies. Only Meir Aaron Goldschmidt, who discussed the story extensively in his magazine *Nord og Syd*, displayed reservation and wondered if a story of man's struggle against his double nature in which the spirit overcomes was not too large a theme for a fairytale.⁴

One of Andersen's female friends and first readers injects an invigorating note of criticism into an otherwise jubilant letter of thanks:

That Helga cannot become an ordinary housewife keeping control of children and servants, I do understand; but why she should behold heavenly glory and then return here I completely fail to grasp. I would be grateful if you could solve this mystery for me.⁵

Andersen's contemporaries took the story to be an allegory about the struggle between man's higher and lower nature, in which the marsh and the beauty of Helga and her prince, as well as the frog's ugliness, represent man's earthly aspect; the aim is a religious liberation from the body into a spiritual form.

In this connection there is a striking parallel between the three hundred years which Helga spends in heaven, the three hundred year life span of the mermaids and the three hundred years which the little mermaid from the fairytale of the same name must spend with the Daughters of the Air before she can gain an immortal soul. The usual explanation for Andersen's motive in giving both tales a similar, heaven-oriented end is a deep religiosity, which seems to me, however, to be highly questionable. The desire for religious immortality is rather a transference of a more earthly desire for poetic immortality. An immortality which seems more likely for the writer of «The Little Mermaid» than it does for the writer of «The Marsh King's Daughter». Thanks to the former, he has already survived 189 years and will probably attain the three hundred year mark as well; if he had only written the latter he would surely have been a forgotten poet by now. So why am I comparing two such different stories? Their similarities lie in their psychological issues which are

³ Dal VII, p. 184.

⁴ Dal VI, p. 178.

⁵ Dal VI, p. 179.

of such central importance to their author that even his satisfaction with the cluttered story of the marsh king becomes plausible.

It will be clear to the observant reader that two myths are lurking in the fairytale material. These myths, which find a natural setting in the tale, are the myth of the hero's birth (in the sense of Rank) and the incest myth.⁶ The latter is somewhat better concealed than the former, which is hardly surprising given that incest material in modern literature is scarcely subject for open consideration anymore, owing to an increase in taboo and denial. The hero is born in water, in a casing, a lily flower in this instance, and subsequently brought into the world by an initiator. Clearly the stork is acting as initiator.

The incest story becomes clear only gradually, if ever. Initially the stork simply tells us that the princess of the Nile, the daughter of his Egyptian host, came flying in with two friends to pluck a flower for her sick father. Only when she is reunited with her daughter sixteen years later does she relate what happened to her when she was dragged down into the marsh:

I slumbered and I dreamed. I dreamed that I stood again in the Egyptian pyramid, yet the swaying alder stump that had frightened me so on the surface of the morass stood ever before me. As I watched the check marks in its bark, they took on bright colours and turned into hieroglyphics. I was looking at the casket of a mummy. It burst open, and from it stepped that monarch of a thousand years ago. His mummy was pitch black, a shining, slimy black, like the wood snail or the mud of the swamp. Whether it was the Marsh King or that mummy of the pyramid, I know not. He threw his arms around me, and I felt that I would die.

She reawakes to find a little bird fluttering on her breast which she allows to fly away «to our Father», a somewhat sudden reference.

Now we know the origin of the hero or heroine whom we previously encountered in the lily flower on the water. In Andersen's tale she is born in dark realm where mud and repression rule. The princess sleeps and dreams and is united in that sleep with the marsh king who is described as shiny, slimy and black. The sleep and the dream suggest repression; the comparison of the marsh king with «that mummy of the pyramid» we should connect with two earlier references in the story. During the storks' first winter in Egypt following the Princess' disappearance, the father stork noses around in the palace of their Egyptian host who is «stiff and stark as a mummy», lying in a hall with many-coloured walls «as the inside of a tulip». The stork hears the wise men say that love brings life. The year before they had decided that at new moon the daughter of the Egyptian lord should enter the pyramid where one of the kings of old is lying as a mummy; there she should lay her head on the mummy's chest to find out how she must restore her father to life.

When she had done all this, she had a dream in which she learned that in the Danes' land there was a deep marsh (...) Here, beneath the water, she would feel a lotus flower touch her breast, and when that flower was brought home to her father it would cure him.

If we bring this scattered information together, a pattern finally begins to emerge: the sick Egyptian king is a mummy, the princess has to lay her head at night on the chest of another mummy in order to discover that she must fetch a flower from a marsh. However, the flower from the marsh proves to be a daughter, which is sired on her by the marsh king, who turns out in the depths of the marsh to be a mummy as well. If we disregard the geographic relocation for a moment, we therefore see that the Princess has to bear her father a daughter. Although we know that incest was permitted in Egyptian dynasties, our story requires the shift from father to mummy to marsh king in order to dare to describe the incest.

⁶ Rank 1970.

Following this triple denial, the incest is shifted to the unconscious through a triple and also an age-old sleep: the king does not move, he is «as a mummy» more dead than alive; the mummy in the pyramid is a casket for a king of old; the Marsh King proves to be a monarch of a thousand years ago, concealed in the casing of an alder stump. Everyone is covered with a veil of oblivion and death. The princess, who is supposed to generate new life with all these dead fathers, may be alive and kicking, but falls asleep and dreams «that it is just as if she were dead».

So what we have here is a massive denial and a massive repression. When the princess arrives at the palace with her daughter, the sick king rises up with renewed vigour «as if (...) after a long and trying dream».

Not only is the incest concealed under many layers, it is moreover incest with the anal father, which probably reinforces the need for repression. The anality is indicated by the marsh, the black, slimy, shining mud, and the destructiveness which is suggested by death.

But the relationships are further complicated by the depiction of the sick father lying in a tulip, which identifies him with the grandchild found by the stork in a lily flower. The legend of the Greek princesses from which Andersen originally derived the idea for his fairytale, is based on the motif of rejuvenation through bathing in the fountain of eternal youth. The princess rejuvenates herself by being reborn as her own daughter; the stork initially thinks that her daughter is her, become a child again. In one sense of course he is on the right track as the child in the lily flower is indeed the daughter of her father. But the rejuvenation is extended through a further generation in that the father is also reborn, in a tulip flower.

Aiming to transfer the fairytale to Egypt, Andersen associated his initial idea about the swans with a later one about storks, incorporating them both in this combined tale after leaving them dormant for ten years.

The fairytale cannot end as a fairytale but is given a religious conclusion so that Helga can rise up, not to God who is not mentioned, but to «the Father», to whom her mother let her originally rise up out of the marsh. This is why Helga cannot marry her Arabian prince; she in turn is held fast in the incestuous embrace.

The fusion of fairytale, folktale and legend is necessary in order to bring this project to a good conclusion.

The story insert about the ostrich is the symbolic expression of hubris, the striving for ideality with which this story wrestles.

The incest, which is pregenital, is interpreted by Chasseguet-Smirgel as *incastus*=*non-coupé*. The non-castrated state suggests the pregenital organization where the ego ideal is not yet replaced by the superego, that presupposes a superseded Oedipus situation, in which the previous phases of the psycho-sexual development have not been repressed but integrated.

Holding to ideality indicates a non-accepted reality, to wit the reality of the generation difference and the castration. The gulf between the ego ideal and the superego can be bridged by sublimation, a project which occupied Andersen all his life, but in which he only succeeded, according to Martin Lotz, after the Italy crisis.⁸ In our text he resolves the problem by preserving the heroine in her ideality.

Moreover, the lack of clarity surrounding the characters' sexual identity, the daughters as phallic swans and the father as passive flower, is significant of the vague gender identity of many of Andersen's characters.

The little mermaid also suffers from this. Initially, while she is still living with her family under water, she spends a great deal of time in her little circular garden whose centre point is a marble statue of a handsome prince, an image of phallic auto-eroticism. True, she is stripped of her tail by the sea-witch in exchange for her voice, so that she can love the prince above water, in the

⁷ Chasseguet-Smirgel 1975.

⁸ Lotz 1988, p. 59.

world of flesh and blood. But the prince ultimately chooses another, and the mermaid's sisters provide her with a knife to murder him. When she decides not to kill him and throws the knife in the water, it turns red as blood in the light of the rising sun. At that moment, according to all the prophecies, the mermaid should turn into foam on the sea, but Andersen follows this with a solution which is just as unsatisfactory from a literary point of view as Helga's ascension to heaven in our tale. The little mermaid is taken in by the «Daughters of the Air», enabling her to acquire an immortal soul after spending three hundred years with them. This immortal soul was after all the reason for her to wish for some kind of relationship with the prince: the dream of the ideal – ego as substitute for the genital reality. That the prince is no longer important to her is obvious from her smile as she – invisibly – regards him one last time from her superior position.

Immortality – and I think that here we should translate religious immortality into a literary kind – renders the realization of earthly love superfluous, while as sublimation it solves the conflicting man-woman identity which so thoroughly obstructs the path to love in Andersen's work. With a variation on the words of Flaubert, «Madame Bovary, c'est moi», we can imagine an Andersen who says: «The little mermaid, I am she.»

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Un Rêve de Hawthorne: *The Celestial Railroad*

PIERRE MET (*)

Cet article est un essai d'interprétation psychanalytique d'un conte, *The Celestial Railroad*¹, publié par Hawthorne en 1843 et présenté comme étant le récit d'un rêve. Freud a démontré que les rêves étaient bien les révélateurs de la réalité psychique.

La plupart des rêves artificiels créés par les poètes sont destinés à être ainsi interprétés symboliquement: ils rendent la pensée de l'auteur sous un déguisement où notre expérience découvre le caractère de nos propres rêves.²

Au moyen d'un travail d'écriture, analogue à l'élaboration secondaire dans le rêve, l'auteur associe une partie de l'intrigue du *Pilgrim's Progress*³ de Bunyan avec le développement du chemin de fer aux Etats-Unis dans les années 1840.⁴

Le rêveur quitte son hôtel en compagnie de Mr Smooth-it-Away⁵, emprunte un pont surplombant le Slough of Despond⁶, achète son billet et monte à bord du Chemin de Fer Céleste reliant la Cité de la Destruction à la Cité Céleste.⁷

Le convoi chemine à l'intérieur d'un tunnel creusé sous la Colline Difficulté⁸, traverse la Vallée de l'Ombre de la Mort⁹, passe devant la grotte d'un Géant et s'arrête à Vanity Fair¹⁰. Séduit

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¹ *The Celestial Railroad*, publié pour la première fois dans la *Democratic Review* en 1843. Dans cet article, les chiffres entre parenthèses suivant les citations ou les références au texte de *The Celestial Railroad* indiquent les numéros des pages de l'édition de l'oeuvre *Moses from an old Manse* de Nathaniel Hawthorne (volume IV pp. 259-288), Boston et New-York Houghton, Mifflin and Company, the Riverside Press, Cambridge (USA) 1900.

² Sigmund Freud, *L'interprétation des rêves*, Paris: PUF, 1967, p. 122.

³ *The Pilgrim's Progress* publié par John Bunyan entre 1678 et 1684 est présenté comme étant le récit d'un rêve. Christian le héros effectue un pèlerinage en direction de la Cité Céleste.

⁴ La ligne de chemin de fer reliant Salem à Boston fut inaugurée en 1838, les passagers devaient emprunter un bac pour terminer leur voyage. A cette époque les accidents étaient fréquents.

⁵ Mr Smooth-it-Away sera le compagnon du rêveur tout au long de son pèlerinage.

⁶ Christian tombe dans le Slough of Despond et est secouru par un homme répondant au nom de Help.

⁷ The City of Destruction. Dans le livre de Bunyan, le héros Christian, quitte the City of Destruction, surmonte de nombreuses difficultés et atteint la Cité Céleste.

⁸ The Hill of Difficulty. Le chemin étroit conduit Christian au sommet de la colline.

⁹ The Valley of the Shadow of Death. Pour atteindre la Cité Céleste, Christian doit traverser une vallée sombre.

¹⁰ Vanity Fair est une allégorie des plaisirs du monde.

par l'atmosphère de fête, le rêveur décide de mettre fin à son pèlerinage. Quelques jours plus tard, dans l'imitation de deux Pèlerins âgés qui, refusant de se laisser aller à la facilité, poursuivent leur marche avec détermination, le rêveur remonte à bord du train, passe devant la porte de l'enfer¹¹, traverse le territoire de Beulah¹² et embarque à bord d'un bac pour traverser l'étendue d'eau, au-delà de laquelle s'élève la Cité Céleste. Malencontreusement, il tombe par dessus bord et manque de se noyer dans l'eau glacée du fleuve. Il se réveille en éprouvant une sensation d'angoisse.

1.

La structure de rêve permet à Hawthorne de pénétrer la vie psychique à l'aide d'une représentation symbolique.

Not a great while ago, passing through the gate of deams, I visited that region of the earth in which lies the famous City of Destruction. 1 (259)

Le sujet, personnage central du rêve, considéré comme l'objet de sa propre activité a la présomption de passer pour un héros. C'est un fugitif désirant vaincre la solitude: «It was my good fortune to enjoy the company of a gentleman – one Mr. Smooth-it-Away». 1 (259)

Pour ce faire, Hawthorne imagine une symbiose entre la Réalité et l'Imaginaire: le rêveur quitte la mauvaise mère (la ville de la destruction) dans l'espoir de retrouver le père qui l'a précédé dans la Cité Céleste. Cette ascension réalisée sur un mode hallucinatoire peut être interprétée comme la compensation d'un manque. Le rêveur cherche toujours à aller de l'avant; soumis à un rituel au cours duquel présenté comme une victime il tente d'échapper à la destruction, il pénètre des cavernes, franchi des portes, descend au fond de vallées, transperce des montagnes. L'obscurité régnant dans ce monde souterrain est une métaphore de la tombe à l'intérieur de laquelle il espère être réuni au père absent. Le va et vient du train à l'intérieur d'un lieu, métaphore d'organes sexuels féminin évoque, quant à lui le rythme de la copulation.

Throughout our journey, at every stopping place, Apollyon had exercised his ingenuity in screwing the most abominable sounds out of the Whistle of the steam engine. 1 (285)

A la fin du récit, les symboles maternels (eau, bateau) sont surreprésentés. Cette phalisation de la mère permet de contrebalancer l'importance du rôle joué dans le rêve par des hommes âgés. Le rêveur quitte la Cité de la Destruction afin de retourner à l'intérieur du corps maternel. Hawthorne prend plaisir à l'empêcher d'atteindre son but en plaçant des obstacles sur sa route. Un souffle de vent balaye soudainement la surface de l'eau et le rêveur saisi de panique se réveille brusquement. A cet endroit le rêve est censuré, car il exprime d'une façon manifeste des impulsions latentes interdites : le désir est montré comme réalisé et le moi se sent coupable d'être un moi ou de le devenir. Dans son rêve, Hawthorne imagine une ville qu'il lui est interdit de voir et cette représentation mentale met en évidence une obligation de répétition: partir, pénétrer, aller à la recherche de quelque chose d'absent.

Through the very heart of this rocky mountain a tunnel has been constructed of most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double track. 1 (268)

En chemin, le rêveur rencontre de nombreux personnages signifiants de son Désir. Le travail d'écriture permet à Hawthorne, par un processus de condensation, de signifier en dissimulant.

Mr Smooth-it-Away guide le narrateur, Apollyon¹³ est devenu le mécanicien du train,

¹¹ La porte de l'Enfer se trouve au centre de la Vallée de l'Ombre de la mort.

¹² Le territoire de Beulah. Un lieu de repos pour les Pèlerins. Cf Isaïe (62.4) «On ne t'appellera plus la délaissée, ni la terre de l'abandonnée; on te nommera: Ma préférée, et ta terre: l'Epousée».

¹³ Apollyon – un démon imaginé par Bunyan. Christian le rencontrera dans la Vallée de l'Humiliation et le vaincra après un difficile combat.

Evangelist¹⁴ contrôle les billets et Take-it-Easy réside dans la Vallée de la Mort. Prudence, Piety et Charity¹⁵ ne sont plus toutes jeunes. Elles ont perdu leur tendresse et leurs formes arrondies pour devenir anguleuses: «Why, my dear fellow, they are old maids every soul of them – prim starched, dry and angular». 1 (269)

Ces distortions par rapport à l'histoire imaginée par Bunyan sont équivalentes au lapsus; des tendances non réalisées réclament par le rêve leur voix au chapitre et deviennent les partenaires du moi. L'image du père est clivée (Mr Smooth-it-Away, Apollyon), et la nature de l'intrigue donne satisfaction au désir refoulé. Désespéré d'être maintenant éloigné de la Cité Céleste, l'auteur abolit l'espace et le temps afin de recréer sous une forme hallucinatoire une situation qui existait avant sa naissance.

Le sujet prend plaisir à regarder, (pulsion scopique) et ce voyeurisme est une métaphore du désir de contrôle de celui qui est regardé. L'allusion faite par celui qui regarde, dans le rêve, à la pétrification de Lot¹⁶ montre que le rêveur a compris le danger qu'il y avait à regarder et à être vu regardant. «A little further onward was the spot where Lot's wife has stood forever under the semblance of a pillar of salt» 1 (283). A la fin du rêve, Hawthorne associe le voyage en bateau à la mère dévoratrice. Se sentant en danger d'être étouffé par un monstre de sexe féminin (le mauvais sein) le rêveur se réveille, terrorisé¹⁷, afin d'éviter d'être la victime du conflit auquel se livrent des forces contradictoires.

2.

Le début du rêve signifie déjà que le rêveur souhaite modifier sa condition considérée comme destructrice. Pour ce faire, il descend au fond d'une vallée, manifestement une métaphore de l'inconscient, traverse un étroit défilé et se retrouve dans l'ombre, véritable partie vivante de sa personnalité. Comme le rêveur est endormi, sa libido choisit son objet sans inhibition. Il devient le personnage principal de sa fantasmagorie¹⁸ et réalise un souhait inacceptable pour le Moi conscient, lorsqu'il est en état de veille. A ce moment précis du conte, Hawthorne inclut un second rêve à l'intérieur du premier: «It could well-nigh have taken my oath that this whole gloomy passage was a dream» 1 (274). Cela équivaut à exprimer le souhait que ce qui a été décrit précédemment ne se soit jamais réalisé. Des rituels compliqués mobilisent l'énergie du sujet et l'empêchent de retrouver l'état de plénitude.

Hawthorne punit le rêveur et la figure paternelle refuse au dernier moment de monter avec lui à bord du bac. N'ayant plus de protecteur, il tombe par dessus bord et se retrouve plongé dans l'eau glacée du fleuve, en situation de se noyer. Le héros dépense de l'énergie contre lui-même et à l'aide d'une forme de gratification masochiste obtient un plaisir érotique en s'infligeant de la souffrance.

Etablir une relation entre la terre et le ciel peut être lu comme la métaphore d'un besoin d'amour. Le Chemin de Fer Céleste met en scène la réalisation d'un fantasme de conquête, de

¹⁴ Evangelist est un pasteur dans le livre de Bunyan.

¹⁵ Prudence, Piety et Charity. Dans le livre de Bunyan ce sont de belles jeunes femmes, gardiennes de the House Beautiful, une maison située sur le flanc de la Colline Difficulté et servant de refuge pour les pèlerins. Voir aussi Young Goodman Brown, publié par Hawthorne dans *The New England Magazine* (1835) puis dans *Mosses from an old Manse* (1846).

¹⁶ Instruit de l'arrêt porté par Dieu contre Sodome, Lot quitta la Cité avec sa famille, mais sa femme, cédant à la curiosité malgré la défense des anges regarda derrière elle et fut changée en une statue de sel.

¹⁷ Généralement, le rêveur n'est pas réveillé par le rêve. Lorsque le refoulé se manifeste insuffisamment déguisé, le rêve est accompagné d'angoisse et le rêveur se réveille avant que son rêve ne se transforme en cauchemar.

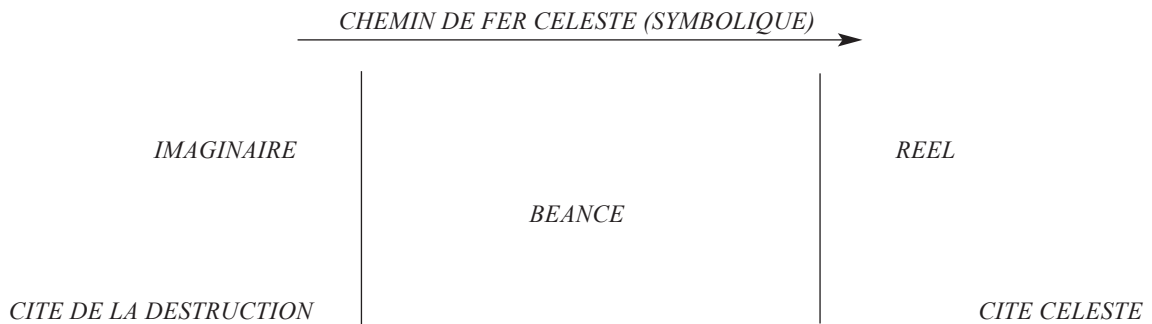
¹⁸ Le rêveur développe une pensée incestueuse. Le mécanicien est le frère de la locomotive et chevauche sa machine.

«Do my eyes deceive me?» cried I. «What on earth is this! A living creature? If so, he is own brother to the engine he rides upon!» 1(p. 265).

mariage, grâce auquel un enfant établira une liaison avec une ville, métaphore de la mère, permettant aussi le retour du parent absent. L'Auteur imagine des scènes consistant à se faufiler à travers des passages étroits pour se retrouver baignant au milieu d'un élément liquide. Il tente de recréer l'unité primitive qui existait avant sa naissance, imaginée comme une séparation. Cette régression est un retour au premier objet de la libido, un désir de fusion. Arrivé à Vanity Fair, l'enfant investit la ville pour prendre la place du père absent. Cette métaphore de la tentation de l'homme par la femme lui permet de prendre conscience que la mère qui nourrit peut être aussi, une mère destructrice.

Wherefore every man who buys a ticket must lay his account with losing the purchase money, which is the value of my own soul. 1 (282)

Tel Dieu punissant Moïse, Hawthorne n'autorise pas son héros à séjourner en Terre Promise¹⁹. Il ne peut que contempler la béance: le phallus est hors d'atteinte. Le chemin de fer céleste est un fétiche donnant seulement l'illusion que la complétude est possible. Conscient de la dualité, le rêveur poursuit sa route sur deux rails et comprend que c'est entre les deux extrêmes que se trouve la vérité. C'est une réponse symbolique au complexe d'Oedipe.



Mr Smooth-it-Away, un homme âgé et autoritaire est le propriétaire du chemin de fer²⁰. Il le possède comme le père possède la mère sexuellement: «Apollyon (...) is own brother to the engine he rides upon!». 1 (205)

Being moreover, a director of the railroad corporation and one of its largest stockholders, he had in his power to give me all desirable information respecting that praiseworthy enterprise. 1 (260)

¹⁹ Hawthorne trouve un compromis entre le Désir et sa défense: seuls deux pauvres pèlerins parviendront à la Cité Céleste, ce qui permettra au rêveur d'entrevoir la félicité.

I perceived, on a lighting from the car, that a multitude of shining ones had assembled on the other side of the river, to welcome two poor pilgrims, (...) 1 (p. 286).

²⁰ *The Celestial Railroad* donne à Hawthorne l'opportunité de rencontrer le père absent sous une forme clivée. Le narrateur ne chemine pas seul; il est guidé par Mr Smooth-it-Away (le bon père). Apollyon (le mauvais père) dont le nom grec signifie destructeur est devenu le mécanicien du train. Il a l'apparence d'un dragon, et des flammes et de la fumée sortent de son corps. Afin de survivre, il a appris à maîtriser les forces destructrices de la nature (le feu); c'est une métaphore d'un esprit en contrôlant un autre.

The engine at this moment took its station in advance of the cars, looking, I must confess, much more like a sort of mechanical demon that would hurry as to the infernal regions than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. 1 (p. 265).

Représentant de la loi, il doit aider l'enfant à trouver sa place dans l'ordre symbolique. Redevenu un petit enfant, le sujet est attentif au regard approbateur de son père. Cependant Mr Smooth-it-Away est davantage un geôlier qu'un guide. Son apparente bonté est un masque. Il représente une force destructrice incontrôlable par le sujet: l'inscription du désir de l'Autre. En établissant cette amitié perverse, Hawthorne transforme le père en objet de haine. Il condamne Great-Heart (le personnage de Bunyan) à se retirer dans la Cité Céleste et fait de Mr Smooth-it-Away un spectre dont le destin sera d'errer éternellement sans jamais trouver un instant de repos. Cette haine peut être considérée comme un parricide symbolique.

3.

Tout au long de son rêve, le rêveur adopte une position de défense, et vit replié sur lui-même. Il fuit devant le danger accompagné par une sensation d'angoisse. Contrairement aux deux pèlerins âgés qui, marchant le buste redressé, adoptent une attitude de conquérant, le héros est le plus souvent dans une position assise: celle du dominé. Alors qu'il est à bord du bac, il éprouve la sensation d'être mouillé. 1 (288). Ceci peut être interprété comme un comportement auto-érotique où le sujet utilise une part de lui-même comme équivalent symbolique de quelque chose d'autre. Craignant d'être puni par un castrateur, la fuite au moyen du chemin de fer est une réponse «biologique» à la peur. Le rêveur est non seulement hanté par la culpabilité émanant de son Désir, mais aussi par la culpabilité de sa négation. Ce conte fournit un moyen d'expression qui peut favoriser une angoisse latente. Le rêveur sera un perpétuel hésitant : faire une chose, sans négliger l'autre. Une impulsion libidinale le conduira à s'arrêter à Vanity Fair. La condamnation de cette impulsion l'en fera repartir.

This shows the liberality of the age; this proves if anything can, that all musty prejudices are in a fair way to be obliterated. 1 (265)

Le déplacement en train masque la castration symbolique qui est la condition du sujet. Dans son rêve le rêveur associe une sensation d'anxiété à un désir de consolation. Mais sa volonté semble inhibée: «The idea of pursuing my travel to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind». 1 (280)

Une figure paternelle, Mr Smooth-it-Away, conduit l'enfant de la Cité de la Destruction à Vanity Fair, où le héros sous l'impulsion d'une figure mâle autoritaire prend le parti d'attendre. Il continuera son pèlerinage après avoir été transformé par ce qu'il a pu voir. La libido rencontre les traces de chocs anciens qui constituent pour elle des lieux de stagnations privilégiés, une peur éprouvée pendant l'enfance ressuscite une angoisse.

Had all regrets been punished as rigorously as this poor dame's were, my yearning for the relinquished delight Vanity Fair might have produced a similar change in my own corporeal substance, and left me a warning to future pilgrim. 1 (283)

Au début du rêve Mr Smooth-it-Away est une métaphore de l'objet que l'on croit capable de protection et de secours. En fait, il conduira l'enfant vers la mère au lieu de lui permettre de trouver sa place dans le monde social. L'enfant, amoureux de la mère devient jaloux de son père, et son érection, semblable à la pétrification de Lot est un moyen mis en oeuvre par le sujet pour s'opposer au pouvoir du père, «(...) to become a sexed being through the phallic function to which the Name of the Father refers»²¹.

Dans la dernière phase du rêve, le scénario d'arrachement et de libération est associé à une symbolique de naissance. Lors de ce combat, qui est une seconde naissance, Hawthorne donne deux mères aux héros. Ce dernier comprend qu'il est en danger d'être étouffé par la mère, parce

²¹ *The Seduction of Psychoanalysis*, Freud, Lacan, and Derrida, John Forrester, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 110.

que cette seconde naissance comporte en elle-même un voeu d'élimination du père. Il développe alors des sentiments anxio-gènes, substitués d'une distorsion qui a été omise et libère des forces antagonistes qui inhibent ses mouvements. Le Désir de fusion avec la mère reliant étroitement inceste et naissance est ressenti comme étant destructeur pour le sujet. Le rêveur se réveille alors terrorisé avant que son rêve ne se transforme en cauchemar: «(...) with a shiver and a heartquake I awoke». 1 (288). Ce retour à la conscience est bien la preuve d'une anxiété de castration fondée sur une rivalité oedipienne avec le père²². Le pont bâti par Hawthorne pour relier les deux rives du Slough of Despond, le chemin de fer véritable relation institutionnelle entre la Cité de la Destruction et la Cité Céleste, le tunnel permettant de traverser de part en part la Montagne de la Difficulté, le nivellement de la vallée de l'Humiliation sont des fétiches permettant à l'Auteur d'établir un compromis entre un désir et sa défense. Le retour au sein maternel s'assimile à la navigation nocturne du soleil appelé à renaître à l'orient. Le père absent peut être recherché dans le symbolique grâce à l'écriture: le désir trouve ainsi un moyen pour se manifester «Thank heavens it was a dream!». 1 (288)

* * *

Ce conte «(...) delivered under the similitude of a dream» (3) 41, est une métaphore du combat qui se déroule à l'intérieur de la psyché d'un sujet victime du complexe de castration. Les difficultés rencontrées par le Pèlerin au cours de son voyage sont semblables au combat que mènera le sujet lors de la cure analytique. Souhaitant rejeter une société hostile et destructrice le rêveur poursuit inlassablement sa fuite, d'une manière irrésistible. Le sujet se voyant séparé d'une mère protectrice et aiguillonné par la peur d'un super ego génère de l'anxiété. Le va et vient du chemin de fer entre la Cité de la Destruction et la Cité Céleste est une métaphore de cette obligation de répétition destructrice. Contrairement au pèlerin de Bunyan, le rêveur de Hawthorne ne progresse pas, il répète toujours, sous des formes diverses sa nostalgie de complétude, son désir de fusion et son impossibilité d'accepter la castration. Accompagné par un guide qui n'est pas «le sujet supposé savoir», il continue à se détruire, car dans ce rêve, le désir est perpétuellement déplacé, transféré au lieu d'être analysé.

²² La fin du conte est une métaphore du déplacement dans le rêve. Le fils prend la place du père et monte à bord du bac. Le père castré retourne dans la vallée de l'ombre de la mort.

Looking back to the shore, I was amazed to discern Mr Smooth-it-Away waving his hand token of farewell. 1(p. 287).

A Psychoanalytic Exploration of the Unhappy Outcome of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (*)

MARVIN B. KRIMS (**)

Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* has an unusual dramaturgic structure for a comedy. It begins with a king's preoccupation with death and ends with a queen in mourning for her father. In between, the characters court each other in typical comedic style but their courtship ends most unconventionally: they part without gratifying their love for each other. I intend to show how anxiety in the male characters contributes to this outcome and that a reading of the subtext suggests that this anxiety is caused by an unconscious linkage of love with death and, aggression. Finally, I shall show where this linkage also appears transparently just beneath the surface of the text.

The play's unhappy ending is foreshadowed in the opening lines as Ferdinand, King of Navarre, compels his lords to join him in giving up their pleasures and devote themselves instead to study for three years. He demands that they sleep only three hours a night; eat one meal a day and fast one day week; and «not see a woman in that term». Sleeping, eating, and love-making then are the enemies to be conquered and it soon becomes plain that love is the paramount enemy. The king assures his men that by doing this, Navarre will become «the wonder of the world». No doubt Navarre would be the wonder («wonder» in the sense of «marvel») of the world if her men gave up their pleasures for three years.

But the king's «wonder» here may contain a meaning he does not intend: «wonder» in the sense of «doubt». Perhaps at some deeper level, the king has some question about the Draconian measures he seeks to impose. He might wonder whether it is possible to sublimate all pleasure into study and if this will truly bring the «honor which shall bate [Time's] scythe's keen edge». And he will soon show us that he is too interested in life and love to be so concerned with death. Accordingly, the king's «wonder» might contain some doubt, some uncertainty about why he insists on renouncing the pleasures of living. Perhaps the reader wonders as well.

When the lords finally swear to the king's edicts, they learn that not only is «to be taken with a wench» forbidden, just talking with a woman calls for as much «public shame as the rest of the

(*) Line references are to The Oxford Shakespeare (G.R. Hibbard, Ed.), Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

(**) 184 Ward Street, Newton Centre, MA 02159, USA.

court can possibly devise». And no woman shall come within a mile of the court «on pain of losing her tongue»¹. Clearly, there is to be no contact with women.

Curiously, the king seems to have contrived these harsh measures at the same time as he made plans to meet a woman – the Princess of France (to negotiate the return of some conquered land – Aquitaine). He had not disclosed this to his lords but he was not being simply duplicitous – he had completely forgotten the meeting. His forgetting this important affair of state cannot be merely a random event; there must be strong repressive forces operating within the king which caused him to forget. And the presence of these repressive forces strongly suggests the presence of unconscious conflict.

After being reminded of the meeting, the king proceeds with the conference with the Princess anyway – thus immediately subverting his own resolutions. Although he does make some attempt to honor them by forcing the women to camp out in the fields, he then completely undermines the statutes by falling in love with the princess and courting her. Ferdinand's intense ambivalence is another indicator of unconscious conflict. This further stimulates reader inquiry into what might be the nature of the conflict.

A possible clue to the nature of the king's conflict is offered in the final scene. By now, the men suddenly – without prior preparation in the text – one of the Queen's women, Rosaline, introduces a grim note about the king:

Rosaline: You'll ne'er be friends with him, a' kill'd your sister.
Katherine: He made her melancholy, sad and heavy,
And so she died. Had she been light, like you,
Of such a merry, nimble, stirring spirit
She might 'a been [a] grandam ere she died.
And so may you, for a light heart lives long.

V, ii, l. 13-17

Rosaline reveals a dark side of the king: a kill'd Katherine's sister. There is no context for this, no connection with anything that follows. The lines seem strangely out of place in a comedy, as if they were misplaced from another play, perhaps a tragedy. The problematic, discordant quality of the lines calls for closer scrutiny.

Since the lines are in a comedy about love, they might indicate that Katherine's sister loved the king but he rejected her and she died of broken heart («He made her melancholy, sad and heavy,/ And so she died.»)

But after «died» Katherine breaks off in midline and radically shifts mood to teasing sexual banter: «Had she been light like you.» She switches from the tragedy of her sister's death back to comedy, playing on the word «light» (Elizabethan for «wanton»).

Perhaps Katherine changes mood to protect herself and the others from the sadness of her sister's death – the women had been joking about the men's gifts before Rosaline's disclosure. But she could have more logically changed moods by resuming the banter about the gifts. Instead she switches to the theme of wantonness and thus unconsciously connects her sister's death with lack of sexual restraint. In this reading then, the subtext of Katherine's words contains a meaning far different from her conscious intent: her sister's death is associated with wanton behavior. Accordingly, the disclosure about Ferdinand («a kill'd your sister») presents Ferdinand as a lady-killer in both the literal and metaphoric sense.

Whether King Ferdinand killed the Katherine's sister by loving her or rejecting her (perhaps both), the disclosure of the king as a lady-killer offers a clue about the nature of the conflict which causes him to distance women. Ferdinand might feel guilty about the «killing» – real and, or imagined – and this guilt might then motivate his edicts. Thus, his «if any man be seen to talk with

¹ Longeville suggested this punishment but the king adopted it. The threat to, and of, the woman's tongue echoes in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

a woman..., he shall endure as much public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise» would be a reflection of his own private shame. His threat of mutilation for a woman who comes within a mile of his court becomes both a representation of the harm he feels he has already caused and an attempt to prevent further harm by distancing women. His guilt also could account for his forgetting the meeting with the princess as all women might be associated with Katherine's sister. In this reading then, his lofty scheme for achieving eternal fame through hermetic study is an attempt to expiate the guilt caused by Katherine's sister's death.

This inner conflict of the king becomes the principal theme of the play: love is threatening to women, shameful to men, forbidden by statute – and passionately pursued by the all. Yet despite the character's passion for each other (apparent in their bawdy word-play), the men's attempts at romantic intrigue always miscarry and subvert their wishes for intimacy². Perhaps then all the lords are like the king and also have conflicts about love. Such conflict is detectable throughout but must be curtailed here because of restraints of time. The words of Biron as he declares his love for Rosaline captures the spirit of the men's ambivalence:

And I, foresooth in love! That have been love's whip,
A very beadle to a humorous sigh,
A critic, nay, a night-watch constable,

III, i, 1.167 -193

.....

And what might be a common underlying cause for their conflicts about love? In this reading, it is an unconscious linkage of love with death and aggression. This linkage emerges with special clarity during the deer hunt scene when Boyet, the princess's salacious attendant, teases the Princess about a love-letter misdelivered to her.

And thou dost hear the Nemeam lion roar
'Gainst thee, thou lamb, that standest as his prey.
Submissive fall his princely feet before,
And he from forage will incline to play.
But if thou strive, what art thou then?
Food for his rage, repasture for his den.

IV, i, 1.86- 92.

Boyet's metaphors fuse predation with making love. His words situate the woman as the helpless lamb, the man the ravening lion. If the lamb resists («if thou strive»), the lion devours her in a rage. If she yields, the lamb conquers and the lion submits and wants to play. But ultimately, the lamb – standing or striving to escape – is forage for the lion, repasture for his den. Making love is at once play and depredation, oral pleasure and oral incorporation. The orality here is both an upward displacement of genital union and an indirect reference to oral sex. Love and hate, submission and predation, copulation and incorporation are conflated: lions eat lambs^{3 4}.

² Two minor characters, Costard and Jacquinta, do manage to make love. The king punishes Costard by a «week of bran and water», thus further undermining his decree of «a year's imprisonment to be taken with a wench». (I,i, 1.275).

³ Asp (1989) locates the men's difficulty in their refusal «... to acknowledge the lack that is desire's source.» Accordingly, «... they repress desire by both denial and sublimation». My reading traces their repression of desire to anxiety about unconscious aggression.

⁴ Hehl (1994) understands the failure of the men's attempts at courtship as caused by their fear of narcissistic humiliation by the women and defensive withdrawal into a phantasied Garden of Eden – their «little Academe». Excessive fear of narcissistic injury could be caused by early development failure. Such failure might both increase aggression and diminish defensive capacities, thus leading to heightened anxiety about aggression.

LOVE LINKED WITH AGRESSION APPEARING ON THE SURFACE OF THE TEXT

This interpretation of an unconscious linkage between love and death as a cause of the men's difficulties is of course an inference, an attempt to derive unconscious structure and process from the words of literary characters. The text examined so far offers no explicit support for this linkage: the men pursue the women with no conscious thought of anyone getting hurt. Psychoanalysis accounts for the discrepancy between the words-on-the-page and depth interpretation by the concept of repression: the linkage between love and death is repressed and therefore does not appear on the surface. However, psychoanalytic work with real people also observes that repression is never complete and thinly disguised unconscious contents inevitably surface into awareness – especially when self-censorship is somewhat relaxed (for example, in dreams, day dreams, parapraxis, or play). This surfacing also occurs in the text, in the word-play at the end of the deer hunt scene (Act IV, i, l. 115).

The hunting party has by now abandoned all pretense of the hunt and enjoy some thirty lines of word-play and bawdy banter on archery⁵. Unfortunately, time permits but three lines of their «greasy» puns and analysis requires further desiccation. First a glossary: «Mark» is the target; «prick» is the spot in the center of the target (from a mark made by pricking, its earliest meaning (OED) and hence the center of the target); «upshoot» is the last best shot in the match, the upshot;

Boyet (To Maria): A mark! Oh mark but that mark!

Let the mark have a prick i't....

Costard: Then she will get the upshoot [by cleaving the pin].

IV, i, l.130 -135.

The characters here joke about making love but employ the language of violence: upshoot and (elsewhere) shoot, hit, prick, and cleave.

Boyet's «Let the mark have a prick i't» (l.130) is patently prurient. «Prick» has an androgynous meaning here: «female introitus» and «penis» (a meaning also available in Shakespeare's time⁶. Accordingly, Boyet speaks openly of Maria's genital and his wish to enter her while at the same time his word «prick» denotes the center of a target and an arrow shot into it. His words-on-the-pages combine erotic excitement and lancinating aggression.

Costard's reply «Then will she get the upshoot by cleaving the pin» – also plays with the imagery of love fused with the language of aggression. «Then will she get the upshoot» combines ejaculation of the male into the female with an arrow shot into the center of the target. «Cleaving the pin» has a dual meaning: masturbation of the male by the female («cleaving» read as «adhering» and «pin» as penis) and entering the female genital («cleaving» read as «splitting», hence «unfolding» and «pin» as «center of the target»)⁷.

Perhaps the playfulness of the scene relaxes censorship so that this otherwise repressed imagery can become conscious. In this, the characters are like children playing out in the safety of a playroom. However, they show no awareness that there is a dark side to these joking phantasies: the anxiety produced by the association of love with aggression prevents them from bringing the comedy to a happier ending.

⁵ In performance, it seems probable that the bawdy words were accompanied by obscene gestures (perhaps even unscripted dumb shows) derived from the coarse, improvisational practices of the Italian Commedia dell'Arte (Barasch, 1993).

⁶ The earliest citation in the Oxford English Dictionary for «prick» is «an impression or mark made by pricking», about 1000 C.E. (OED I, 1). The earliest phallic meaning cited in OED is 1592.

⁷ Although my reading of the bawdy utilizes «The Oxford English Dictionary» as an etymological base, it is also informed by Colman (1974) and Rowse (1978) and to a lesser extent on Patridge (1961) and Rubenstein (1984).

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Introduction to the Morphology of Puppets (*)

MICHAEL JAMES STOCK (**)

Several months ago a story was released on the AP wire «revealing» a long-closeted queer relationship between the hand-puppets, Bert and Ernie on the Public Broadcasting System's long-running program, *Sesame Street*. PBS adamantly responded in a statement to the press: first, that the puppets were not gay «and there are no plans for them to do so in the future»; second, that they are only puppets created to «help demonstrate to children that despite their differences, they can be good friends». This paper does not serve to support one side of the non-argument or the other, but rather to examine the site of contestation: the body of the puppet. This examination is focused on the morphological ontology of the puppet – its anamorphic form: in short, the body «of» the puppet and how it is «read», or interpreted, by the spectator.

Typically, hand puppets, whether they are monsters, frogs, pigs, Berts, or Ernies, are endowed with human characteristics: with heads, legs, arms, and mouths that speak. They are animated as anamorphic stains, dedicated to the art of mimicry, resulting from the spectator's anthropomorphizing gaze which accepts the movements of puppets as human-like. Lacan informs us in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* that we forget that «mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind» (99). We forget that the puppet has its own morphological form, and – an existence separate(d) from its «human-ness».

The puppet form that we see and recognize as approximating «human», functions as an example of anamorphosis, in the same way that Lacan describes his reproduction of a drawn figure, «enlarged and distorted according to the lines of what may be called a perspective» (85). Lacan continues:

One supposes that – if I take away that which has helped in the construction, namely, the image placed in my own visual field – the impression I will retain, while remaining in that place, will be more or less the same. At least, I will recognize the general outlines of the image – at best I will have an identical impression. (85)

(*) This paper was delivered at the 1994 International Conference in Literature and Psychoanalysis as «Notes on "New" Bodies: The Morphology of Puppets». However, I would like the article to be printed with the title listed above.

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The puppet, then, has the human body as its «"geometral" point», where identification occurs within the spectator who holds the puppet-body in his/her gaze. Our immediate recognition of the puppet's body, however, denies its morphological form almost entirely. We do not «see» the force external (and internal) to the puppet which is responsible for animating it, for giving it «life». In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Zizek describes:

We can deceive animals by an appearance, imitating a reality for which it can be no substitute, but the properly human way to deceive a man is [to] imitate the dissimulation of reality – the act of concealing deceives us precisely by pretending to conceal something. (196)

On *Sesame Street*, Bert and Ernie are consistently contained within a medium shot; their bodies are seen only from the belly-up, with a wall often concealing what exists «below the belt». The puppet's body re-replaces the human body, existing as an anamorphic distortion of the human body – the site within the frame where the picture gazes back at the viewer. In *Looking Awry*, Slavoj Zizek recognizes the Hitchcockian tracking shot which «slowly isolates from its surroundings the element that cannot be integrated into the symbolic reality, that must remain a strange body if the depicted reality is to retain its consistency» (116). In the case of the puppet, the «strange body» that is the anamorphic stain, the gaze qua object is the technological creation of the body itself – rather than a formal filmic structure. The puppet exists in a reality equal to our own – in living rooms, bedrooms, neighborhoods, etc.; the «blot» is the puppet's very form, its ontological Being: its Body.

The technique of containing the puppet's body with the re-st(r)aining wall acts to obstruct our view of the life-force which provides the puppet with movement – the dynamic between the puppet and puppeteer. This blocking technique also acts to obstruct our view of the arms and hands that animate the puppet, concealing the puppet's hidden «life-force», and actively denying the existence of half of the puppet's body – the half associated with a sexual existence and methods of movement and propulsion.

In *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, Slavoj Zizek finds that «"monsters" appear at every break which announces a new epoch of capital», whether it is Frankenstein, the phantom of the opera, or «the living dead» (139). Considering puppets in the same manner that Zizek considers monsters – as anamorphic stains – suggests that the popularity of puppets is the result of a fascination with the possibility of new bodies that may replace our own. The technology of the puppet is a result of our fascination with the technologization, or fetishization of the body. The I/imitation of the body, as Laurence Rickels indicates in *The Case of California*, as in Kafka and de Sade, results in «the body [which] comes only to its mutilation, rebuilding, and animation» (76).

With this excitement/incitement to (re)build bodies, comes fear of the foreign body, or «Other». This phenomenon results in the simultaneous denial of the new morphological entity – this new Body. It is as though a concerted effort is being made to contain Foucault's assertion in *The History of Sexuality* concerning «the intensification of the body – with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power» (107).

A puppet's form, his/her Body, is crumpled and seemingly lifeless – sleeping, perhaps – until someone's hand enters the body of the puppet. To control the body and mouth movements of the hand puppet, a hand enters the body through the anus of the puppet, which aligns the point of sexuality and life (the genitals) with that of excrement and death (the anus). The anus of the puppet functions as Guy Hocquenghem promises in *Homosexual Desire*, as «a circle which is open to an infinity of directions and possibilities for plugging in, with no set places», resulting in the collapse of the Oedipal, «Phallic hierarchy» (111). The Phallus of the puppet, in effect, becomes the anus, because of its existence as the point where life originates rather than ends.

At this point of interaction between puppet and puppeteer, where does one body begin and the other end? In Barthes' tale of «The rib chop», the piece of Barthes' body that is removed from him is returned with the explanation that «my body belongs to me, in whatever dismembered state they

restored it to me: I am the owner of my bones, in life as in death» (*Roland Barthes* 61). In the case of the puppet/er analogue, then, who and what «belongs» to whom?

The curious adjoining of the two bodies acts as a unique sexual morphology; the dynamic between the two results in nothing less than a new morphological ontology created out of *jouissance*. In effect, the impossible occurs: this new Body is «reanimated» – a creation of life, born from the penetration and control of the anal passage of excrement and death. The phallic hierarchy is reversed. The manipulation of the puppet's anus, in fact, results in «life» for the puppet and a partial death for the puppeteer – the penetrator, the assumed owner of the Phallus. After penetration and the resulting «birth», the puppeteer's movements and gestures are no longer his/her own – they are the puppet's. Also, the puppeteer is no longer seen; s/he is neither object nor subject of the gaze – because of the «wall» intended to re-st(r)ain the puppet's body.

Like Zizek's description of anamorphosis in *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), the puppet, too, functions as an anamorphic parasite, «a kind of a "sprout of enjoyment", a leftover of the maternal Thing which then functions as a symptom – the Real of enjoyment» (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 79). Born from erotic violence, the puppet's form envelops the hand's form and claims its life from it, denying the puppeteer's «body». Both bodies function as signifying sites of violence: the violation of the puppet's form and the virtual crippling of the puppeteer. It is as Lacan describes in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, the self-flagellating ascetic who «does it for a third party» – for a spectator, the voyeur who watches life given through «the possibility of pain undergone by him who has become, at that moment, the subject of the drive» (183). What Zizek finds in *Alien* holds true for the puppet: «the fact that this parasitic object incessantly changes its form merely confirms its *anamorphic* status: it is a pure being of semblance» (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 79).

The puppet re(as)sembles the human form, animated by a part of that form – the «Boneless» status of the puppet is re-placed («filled up») with the puppeteer's bones at the point of «birth» as the result of virtual «Body-building». Albert Liu points out in «Theses on the Metalmorph» that Bodybuilding, as in the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger's blown-up body, «is also an experience of the Boneless, to the extent that expandable organ-muscles are made to grow or appear on asymbolic sites of the body» (136). The «Body-building» of a puppet, similarly, manifests itself on «asymbolic sites of the body», replacing these sites with a «new» Body, rather than enhancing the «old» one.

Unlike most diegetic constructs in classical narrative films, the puppet in *Sesame Street* constantly directs its gaze toward the camera – and, in effect, the spectator – effectively inviting us into the mise-en-scene and making us subjects of their gaze. Since, as Christian Metz observes, «the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is now looking at» (*Imaginary Signifier* 49), a rapport results between the puppet and the spectator. In deference to Sartre's assertions concerning the gaze, Lacan states «it is not true that, when I am under the gaze, when I solicit a gaze, when I obtain it, I do not see it as a gaze» (84). Rather, this gaze of the puppet makes me aware of my role as spectator; I become aware of Brecht's «A-effect... a definite gest of showing» (*Brecht on Theater* 136). My subjectification – the Medusa effect – is the effect of the puppet's evil eye, or «the *fascinum*», which Lacan defines as: «that which has the effect of arresting movement and, literally, of killing life. At the moment the subject stops, suspending his gesture, he is mortified» (118).

It is the effect of the *fascinum* that the puppet directs toward the camera which rivets me to my seat and the screen; my mobility is denied and my identification with the puppet increases because I am mimicking the puppet on the screen. As a spectator, I am rendered as «Boneless» as the puppet. Just as the puppet cannot turn its head from the camera, I cannot turn my head from the screen or I will cease to be a spectator of the puppet's address, which appears to be performed as half of a dialogue that I am expected to complete.

The puppet's body appears as if from the future, unaging and ungrowing, reflecting the unavoidable technological body – the spectator enslaved to the cinematic apparatus. As Rickels

describes, «The body has been left behind in the wake of its media-technical range, which has escalated on automatic to the point that it can no longer be plugged back into any so-called sensorium or corpus» (76). Mobility is limited, freedom offered only through the eternally unblinking gaze – turning all attention to the screen, sacrificing the on/off switch. In «Problematizing the Spectator's Placement in Film», Malcom LeGrice warns that the spectator's motor actions are almost completely stopped. The image remains, typically in the center of the screen and the screen is contained within the spectator's visual field (57).

In the case of *Sesame Street*, this mimetic effect of doubling on-screen the position, gaze, and body of the puppet with that of the spectator results in identification with the puppet and with other spectators, doubtlessly tuned in. All maintain the same space – the same position. Pascal Bonitzer explains in «Les deux regards» that the look at the camera «is no longer addressed through the lens of the camera to a metteur-en-scene, to a master, but to the collectivity of spectators interpellated as a collectivity» (45-46). The «feeling of inclusion» that the spectator may feel is inseparable from the virtual paralysis or death of the body that occurs when «locking» the gaze to the puppet's; the screen becomes the puppeteer and the spectator its puppet.

On *Sesame Street*, even when Bert and Ernie address one another, their continuous gaze is directed towards the spectator. And, since, as Lacan states, «the gaze sees itself» (84), my own gaze, as spectator, is often focused toward the puppet's unblinking eyes, ignoring the body. My sole intent is to nullify its attempted subjectification of me. To deny the puppet's subjectifying gaze, I must return the gaze directly to its source.

I am reminded of the gaze – the ensnaring stare of a stripper, similarly unblinking, that effectively transforms the intended holder of the gaze (the wo/man who enters the bar for the sole purpose of «looking») into a voyeur who has become the object of a gaze – the erotic *fascinum*, unflinching in its return. My eyes look at/into his/hers. I am paralyzed and all my look is at his/her look; I become unaware of the body the gaze originates from. It is the same with the puppet: again, my attention is taken away from this new, erotic body of the Other.

The puppet serves as the penultimate example of a treatise of uninvolvedness with the Other that Theodor Adorno, in *Prisms*, describes in terms of the body «imprisoned in itself, the subject [which] holds its breath, as though it were not permitted to touch anything unlike itself» (262). The morphological entity of the puppet is a hybrid of the human and the technological, a body that we are called to identify with despite its «un-humanness». Rickels tells us that «on TV we watch ourselves trying to conform. Thus assimilation literally renders us "like", "similar", or indeed, the double we already are from the point of view of the one who controls us» (113). In effect, the spectator becomes the puppet s/he watches watch him/her with the evil eye, the *fascinum*, anamorphically transforming the spectator into a corpse whose body and voice are no longer his/her own.

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A Chinese Version of the Oedipus Complex: Freudian Elements in Cao Yu's *Leiyu*

WANG NING (*)

As I have argued on several occasions, Freudianism has indeed made strong influence on modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Almost all the major Chinese writers or critics, either for or against it, more or less reacted or responded to this influential trend of cultural and literary thought. And Freudianism has even produced some different versions in the history of 20th century Chinese culture and literature, partly due to its strong impact on the latter, and partly due to the Chinese writers' creative reception and active construction of it.¹ As one of the most important plays in modern Chinese drama, *Leiyu* (*Thunderstorm*) has in effect long been discussed and analyzed from such points of view as those of sociology, morality and aesthetics, so I do not intend to repeat what all the other critics and scholars have already done. What I would like to undertake in the present essay is to read and interpret the dramatic text from the perspective of psychoanalysis, so as to make some advances in the study of Cao Yu as well as his plays. And what is more, in a broader context of international academic dialogues between the East and the West, we could examine, to what extent Freud's theory is still effective in analyzing Oriental or Third World literary texts, and to what extent it needs qualification and even revision.

FREUDIANISM AND CAO YU

Before a psychoanalytic reading of *Thunderstorm*, I think it is necessary to trace the Freudian influence on Cao Yu, the author of the play. Of all the major modern Chinese playwrights, Cao Yu may be the one who was at least influenced both directly and indirectly by Freudianism and the one who has made remarkable originality in his playwriting.² It is true that Cao Yu himself has never

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¹ For a detailed description of the Freudian influence on modern Chinese literature, Cf. Wang Ning (1991), *The Reception of Freudianism in Modern Chinese Literature* (Part I), *China Information* 5(4): 58-71.

² To me, those Chinese playwrights who were also influenced by Freudianism were Hong Shen, Ding Xilin and Ouyang Yuqian, but Cao Yu has made the greatest advances as compared with them.

mentioned his being influenced by Freudianism, let alone his coming in contact with the latter.³ But we are still able to find some evidence from his personal experience as well as the time when he began his writing career: *Thunderstorm* was written in 1933, when Freudianism had been discussed in the fields of Chinese culture, psychology and literature for over ten years, and nearly all the major Chinese writers and critics expressed their interest in, or were curious about, it in varying degrees. As one of the talented young playwrights and one of the students majoring in Western languages and literatures at Qinghua University, the then best university in the Humanities and social sciences in China, Cao Yu certainly had a wide reading of Western academic works and literary writings and knew much about the then prevailing trends of social and cultural thought, such as Freudianism. What is more, Professor Zhu Guangqian, who had by that time just returned from Europe and who was then lecturing on the psychology of literature and art both at Peking University and Qinghua University,⁴ and his lectures are said to have attracted large audiences of students and young teachers. Thirdly, Cao Yu and Freud, although living in different countries and working in different fields, were both very fond of Greek tragedies, especially the tragic poet Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. And Freud even put forward his important concept of the Oedipus complex based on this tragedy and some other literary texts. So it is not surprising that the theme of the Oedipus complex appears in Cao Yu's plays here and there, especially in his masterpiece *Thunderstorm*. Nevertheless, we should observe this phenomenon from two angles: (1) the Greek tragedies might well give Cao Yu some direct revelations, stimulating his imagination to such an extent that he even intended to create a Chinese version of the Oedipus complex, for if we compare *Oedipus Rex* with *Thunderstorm*, we could immediately notice some similarities in these two texts in which an oedipal love is presented in different ways; (2) Freudianism might have probably provided him with a theoretical basis, for Cao Yu at least knew something about or heard about Freud's major ideas even if he did not necessarily read Freud's works in the original. In addition, it is known to all that Cao Yu, as a playwright, has always been interested in Eugene O'Neill's plays and even made many remarks on this great American playwright he has ever admired. In 1957, he put that O'Neill's plays really «have an intense drama. I quite appreciate his early plays, because they are very realistic».⁵ In 1982, he commented again:

The American playwright Eugene O'Neill was one of the playwrights who have influenced me greatly. *Beyond the Horizon*, one of his earliest plays, is my favourite. I admire this playwright in these respects: (1) he unremittingly sought and created new dramatic techniques so as to represent the characters' states of mind vividly; (2) his early plays show his understanding of the sailors from the lower stratum, coming really from life itself.⁶

From Cao Yu's plays, we could easily find a great deal of evidence which shows his being influenced or inspired by O'Neill, especially in the plot and techniques of his *Yuanye* (*Champaign*), there are quite a few similarities with those in O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*. Some Chinese critics even accuse Cao of conscientiously imitating the latter at the expense of his own originality.⁷ It is

³ I have read nearly all the notes and essays by Cao Yu, in an attempt to find some evidence of his being influenced by Freudianism, but to my disappointment, I failed to find any obvious evidence.

⁴ Zhu Guangqian was one of the first Chinese scholars to introduce Freud's theory in China. As for his relationship with Freudianism, Cf. Wang Ning (1992), Zhu Guangqian and Freud, *Shen Cheng xinlixue yu wenxue piping* (*Depth Psychology and Literary Criticism*), Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Press, pp. 134-155.

⁵ See Cao Yu tongzhi tan juzuo (Comrade Cao Yu on Playwriting), *Wenyibao* (*Literature and Art Gazette*), 1957: 2.

⁶ See He juzuojia men tan dushu he xiezuo (On Reading and Writing with Some Playwrights), *Juben* (*Plays*), 1982: 10.

⁷ As for such accusations, Cao Yu once said angrily at the Central Institute of Theatre denying his deliberate imitation of O'Neill's plays.

therefore quite certain that Cao Yu was influenced or even inspired by Freudianism through the intermediary of O'Neill as well.

If we are assured that Cao Yu was indeed influenced by some of Freud's ideas according to the above mentioned investigations, we might be asked where the signs lie, or in what way these Freudian elements are represented in his plays. As for this, I would like to take his best play *Thunderstorm* for a typical example, or as a rare text in modern Chinese drama. Of course I will make a close reading first and a tentative interpretation of it from the perspective of traditional Freudian psychoanalysis. For I am sure that although many critics and scholars both at home and abroad have studied or criticized this play, yet few of them have mentioned its relationship with Freudianism, nor have they pointed out the Freudian elements in it. But to me, it is actually a typical Chinese version of the Oedipus complex if it could also be regarded as something else from other perspectives.

HATRED FOR FATHER AND LOVE FOR MOTHER: ONE MANIFESTATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Illuminated by Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Freud once theorized this story and invented the concept of the Oedipus complex in his great work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Its opposite is the Electra complex. For years, the Oedipus complex has long been a theme in literary creation as well as an approach for psychoanalytic critics to analyze literary texts. To my mind, *Thunderstorm* is one of the few texts in this respect, either in terms of a literary theme or of a critical approach, in the history of modern Chinese literature.

The play describes two antagonistic but somewhat related families. They do not merely have certain living and economic connections, but some complicated blood relationship. Such a complicated relationship between these two families foreshows the later oedipal love and conflict, which obviously finds embodiment in the following two aspects. Firstly, it is embodied in the relationship between parents and sons. And this is dramatized on three specific levels.

1. The oedipal relationship between Zhou Ping and Fan Yi. It is the longest and most complicated thread manifesting the Oedipus complex in the whole play. According to Lu Gui, Sifeng's father, such an oedipal relationship was established even before Act I starts. At that time, Sifeng had not come to the house. This large mansion was haunted every now and then at night. Obviously, Lu Gui offers some of its secret reasons: to Fan Yi, there was no rival suitor since Sifeng, who is later loved by Zhou Ping and has become her rival, was not in that mansion; Zhou Puyuan was engaged in his business in the mine, having no leisure to caress her or satisfy her sexual desire, which made her unable to endure such a repression; since her second son was too young to satisfy her oedipal desire, Fan Yi could not coquet with him; and Lu Gui, who was born of a poor family, was by no means qualified to make love with her; so the only candidate for her is none other than his step son Zhou Ping, who was not her real son although he should call her «mother». In those pre-1949 years, such a phenomenon as an old husband had a young wife was by no means a wonder if the man had enough money or was powerful enough. Zhou Ping, only several years younger than his step mother, now has a burning desire. And in this large and quiet house, no one would stand in the way if both of them are willing to make love. So the story of haunting takes place in a mysterious way.

If we stop on this level of apparent analysis, it would be of surface value. To my mind, the more important factor to make them have the oedipal love and conflict should include their personal character as well.

First of all, let us look into Zhou Ping's character. This 29-year-old young man, pale and weak but somewhat handsome, «always seems to regret his mistakes, but whenever a new impulse

comes, he is intoxicated with the tide-like passion and desire».⁸ He has never known who his real mother is since childhood, which undoubtedly makes him suffer all the time. He only hears about the story that his mother «died long, long ago». Zhou Puyuan, his father, always looking austere and ruthless, almost has no love for him, and Zhou Ping is awed by his solemn appearance and cold words. Thus such passion and desire in his childhood repressed deep in his unconscious form an oedipus complex. When he grows up and has his own sexual desire, he is submitted to Fan Yi's flirtation, which has satisfied his unconscious desire in his childhood. He projects his long repressed libido on Fan Yi, his sexual object. Obviously, on the one hand, Zhou Ping's oedipus complex finds embodiment in his shady relations with Fan Yi. And on the other hand, it reveals his discontent with and even envy of his father. Such an attitude as his towards his father is not represented as a face-to-face struggle against him, but as another form: identifying himself with a father and having adultery with his step-mother. It is undoubtedly a metamorphic manifestation of killing father and marrying mother which is characterized by Freud's Oedipus complex. For in Zhou Ping, there always exists a drastic conflict between two forces: the id (representing libido) and the ego (and some of the superego elements representing the intellect and social morality and conscience). When the id is in the dominant position, he has a sexual desire for his step-mother and commits the «unpardonable sin»; whereas the «guilt complex» will be in the dominant position when the other force overwhelms the id. Therefore, he later on tries every means to elude his abnormal contact with Fan Yi so as to realize the sublimation of his ego by means of having his normal love for Sifeng.

Then comes Fan Yi's character. «Pale and pretty in appearance», she has some irrepressible passion and force in her. She can do whatever she wants to in order to satisfy her burning desire. From Cao Yu's depiction of her, we can see, this is a woman of strong, complicated and subtle character. In her are at least three layers of personality: wife, which she has essentially lost since she married Zhou Puyuan and gave birth to their first child; mother, which is manifest completely only before Zhou Chong, her own son; and paramour, which shows itself before Zhou Ping. Even if in Zhou Ping's eyes, such three identities show themselves separately and alternately. In contrast with the original meaning of Freud's ideas of libido and the Oedipus complex, the oedipal theme in *Thunderstorm* is somewhat a metamorphic manifestation. It finds embodiment in the shady relations between Zhou Ping and Fan Yi. When Zhou Ping is a child, Fan Yi acts as a mother, but she does not give him maternal love, because she has her own son and has maternal love for him. This makes Zhou Ping unable, like other boys, to regard her as his mother and love her as he loves his own mother. Since he is unable to release his oedipus complex repressed deep in his unconscious, his character is thus twisted. When he has become a young man, he would certainly have overcome his oedipus complex and fall in love with his girl friend like other young men, but Fan Yi tries to coquet with him. So finally, he has satisfied his unconscious desire in his childhood by projecting his first love on his step-mother. Then he has actually completed his task of revenging himself on his father by making love with his mother (Fan Yi).

2. The relationship between Lu Dahai and Lu Siping. Although they are real mother and son, we cannot see any signs of the oedipal relations between them throughout the play. If we reconsider Lu Dahai's relations with his mother by observing the hostile relationship between Lu Dahai and Lu Gui and that between Lu Dahai and Zhou Puyuan, we will be illuminated to some extent. It is true that Lu Dahai is Lu Gui's step-son. But Lu Gui always loves ease and hates work and even flatters the rich and looks down upon the poor. He is regarded as a running dog of his master, Zhou Puyuan. All this serves as the reason why Lu Dahai has a contempt for him. In his eyes, there is no

⁸ Quotations from *Thunderstorm* all come from *Cao Yu juzuo xuan (Selected Plays of Cao Yu)*, Beijing: People's Press of Literature, 1961. The English translations are mine. For the sake of limited space, I will omit such detailed notes.

such father as Lu Gui in the world. But what is more, when Lu Gui and Lu Siping can hardly dissuade Sifeng from cutting off her love affair with Zhou Ping, Lu Dahai, even like a father, intervenes in this matter. When he forces Lu Gui to hand in the money given by Zhou Puyuan, he even uses a pistol to threaten him. At that time, Lu Gui is really threatened to death, acting just like a son rather than a father. Lu Dahai again identifies himself with a father here. Such a hostile attitude towards his step-father has brought into relief his deep love for his mother. So he often tries to protect his mother by following his (ideal) father's suit, which is probably a disguised form of the Oedipus complex. Also, such a hostile attitude (or even more) is directed towards Zhou Puyuan, his real father. But Lu Dahai does not know the fact that he is the son of Zhou Puyuan. Nor does the latter know it. When he finds his mother probably bullied in Zhou's mansion, he, reckless of the consequences, comes and tries to bring her under his protection. All this shows his close relations with his mother. He acts not merely as her son but also as her protector (ideal husband).

3. The relationship between Lu Siping and Zhou Ping. This is the very most tenuous and most repressed relationship between mother and son throughout the play, for both sides are reluctant to recognize this fact. Finally, when Zhou Puyuan tells Zhou Ping, «She is your mother, the one who is said to have died thirty years ago», he even persists in denying: «No, she is not, not my mother!» He is not forced to call her «mother» until he becomes sober-minded. Now she is extremely bitter and nearly desperate: not simply because he has reluctantly recognized her – a woman of such a lower class origin as his mother, but because his love affair with Sifeng is becoming impossible, which is most fatal to him and, which will deal a heavy blow at him. But it is unknown to him until now. This is wherein his tragedy lies. The thing that distinguishes him from Siping is that she knows, but what she wants to do to this fact is submitted to the unconscious. On the one hand, she does not want to see her own children commit the incestuous sin, and even tries in one way or another to bar this affair. But on the other hand, when it becomes a fact, she does not want to accept it. To her, it is not all the others who should be responsible for that, but she herself who «committed that sin» long ago. So it serves her right! Similarly, she does not want to see with her own eyes Lu Dahai and Zhou Ping fight each other, because they are both her sons. When she sees Zhou Ping slap Lu Dahai in the face, she is very bitter and angry. Her attitude toward Zhou Ping is somewhat ambiguous: she hates him for his degenerating to such a degree that he even beats his own brother (Lu Dahai); but when Lu intends to kill him, Siping spares no effort to protect Zhou Ping out of pity for him. She has saved his life, thus having realized her «love and concern» in her unconscious for Zhou Ping.

PUNISHMENT FOR INCEST: THE OTHER MANIFESTATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Over two thousand years ago, in Sophocles' play, Oedipus Rex killed his father by chance and married his mother before he had realized it, or completely by chance as well, but even so it was not permitted to the then moral standard. Therefore he could not but resign from the throne and punish himself for his serious crime. In modern times, should Zhou Ping and Fan Yi also be punished for their abnormal love affair? Indeed, such an incestuous act should have been cast away along with the progress of human civilization. It will not be accepted even if it appears in a literary work. So Cao Yu made some modifications and disguise: setting the relationship between Zhou Ping and Fan Yi as that between step son and step mother, without a striking difference in age. Since they have no blood relations, their affair cannot be regarded as a typical incestuous act and they should not necessarily be punished severely. The shady relationship between Zhou Ping and Fan Yi is that of a disguised oedipal love, so they are punished spiritually and morally rather than physically.

If the playwright has just stepped his work at this point, then he could not have made *Thunderstorm* an oedipal tragedy and my analysis would have ended here. But what should be called attention is that Cao Yu makes some modifications and embodies the blood incest in the love affair

between Zhou Ping and Sifeng. In this way, Cao Yu succeeds in creating a complete oedipal tragedy in the Chinese way. In terms of difference in age, the incestuous act between brother and sister seems to be more convincing and therefore their tragic lot of being severely punished is more reasonable. The end of the play has actually proved this. If we approach the origin and development of the incest between Zhou Ping and Sifeng along the thread of the Oedipus complex, we may find that it is the other important thread through which the other manifestation of the Oedipus complex is represented. It has its beginning, development, twists and turns and ending, just like a kind of ritual in the primitive age.

In his comparative study of *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*, Jacques Lacan put forward an idea which is quite illuminative to us: «As I have said, the thing that distinguishes Hamlet from Oedipus is that Hamlet knows»,⁹ whereas «in Oedipus, the hero, not knowing what he's doing, is in some way guided by fate».¹⁰ To him, these two heroes have different fates: Hamlet dies a tragic hero, but Oedipus exiles himself abroad, thus severely punishing him. Then how does Cao Yu treat his incestuous characters? I think that he draws upon both and embodies their characteristic features in the two or three characters: Sifeng, innocent and naive, is killed by thunder and lightning together with his suitor Zhou Chong; Zhou Ping, younger and full of romantic fantasy and innocence, cannot but satisfy his desire for Sifeng in the Kingdom of Heaven, because he could not marry her in his lifetime on this earth. In contrast, Zhou Ping, although «not knowing», is somewhat more sophisticated and more experienced, so his sin is more serious. As soon as he becomes interested in Sifeng, he makes much effort to project his burning sexual desire repressed deep in his unconscious on her. Obviously, he is a young master and Sifeng a servant girl. Such a difference in class origin bars their love and marriage. Secondly, both of their parents and brothers are opposed to their love and try to stand in the way. As a result, it cannot be made open to the public, which inevitably anticipates the tragic ending. And thirdly, the intervention of Zhou Chong, «the third person», in this abnormal love affair, complicates their secret relationship all the more. On considering all the matters above, especially on realizing that his incest with Sifeng has become a fact, Zhou Ping cannot but reveal it. But unfortunately, his successive faults have already driven him to despair before he could realize it. Having reluctantly called Siping «mother» at last, he then cries all of a sudden: «You should not have born me!» Now, «he is pale and calm, going right into the study». Then comes a sound of pistol. He punishes himself by committing suicide, thereby realizing his impossible instinctive desire in his unconscious only.

Here I will not spend much space discussing whether or not the tragic ending of these three characters are adequately dealt with. From the fact that Zhou Ping and Sifeng are severely punished, we have noticed that the Oedipus complex in modern society in literary works is not so developed along with the progress of human civilization and, with the gradual restriction of social morality and conscience. Although this phenomenon appears every now and then, it has already been disguised in varying degrees and, with «not knowing» as its start and «misunderstanding» as its juncture of development, and finally it vanishes with the hero and heroine punished. *Thunderstorm* can be said to have fulfilled an adventure in parallel with the classical tragedies of the oedipal fate and character in the form of a modern tragedy. So on the whole, it is quite successful, for it at least has offered a modern «text» for the psychoanalytic critics to read and interpret. Its critical value knows no bounds. What I have done in this essay is just an attempt to apply a Western critical theory to the reading and interpretation of a non-Western literary text.

⁹ Cf. Jacques Lacan (1977), *Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet*, in *Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Shoshana Felman, Ed.), p. 19, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE AUTHORIAL UNCONSCIOUS, OR THE TEXTUAL UNCONSCIOUS?

Obviously, what I have done in the previous parts of the essay basically follows the practice of traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, but if I were invited to analyze the author's creative motivation, I would have difficulty going on. What are the reasons for that? In my opinion, the most important one is no doubt the theoretical dilemma I would be confronted with: investigating the Oedipus complex in the text in accordance with Freud's doctrine, I would not but adopt a psychoanalytic approach to the author himself, which is not my original purpose. What is more, taking into consideration the biographical data of Cao Yu, we could hardly find anything associated with the Oedipus complex. Secondly, it is difficult to explore the unconscious motivation of the author. The unconscious, according to Freud, is a unique domain of man's psyche, which has its own instinctive drive, its particular manifestation and its psychic mechanism.¹¹ In a word, the unconscious is like a fathomless and chaotic well with all the evil ideas or desires hidden in it. So to explore the unconscious psyche is just like making a mental adventure in a dark kingdom. Evidently, in view of the design of *Thunderstorm* as well as the oedipal love, incest and conflict, the authorial unconscious does function in varying degrees. So it is of certain relevance to make an investigation into it. But just as Elizabeth Wright describes, traditional Freudian psychoanalysis in dealing with a literary work usually centers on analyzing man's psyche, whether it is the author's, a character's, a reader's or these people's collective psyche.¹² If we explore the author's unconscious just in this way, we would certainly be puzzled. But fortunately, we have the Lacanian neo-psychoanalytic approach, which is characterized by re-interpreting traditional Freudian psychoanalysis, and which aims at centering on the analysis of the text as the psyche. This kind of analysis is based on the doctrine that the unconscious is structured like the language.¹³ Thus I would rather choose to explore the textual unconscious as my starting point.

But how should I describe the unconscious structure of *Thunderstorm*? It is what I would like to do before concluding this essay. According to my previous analysis, we may well affirm that the play is actually a new manifestation of the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* in a civilized modern society. Just as we reach the conclusion in examining James Joyce's *Ulysses*: it is a parallel and metamorphic version of the Homeric epic *Odyssey* in modern society. It is true that all the savage and evil things should inevitably be got rid of with the progress of history since human society has already evolved onto such a stage. But many of the evil things have existed in man's collective unconsciousness, more or less manipulating man's speech and behaviour. No matter how you intend to escape this shadow, you will always fail, for it is just like a hidden God which could never be seen but which is present everywhere. Similarly, literature is continuously developing, and the Homeric epics have long been a canon which can never be surpassed in the contemporary era. So writers will no longer describe modern men's fate, character, his sense of the sublime, elegance, grandeur and death, etc. in the form of classical tragedy. They could only try to present modern men's tragedy in a developed or evolved form. This idea has indeed come into writers' consciousness or unconsciousness, and then, is embodied in the textual unconscious, which not only manipulates writers' creative motivation but also functions in the textual structure itself. Therefore, when we do some comparative studies between Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, we could not but find so many parallels and similarities hidden deep in the two texts. Obviously, it is the textual unconscious rather than the authorial unconscious that we should deal with in our reading and interpreting of a literary text.

¹¹ Cf. Sigmund Freud: *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, London 1922, 178.

¹² Cf. Elizabeth Wright (1984), *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice*, New York and London: Routledge, p. 114.

¹³ Ibid.

Searching His Soul: John Ford et la Mort de l'Objet Transitionnel

FABIO TRONCARELLI (*)

La psychanalyse se méfie du western. Se méfie du soleil, du bruit, des hommes qui agissent sans réfléchir, de cet univers sans rêves.

Le temps vient franchir les Colonnes d'Hercule, de défier le grand Océan mystérieux de l'*acting out* et du refoulement.

Le *cowboy* ne rêve pas, c'est vrai. Mais toute sa vie c'est un rêve ou un cauchemar: toute sa vie c'est un espèce d'hallucination dans laquelle, pour citer Baudelaire, les spectres nous raccrochent en plein jour.

Je veux parler du chef-d'oeuvre de John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956).

Commençons par la fin. On voit John Wayne avec une main sur son bras, qui tourne le dos et s'en va dans le desert. La main sur le bras: un geste apparemment casuel. Il faut déchiffrer ce qui se cache en dessous de l'insignifiante casualité de l'extérieur, comme dans les rêves. Ce geste a une grande valeur symbolique. C'était, en effet, un geste typique d'un grand ami de Ford, Harry Carey, qui avait été presque un père pour le jeune irlandais au debut de sa carrière.¹

La légende veut que ce soit un geste de paix que Carey avait appris d'un grand chef indien: même si cela est faux, comme souvent les anecdotes sur les artistes, le geste avait sans doute une signification de réconciliation, du point de vue de Ford. Le héros du film fait le même geste de l'ami du metteur en scène pour souligner que l'ami est encore là, encore vivant. Ford avait été lui-même l'inspirateur de Wayne a cet égard: en plus, la scène à été tournée dans la présence de la veuve et du fils de Carey, qui jouaient dans le même film. Tout le monde fut frappé: et tous pleurerent.

The Searchers termine de la même façon que *The long gray line*, tourné l'année precedente: les morts, les êtres les plus aimés, reviennent à la fin pour être célébrés avec nostalgie.

Mais le début du film, qui ressemble à sa fin, signifie la même chose: l'héros revient à la maison de son frère, à sa famille, après s'être évanoui pendant des années, et son apparition c'est le retour d'un revenant, d'un espèce de fantôme bienveillant. A la fin il s'en va, comme faisait Carey dans *Straight Shooting*: il retourne dans le monde des ombres, les *Lares* paternelles qui veillent sur les hommes.

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¹ T. Gallagher (1986), *John Ford. The Man and his Films*, Berkley-Los Angeles-London, pp.17-25.

Ford souligne l'identité entre le début et la fin du film, choisissant le même cadrage: une porte ouverte du dedans. C'est à l'intérieur de ce cadrage «naturel» que nous voyons l'ombre du père perdu, John Wayne *alias* Harry Carey.

Quel est la signification de ce cadrage? Et de l'apparition-disparition du revenant bienveillant? A premier coup tout cela fait penser à un espèce de magie pour oublier la perte et la mort: l'ami, le Bon Père, est toujours là; il vient, il va, il revient, il est à côté de nous comme l'Ange Gardien.

D'où vient cet étrange mécanisme de défense?

A mon avis le cadrage est une métonymie de l'écran du cinéma: comme dans la salle de projection nous voyons un cadre noir sur l'écran à l'intérieur duquel il y a de la lumière et des hommes qui sont en réalité des ombres. Mais pourquoi dans la magie du cinéma peut-on se réaliser la magie de la matérialisation du Bon Père dont nous avons parlé? Pour le comprendre il faut rappeler un épisode très important dans la vie de Ford.² Dans sa jeunesse il était au cinéma avec sa mère: il furent frappés par l'apparition presque magique sur l'écran de Frank, le frère de Ford. Frank s'était échappé de la maison paternelle et était disparu pendant dix ans. La fuite avait été une blessure pour tous. Et maintenant, le voilà devenu une star d'Hollywood, sur l'écran d'un cinéma d'une ville de province!

Le choc fut énorme. Frank fut rejoint par les lettres de son père et retourna à Portland. Il avait quitté la ville comme un traître. Il n'était plus le Fils Prodigue. Il triomphait sur le Père Méchant. En effet ce triomphe maniaque ne pouvait pas compenser les angoisses éprouvées par la famille, dont le jeune Ford avait été témoin; ni le sentiment de culpabilité caché sous la masque de l'apothéose. Frank avait abandonné sa femme et son fils. Et sa respectabilité.

De toute façon, la masque du triomphe était suffisamment séduisant pour étouffer les remords. John subit la fascination de son frère et Frank prit le jeune sous sa protection. Il devint une espèce de père, le Bon Père, compensant la méchanceté du Père réel. John, qui s'appellait Feeney, alla à Hollywood et prit le nom artistique de son frère. Frank lui donna la chance de diriger son premier film. Après, Harry Carey arrive, et il devient le second Bon Père, un alter ego de Frank.

Il permit à John de devenir un véritable metteur en scène, son metteur en scène particulier. Le couple Ford-Carey produisit 25 film avant de se dissoudre. Ford était un homme de cinéma, grâce à ses deux pères putatifs.

L'apparition de Wayne au début de *The Searchers* et sa présence dans le film correspond donc au rôle représenté par les deux pères putatifs de Ford. Ethan revient à la maison de son frère, où il joue le rôle de l'Oncle-Bon Père. L'apparition de Wayne dans le cadre «naturel» de la porte ouverte c'est une véritable vision, presque une hallucination. Les sentiments de tous les composants de la famille sont de stupeur, mêlée à une étrange félicité.

Ethan c'est un homme plein de contradictions. Il a lutté avec les sudistes et après avec Maximilien au Mexique. Toujours avec ceux qui perdent. Il est sarcastique et amer, orgueilleux et frustré. Toutefois, lorsqu'il est dans la maison, il sourit. Il prend la plus petite, Debbie, et la soulève en haut, entre ses bras.

Arrêtons nous sur ce geste. Nous savons que pendant le tournage du film Ford lisait *La chute de l'Empire romain* de Gibbon.³ Il pensait aux romains en faisant un film de cow boys et d'indiens: il pensait à la destruction de la civilisation en faisant un film sur la destruction d'une famille et sur la lutte entre «sauvages» et «civilisés», dans laquelle on peut difficilement dire qui sont les «sauvages» et qui sont les «civilisés».

Ford connaissait très bien l'histoire des peuples et lisait toujours des livres d'histoire. Il ne pouvait pas ignorer que pour les romains soulever un enfant c'était un geste geste symbolique très important. C'est ainsi que le père reconnaissait publiquement son fils après l'accouchement. En soulevant en haut l'enfant, il acceptait de le 'soulever' de toutes les difficultés de la vie et l'invitait

² T. Gallagher, *John Ford* cit., pp. 6-19.

³ F. Troncarelli (1993), *Le maschere della malinconia. John Ford tra Shakespeare e Hollywood*, Basi, pp. 87-88.

à se sentir «soulevé». Dans *Cleopatra* de Joseph Mankiewicz, les amis de César cherchent de lui empêcher de soulever le fils qu'il a eu de Cléopâtre, en lui rappelant la loi des romains à cet égard. Hollywood, comme les romains, savait ce que signifie 'soulever' un enfant dans l'antiquité. Bien sur, dans le Texas de 1868 le geste n'a plus la même valeur: mais il a la même valeur dans l'inconscient hors du temps de Ford. Debbie éprouve la même euphorie qu'une petite fille romaine, qu'un petit irlandais comme Ford, que tous les enfants dans le bras de quelqu'un qui les aime. Être sans poids... Et aussi être bien tenu entre le bras, le *holding* dont Winnicott a souligné l'importance. La vie est légère. Ainsi c'est plus facile de demander un cadeau. Et Debbie veut un cadeau. Voilà, Ethan lui donne un objet très particulier: la croix qu'il a gagné pendant la guerre. Le symbole de la haine et de la force devient un collier pour les enfant, un lien d'amour qui nous entoure comme les bras qui nous entouraient lorsque nous étions en là-haut, suspendus dans l'air comme des oiseaux.

Ethan, le Bon Père, joue avec les enfants et lui permet de jouer. Il faut rapeller que dans le roman d'Alan LeMay d'où vient le film de Ford, Ethan n'a pas ce caractère. Il s'appelle Amos, tandis que Ethan c'est le père perdu du jeune Marty, dont nous parlerons après. Le choix de ce nom est en syntonie avec le caractère du personnage: le sarcastique et amer Ethan du film a aussi un côté qui rappelle la générosité de Frank Ford et de Harry Carey. Soudain surgissent des difficultés pour Ethan, des difficultés qui mettent en question son rôle de Bon Père. Marty fait son apparition. C'est un garçon qu'Ethan a sauvé: les indiens avaient tué ses parents. À première vue ça semblerait souligner le rôle paternel d'Ethan.

Au contraire, l'homme réagit brusquement à la venue de Marty et repousse le jeune qui lui montre le l'affection et de la gratitude. Nous ne comprenons pas pourquoi, même si nous apercevons que le refus est lié à l'origine «bâtarde» du garçon, qui est 1/8 indien, comme il dit. En effet Ethan se montre ouvertement raciste pendant le film et cela semblerait expliquer son hostilité à l'égard de Marty. Mais Ford nous suggère qu'il y a bien autre chose: Marty, assis ou debout, est représenté comme Ethan. Il apparaît à travers la porte comme Ethan; il s'assoit, hors de la porte, loin des autres, comme Ethan.

L'homme voit évidemment dans le garçon un *alter ego*, qui montre ouvertement ce qu'il essaye de cacher: il est un «bâtard» et vit aux marges de la communauté familiale. C'est bien cela que le Bon Père se refuse d'admettre. Il est poussé par une motivation secrète: il a été amoureux de la femme de son frère et probablement cet amour est encore vivant.

Dans le roman de LeMay cela est déclaré ouvertement; dans le film tout est suggéré avec discrétion: mais Ford a déclaré dans un interview qu'il ne faut pas beaucoup d'intelligence pour comprendre ce point.⁴

Du reste, comme j'ai montré dans un autre occasion⁵, Ford s'est inspiré du *Périclès prince de Tyre* de Shakespeare pour ce film. Périclès est le témoin d'un inceste et est contraint à s'éloigner à cause de ça. Ethan, comme Périclès, a été contraint à s'éloigner à cause de son amour presque incestueux, un amour partagé, peut-on le deviner aisément. L'homme est donc réactif contre tout ce qui lui rappelle son conflit, surtout contre le «fruit du péché», le «bâtard», le jeune *alter ego* Marty, qui pourrait être le fils né de son amour défendu. Et voilà, tout éclate! Comme dans un rêve, un cauchemar, les forces du Mal, évoqués indirectement à travers Maty et son histoire, surgissent devant nous. Les indiens, pareils à des Erinnes, s'acharnent contre la famille d'Ethan, en profitant de son absence. Il détruisent tout et tuent tous, à l'exception de Debbie et de sa soeur. Elles sont enlevées pour satisfaire le sadisme des indiens: Debbie sera transformée en indienne; l'autre sera violée et tuée. Quand Ethan et Warty reviennent à la maison il n'y a que mort et ruines.

Encore une fois il faut faire attention.

Ethan nous apparaît à nouveau encadré à travers la porte de la maison. Mais quelle différence avec le début du film! Dans la maison les restes des morts sont éparpillés, coupés en pièces (cela

⁴ P. Bogdanovich (1990), *Il cinema secondo John Ford*, Parma, p. 90.

⁵ F. Troncarelli, *Le maschere* cit., pp. 87-91.

nous est dit dans le roman). La maison est brûlée et seulement des ruines restent debout, comme les ruines de Rome dévastée par les barbares. Nous ne pouvons plus distinguer le visage d'Ethan à travers la fumée. Ethan a perdu son visage, L'homme a perdu son identité. Il ne peut plus être le Bon Père, ni l'oncle, ni le frère. Il est l'homme sans visage. Marty, lui aussi, a perdu tout, mais il garde encore son visage plein des larmes. Mais Ethan lui donne un coup de poing, pour l'empêcher de voir l'horreur pétrifiant. Ainsi Marty s'écroule et son visage aussi disparaît, dans la boue.

Il faut observer que cette séquence rappelle avec force les images de destruction filmées par Ford dans la bataille de Midway, qu'on voit dans le documentaire *The battle of Midway* et certaines images du film *They were expendable*. Ford a montré dans *The Searchers* la même violence aveugle de la guerre moderne. Tout cela a une signification profonde. Ford a toujours conçu la guerre comme une tragédie qui réduit l'homme à un robot. Ce procès de «dépériorisation» a été vécu «personnellement» par le cinéaste: pendant la bataille de Midway il a été sérieusement blessé, mais il n'a pas senti la douleur et a continué à filmer les avions japonais qui tiraient sur lui.

Donc, comme dans les guerres modernes qu'il connaît très bien, les victimes de la violence dans *The Searchers* subissent un choc et peuvent être privées de leur humanité. Ethan, après le choc, ne sera plus lui-même: il devient un être sauvage, parfois un espèce de robot, parfois un espèce de fou. Il répète machinalement des gestes et une phrase, morne et sombre, qui évoque la mort («*It'll be that day: il viendra le jour de la fin...*»). Il se réjouit sadiquement de tirer sur les morts où sur les indiens blessés: et, presque fou comme Ajax s'acharnant sur le trébris, il tue sauvagement des bisons pour empêcher aux indiens de chasser et de se nourrir. Surtout il semble un automate, lorsqu'il parle de sa nièce qui a sur vécu: nous découvrirons qu'il veut la tuer.

La violence du choc n'épargne pas les autres, comme Marty ou Brad Jorgensen: mais ils ont des réactions moins paranoïaques qu'Ethan, même s'ils éprouvent une douleur terrible. Pourquoi?

En effet il faut souligner que le personnage d'Ethan devient le véritable protagoniste du film à partir de la violence subie. Ford nous montre sa transformation et nous pousse à nous occuper de cet homme bizarre. Quel est la signification de tout cela? Et surtout qu'est le problème d'Ethan?

Nous avons connu un homme qui voudrait être «Bon», un «Bon Père», mais qui se méfie de la partie «obscur» de soi, représenté par Marty.

Il a peur d'admettre l'existence des sentiments «incestueux» à l'égard de sa belle soeur. On peut voir dans ce conflit un principe de «neurose» et dire que le héros du film a un conflit névrotique, à cause d'un complexe d'Oedipe pas résolu. Tout cela est certainement vrai, comme il est vrai que les indiens déclenchent les pulsions réprimées d'Ethan: il viole la belle soeur secrètement aimé par l'homme, comme il violeront les nièces (même Debbie, épousée au chef indien est violée avec un «viol légalisé»). La vengeance d'Ethan peut être conçue dans cette perspective, comme une rétorsion contre le Mauvais Père, qui est incestueux et a contraint l'objet des désirs oedipiques et son équivalent (la petite Debbie) à se soumettre à ses impulsions sexuelles.

Cette thèse est sans doute soutenable et sans doute encore plus croyable si on considère que le Chef indien, comme a été souligné par beaucoup des critiques⁶, est représenté par Ford comme un «double» d'Ethan, la matérialisation hallucinatoire de ses désirs refoulés.

Le conflit intérieur d'Ethan a donc une racine oedipienne et un caractère névrotique. Mais cela peut expliquer tout? A mon avis la peur de castration et l'angoisse pour les sentiments incestueux. La vengeance oedipienne et la lutte contre les pulsions étouffées sont seulement une partie du drame que nous voyons. La «dépériorisation» du héros; sa folie, prête à jaillir tout à coup; le déclenchement d'une pulsion de mort qui ne connaît ni remords ni peine; l'angoisse face à la matérialisation du «double» et la vision de soi-même hors de soi-même, comme dans un cauchemar, sont des manifestations psychotiques à peine cachées sur la surface du personnage névrosé.

⁶ T. Gallagher, *John Ford* cit., pp. 332-335.

Cette dimension de folie est du reste la même de beaucoup d'autres personnages, qui sont toujours, comme Ethan, à la limite entre santé et folie. Le Chef indien, n'est-il à son tour un espèce de fou, qui pense seulement à se venger et à détruire, tuer, humilier les autres: à les réduire à des «scalps», des «fetiches», des automates, comme la jeune Debbie contrainte à obéir comme un robot à son maître?

Et la pauvre Debbie, devenue indienne, n'est-elle sur la voie de la folie, comme les autres femmes blanches qu'on voit à moitié du film, des femmes qu'on perd leur identité et crient, hurlent, pleurent, rient, ouvertement en proie à la folie? Debbie est figée à son traumatisme et presque dépersonnalisée, en proie à la honte d'être devenue la femme d'un indien: quand Marty lui dit de s'en fuir elle répond presque machinalement que désormais sa famille c'est les indiens. L'isolement, l'annulation rétroactive ont vidé la jeune fille.

Même Laurie, la fiancée de Marty, dit presque machinalement qu'il ne faut pas sauver Debbie, car elle est désormais perdue et sera tué par Ethan avec raison.

En effet, le fruit du sadisme est que les hommes sont anéantis et perdent leur sentiments. Il deviennent pseudo-humains. Le mieux qu'ils peuvent faire c'est de persécuter les persécutés: la réaction paranoïde c'est la défense contre l'écroulement psychotique.

Les oscillations entre la réaction paranoïde et ce qui évoquerait un *black out* artistique, chez Ethan, révèlent donc qu'il y a quelque chose de plus profond que sa névrose. On peut dire qu'Ethan est dans une condition *borderline*: l'organisation névrotique de sa vie masque une fragilité personnelle d'ordre psychotique, dramatiquement visible lorsque la réalité devient dure, horrible.

Voilà le sens le plus profond du perpétuel vagabondage d'Ethan, errant entre les rochers de la Monument Valley, en proie à un tourment furieux, implacable, inapaisable que nous serre le cœur. Ce paysage âpre, brisé, ce désert raboteux dans lequel les pics surgissent imprévus et séparés les uns des autres avec une méticuleuse rigueur, c'est l'image de l'âme morcelée de l'homme qui vit «à la limite» de la condition humaine.

Dans cet espace, comme il a été dit: «Il se trouve à errer sans arrêt, d'un arbri à un autre, parti très loin d'ici pour échapper à son mauvais objet l'espoir de quelque terre promise, pour être, à la fin, rejoint par les noirs messagers du mauvais objet, qui le reporteront par force à son nid honteux.»⁷

D'un point de vue psychanalytique il est très intéressant que Ford, sans connaître beaucoup de la psychanalyse, ait identifié instinctivement la «cause» du drame de la condition *borderline*, en soulignant que certains des personnages du film ont perdu l'objet transitionnel, une perte qu'on peut voir directement, dans certains cas, tandis que, dans d'autres, il faut la soupçonner.

Ethan donne à Debbie une croix de guerre, qui devient un collier; mais cela sera volé par le Chef des indiens et deviendra un fétiche, un espèce de «scalp», un trophée. Debbie perd aussi sa poupée, lorsqu'elle est enlevée par les indiens. Marty, semble n'avoir jamais connu le temps du jeu: pendant tout le film il cherche de se couvrir avec des couvertures qui sont toujours insuffisantes ou d'acheter une «bonne couverture» sans y réussir.

Cela est bien significatif; couverture s'appelle *blanket* en anglais; sans elle on est *blank*, vide, dans la condition de la psychose blanche typique des personnalités *borderline*.⁸

Sans le savoir Ford a représenté le malaise qui est encore objet de discussion entre les psychanalystes, établissant comme fait Bollas⁹ une liaison entre la perte de l'objet transitionnel et la dégénération psychique de la condition *borderline*.

Les héros de Ford sont toujours des hommes qui vivent sur la frontière, à la limite entre civilisation et vie sauvage: peut-être cette condition difficile est une allégorie de la condition

⁷ A. Green (1991), *Psicoanalisi degli stati limite*, Milano, p. 118.

⁸ A. Green, *Psicoanalisi cit.*, pp. 117-119.

⁹ C. Bollas (1991), *Forze del destino*, Roma, pp. 145-147.

problématique du jeune irlandais qui n'avait pas un Bon Père et qui avait trouvé deux Pères putatifs, sans réussir à trouver soi-même.

On peut supçonner que Ethan lui-même a été traumatisé par la mort de l'objet transitionnel. En maintes occasion l'homme cherche de donner aux autres son argent: mais cet argent, par sortilège, revient toujours à ce qui l'a donné (où est perdu sans être utilisé). Peut-être peut-on deviner dans ce «gag» l'impossibilité par Ethan d'avoir des «transactions» avec les autres et une «transition» avec l'autre.

Bien sûr, dans la tradition psychanalytique classique l'argent a des liasons avec l'analité et la maîtrise de l'argent c'est évident un attribut du Père. Mais dans la tradition cinématographique l'argent qui perd sa qualité de moyen d'échange et de pouvoir a aussi une autre signification. On ne peut pas oublier que jouer avec une monnaie c'est un geste typique des gangsters, enfants qui n'ont pas réussi à devenir hommes: on voit pour la première fois ce geste en *Scarface* d'Howard Hawks et après, chaque fois qu'on doit représenter un gangster, comme dans *Singing in the rain* de Donen où dans *Some like it hot* de Billy Wilder. C'est précisément ce geste qu'Ethan fait à la fin du film: il joue avec l'argent qu'il n'a jamais utilisé, en bavardant avec le shérif-prêcheur Samuel Clayton, qui lui rappelle qu'il est un hors-loi, recherché comme un assassin.

Donc, Ethan jouant avec l'argent c'est un homme qui n'a pas pu jouer dans l'enfance comme les gangsters d'Howard Hawks, qui jouent avec l'argent, le dernier souvenir de l'objet transitionnel perdu. Ce n'est pas par hasard si le Chef indien s'appelle Scar, comme Scarface.

Le double d'Ethan, est Scarface: et le gangster jouant avec la monnaie dans *Scarface* (c'était George Raft) c'était le double de Scarface lui-même, le chef des gangsters.

De ce point de vue la solution du drame ne peut être que découvrir à nouveau ce qui a été perdu. Ethan retrouve Debbie et la soulève dans ses bras: tout le monde pensa qu'il veut la tuer, mais le geste de soulever la fille, identique au geste que nous avons vu au début, a le pouvoir de faire «retrouver» le passé. Le «jeu» entre l'adulte et la fillette est retrouvé: en effet le geste de soulever c'était un «geste transitionnel», un contact physique qui permettait d'établir une liason psychique. Comme dit Winnicott, le «jeu» c'est l'espace dans lequel on peut découvrir la partie plus «vrai» du Self.

L'unique «jeu» que le malheureux héros du film a pu jouer c'était soulever en haut, comme un père symbolique, sa nièce: c'est justement ça qu'il fait à la fin du film, avant de la serrer entre ses bras et de la sauver. Dans ce merveilleux instant de pathos nous avons la sensation que le profond désespoir du personnage s'éteint pour toujours. Nous voyons avec une éblouissante clarté que c'était l'unique possibilité de retrouver l'amour perdu. Et la conscience de l'abîme que nous avons laissé à nos épaules nous donne la sensation de nous évanouir, en goutant comme un vin immortel les larmes de tendresse devenues moins amères des larmes de douleur que nous avons bu, comme le miel, pendant le film.

Ainsi s'achève la longue recherche d'Ethan. Maintenant c'est possible de reconcilier les esprits et de trouver la paix. Et lorsque Wayne met sa main sur le bras, comme faisait Harry Carey, le temps perdu est retrouvé et l'homme qui s'embrasse nous embrasse pour toujours comme dans une danse dansée dans un rêve.

The Psychology of Cyberring

NORMAN N. HOLLAND (*)

Talking on the Internet, people regress. It's that simple. It can be one-to-one talk on e-mail or many-to-many talk on one of the LISTS or newsgroups. People regress, expressing sex and aggression as they never would face to face.

Think about it. Current estimates say 30 million people communicate on the Internet from most of the nations on the globe, and that number is increasing at 12% a month. And all this just grew like Topsy, with no one planning or controlling it. Here is one of the extraordinary technological achievements, one of the great *human* achievements, of our century. But good old *homo sapiens* reverts to primitive, childish behavior. Why?

There are three major signs or, if you will, symptoms of this regression. The one Internet primitivism that everybody talks about is «flaming», flying into a typewritten rage at some perceived slight or blunder. «Everywhere I went in the newsgroups», writes John Seabrook in *The New Yorker*, «I found flames, and fear of flames» (1994, 70).

No wonder. Seabrook had written a friendly piece on Bill Gates, the powerful president of Microsoft. In the «profile», he made a point of the way he and Gates conducted their interview on e-mail. This is what appeared on Seabrook's screen (courtesy of a certain computer columnist):

Crave THIS, asshole:

Listen, you toadying dipshit scumbag... remove your head from your rectum long enough to look around and notice that real reporters don't fawn over their subjects, pretend that their subjects are making some sort of special fawn contact with them, or, worse, curry favor by TELLING their subjects how great the ass-licking profile is going to turn out and then brag in print about doing it.

Forward this to Mom. Copy Tina [the new publisher of *The New Yorker*] and tell her the mag is fast turning to compost. One good worm deserves another.

This last was a veiled threat, since a «worm» is a computer virus and the «flame» might have caused damage to Seabrook's data and programs.

A second primitivism on the Internet is sexual harassment, crude invitations to people about whom one knows no more than their online signatures (which may well be «gender-benders» that hide the sex of the speaker). It happens even in professional or intellectual groups, but the «chat» groups are the worst. Women complain that going into chat mode can feel like a walk past a construction site

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or a wrong turn down a dark street (Span 1994). But males are not the only offenders. Women also proposition men. As one of the subscribers to my list-conference PSYART described it,

Once, while in a chat, I changed my nickname to a female moniker. A woman (and I use the noun to refer to what she presented herself as – not that I have any reason to doubt her, but who knows on IRC [Internet Relay Chat])... left the conference, and told some people there was a new woman on the net. She returned to the conference, and many men joined. Several began sending me private messages suggesting various (and graphic) sexual acts. One in an adjacent state wanted to meet me in person. None of these people ever sent me e-mail later, perhaps because I revealed my real gender after a while – at which time the harassment ended. This particular conference was not one of the sexually-oriented ones – just an IRC group we had formed that night. What began as a joke proved to be quite an education.

On another occasion, while using my natural and usual IRC/real identity, someone claiming to be a young woman joined a conference – again, not a sexual interest group – and began sending me private, explicit messages. I hadn't thought about it until now, but it seems as though her advances were less crude, although every bit as direct (Sougstadt 1994).

The third symptom of regression – and you may not consider it a regression at all – is the extraordinary generosity you see on the Internet. The one comment you hear over and over again about online communication is the openness, the sense of sharing and, mostly, tolerance. Total strangers will give up hours of their time to send one another research data. Even goods. A lawyer was moving from Boston to Washington. A fire on the van destroyed his books, and he posted a list of what he had lost on the Internet. «Every day for six months I was receiving books in the mail from people I'd never met» (Rubin 1994). «People on the network share information about everything from how to run their computers to how to make cheesecake. Most of the people who post are trying to be helpful, even when they disagree» (Golden 1994). Most dramatically, on the Internet, there are support groups for recovering alcoholics, drug addicts, and smokers. People with suicidal tendencies tenderly share ways in which they ward off the temptation (Wright 1993).

Another side to this openness is what Kristina Ross has called «identity play» (1994). People try out new ways of being, often in very playful ways: different professions, the opposite gender, altered self-descriptions. There is a sense that «it doesn't matter», a feeling of invulnerability.

At the same time, this openness involves heightened vulnerability. This is the way *New Yorker* writer John Seabrook describes how it feels to be flamed:

The flame seemed to put a chill in the center of my chest which I could feel spreading slowly outward. My shoulders began to shake. I got up and walked quickly to the soda machines for no good reason, then hurried back to my desk. There was the flame on my screen, the sound of it not dying away; it was flaming me all over again in the subjective eternity that is time in the on-line world... the technology greased the words... with a kind of immediacy that allowed them to slide easily into my brain (1994, 70-71).

In short, communication on the Internet has its plusses and minuses. The plusses are the generosity and openness. The minuses are aggressive flaming, sexual attack, and increased vulnerability. I think they are two sides of the same coin: sex and aggression in positive and negative, active and passive, forms. Both begin because of a lack of inhibition – a regression. But what lures us into this regression?

The simplest answer is, the computer itself. To understand interpersonal behavior on the Internet, we need to look at the fantasies people have about their computers.

It is already a cliché, to say that the computer extends and expands the brain. What the car, the boat, the gun, the airplane do for the body, the computer does for the mind. In fact, people use metaphors of body activity to describe the mind working on the computer, like this British user: «It exercises the mental faculties... it keeps my mind alive and sprightly» (Shotton 1989, 207).

In this pseudo-physicality, men easily get into mine-is-bigger-than-yours games. My hard disk, my chip, my screen is bigger or faster or newer or more powerful (Kantrowitz 1994, Turkle 1984). In psychoanalytic terms, men's fantasies about computers are «phallic». In this context, «flaming» is a bit like giving other drivers the finger from inside a car. Driving is a phallic activity like computing, and the driver identifies *himself* (usually himself) with his machine, feeling secure inside his steel cocoon as the computer «driver» is made safe by distance and anonymity. The context is aggressive and competitive, as men are with their computers (Irvine 1994, Cobb 1993).

Since fantasies about computers tend to the phallic, it should come as no surprise that men and women respond differently to computers. Women, unlike men, generally think the machines are just meant to be used, like the microwave or the vacuum cleaner. «It's a tool, like a screwdriver», one woman writes to the *Washington Post*, not intending (I assume) any symbolism. «I pick it up. I expect it to work. While computers can be more “fun” than most screwdrivers, in general, when I turn my computer on, I expect it to work. Period» (Walker 1994).

It should also come as no surprise that people feel anxious about that phallic computer. «Will the computer go berserk?» «Will it blow up if I press the wrong button?» are common imaginings (Simons 1985, 22). «People are afraid they'll break something», writes one woman. «Computers are like dogs – they know when you're scared of them» (Dowell 1994). Turkle (1984) contrasts people for whom the computer is just an instrument and people for whom it is magic.

Alongside these magical fantasies of power and dominance and size – and castration – are quite different phenomena: computer dependency and addiction. Some people are powerless to resist the pleasure of fooling around with the computer. They see it as an alluring alternative to ordinary life. They will even risk their marriages for the pleasure of hours and hours of «working out» on their computers or «surfing» on the Internet.

Why is it so pleasurable as to be addictive? According to a British study, computer addicts – these are not only people hooked on networking but on programming, gaming, and even work on their computers – saw computers as a soothing alternative to the human. These possibly schizoid types found computers logical, predictable, and non-judgmental, but humans illogical, erratic, and critical. They simply preferred computers (Shotton 1989, 253, 264; see also Weizenbaum 1976). Computer addicts avoid the frustration of dealing with an illogical world of human beings by retreating to a relationship in which they find their own values of logic and dispassion.

Furthermore, not only is the machine human, it is a human just like me. Computer addicts have a narcissistic relationship with their machines. The computer becomes a mirror image of themselves. And indeed, don't most of us prefer magazines, newspapers, television programs – and friends – that confirm our own values? (Shotton 1989, 250-52).

When programming, the computer addicts are working with an ideal partner who understands them fully. They feel toward their machines as toward a true friend. This friend will not withdraw if a mistake is made. This friend will try to be an ever-faithful helpmate (Shotton 1989, 167). And this friend is male.

Most computer users talk to their computers and give them nicknames, as other people do boats, cars, airplanes (for example, Enola Gay), and even guns (Big Bertha). But where the nicknames for cars, boats, airplanes, and guns are usually female, nicknames for computers are invariably male. In an American study, subjects «made a total of 358 pronoun references, variously referring to the computer as “it”, “he”, “you”, “they”, (and even «Fred») – [but] never as “she”» (Scheibe and Erwin 1980). In Shotton's British study of 75 computer dependent people, they all, male and female, gave their computers male nicknames. In fact one woman in that study said right out, «He's the man in my life». In that same study, a male respondent reported that his computer was male («my mate Micky»), but, he said, «I always refer to my dual disk-drive as female – she's

lovely» (Shotton 1989, 194-195). Notice: his active, powerful, intelligent, logical computer was male like him, while his obedient, passive, receptive disk-drive was female.¹ Let's not forget, in this connection, that in 1982 *Time* magazine named the personal computer its *Man* of the Year.

In other ways the computer plays the role of a parent. It rewards its human's good behavior – the program runs – but it does not punish. The machine does not judge its user as inadequate. Rather, faced with poor performance on the part of its human, the computer just ignores it and waits patiently for the next input. The computer is like a parent who has high hopes for you but rewards your achievement, even if it is less than optimum. The machine always holds out more goals to strive for, but these goals are realistic, and it's up to you whether to go for them or not (Shotton 1989, 167). If the computer is a demanding parent, it is also a very permissive one.

It is permissive in yet another way. It is totally anonymous. You can get hurt opening yourself up to real people, but you can say anything to a computer, and it won't judge or criticize you. That is why sociologists are turning to computers to do their interviewing (Kiesler and Sproull 1986). For example, 14% more students admitted to drug use in a survey by computer than by pencil-and-paper (Sproull and Kiesler 1991, 45). In a Scottish survey of alcohol use, people would report greater use to a computer than in a face-to-face interview, and the figures given to the computer matched actual use more closely (Waterton and Duffy 1984).

Now this is odd. We all know that the computer can store anything we say. Yet we nevertheless feel safe in telling it the most intimate details of our lives. For example, there is a computer program for doing sex therapy, *Sexpert*. Videotaped sessions with the computer showed the couples «clearly engaged» by *Sexpert*. They «seriously discussed their sex life, relationship, and *Sexpert*'s comments with each other» (Binik et al. 1989). Why this trust? Because we are isolated from social cues and so feel more free from criticism than if speaking to a person. Opening up to the wrong human being can be humiliating or hurtful. Not so a computer.

And of course, there is a lively market for computer pornography. I came across the following advertisement in *PC-Magazine*:

Now You Can Have Your Own GIRLFRIEND
... a sensuous woman living in your computer!

GIRLFRIEND is the first VIRTUAL WOMAN. You can watch her, talk to her, ask her questions and relate with her. Over 100 actual VGA photographs allow you to see your girlfriend as you ask her to wear different outfits, and guide her into different sexual activities. As a true artificial intelligence program, GIRLFRIEND starts with a 3000 word vocabulary [beautiful but dumb? – NNH] and actually GROWS the more you use it. She will remember your name, your birthday, and your likes and dislikes. GIRLFRIEND comes with the base software [sic] and GIRLFRIEND LISA. Additional girls will be added. This program requires 7-10MB of free space (Sexy 1994).

This is, of course, the same male fantasy as *The Stepford Wives*, the woman who is totally satisfying because she is completely docile because she is a machine.

The same fantasy comes in negative forms, however. After I gave this paper at our Denmark conference, one of my hearers told me the following story. (I am quoting this man accurately as I can.)

I write in bed, using a yellow pad and a pen that will write upside down, a «space pen». Then, the next morning, I transcribe what I have written onto the computer. I resolved to get a laptop computer to eliminate one step of this two-step process. When I got the laptop, I found I could not take it into bed with me – it felt like a homosexual encounter. I still can't do it. I can sit on the side of the bed with the laptop, but I can't take it into bed with me.

¹ There is an exception to every rule. A computer-resistant friend has since told me that he named his first computer Silvia (after Shakespeare's «Who is Silvia? What is she?») and his second after the woman whose influence pervades his scholarly work.

My informant said that he was telling this to people standing around after my talk when a woman chimed in: «I had the same experience. I bought a laptop to write in bed, but I couldn't take it to bed. It's all analytical, logical, dichotomous, and I won't sleep with a man like that.»

Odd as it may seem, many, many psychological researchers have come to the same conclusion: *people almost instinctively think of computers as other people* (Forman and Pufall 1988, 247; Frude 1983). «Extremely short exposures to a relatively simple computer program... induce powerful delusional thinking in quite normal people», wrote Joseph Weizenbaum, having watched people anthropomorphize and become deeply involved with his programs ELIZA and DOCTOR (Weizenbaum 1976, 6-7, 188-191).

These fantasies of the machine as person, indeed as sexual partner, do not attach just to intelligent machines, where they are somewhat justifiable. The British researcher I've been quoting reported an interview with a racing car driver who spoke of his quasi-human relation with his car. Two sculptors she interviewed showed the same kind of personal involvement with their medium (Shotton 1989, 264). «People form all sorts of emotional bonds to machines, for example, to musical instruments, motorcycles, and cars», notes Weizenbaum (7). Apparently one can have a human relation with *any* medium to which one is passionately committed or, perhaps I should say, any medium into which one can passionately involve oneself. Relevant here would be Marion Milner's 1957 classic study of artists' emotional relations to their medium as both an extension of self and a piece of the world that one works on «out there», a special kind of transitional object. The computer just makes this process faster and more drastic, because it exhibits «intelligent» behavior like another human.

In sum, then, we have some fantasies about the computer as a thing: phallic fantasies of power and oral fantasies of engulfing pleasure. We also have these more remarkable fantasies that the computer is something more than a thing, something between person and thing. We have a quasi-human relationship with the machine as helpmate, as true friend, as permissive parent, as sex object, and as sex partner. And all these fantasies enter into communication on the Internet.

The machineness of the machine, it seems to me, affects Internet communication by subtracting and by adding. The machine takes away some of our ordinary human-to-human cues, but it adds other elements from the fantasies we bring to the computer.

The most obvious way the machine affects Internet talk is to take away most of the ongoing signs we have of another person's feelings in face to face communication. We lose the feedback, the chuckle, the smile, the raised eyebrow, the rolled eyes. Even on the telephone we still have pacing and tone of voice. But on the Internet, all we have are typed words – «plain text». Irony is lost and sarcasm literal. Yet, paradoxically, conversely, without eye contact or body language, it feels as though we have a wire going directly into the other person's brain or our own. Communication feels «greased» (in John Seabrook's phrase above) – because you are relating directly to the «mind» of a computer.

Perhaps that's why people think writing on the Internet is aural. As in the opening phrase of this essay, «Talking on the Internet». All through this essay, I've been calling Internet communication speaking and hearing, and I doubt you even noticed. But people don't talk on the Internet, they type. One man left his Caps Lock key on and typed his message all in capitals. He got back a reply, «Why are you shouting at me?» (Filipcak 1994). On the Internet, we blur sensory modes between seeing and hearing, reading and listening, writing and talking, and this is part of a general loss of boundaries.

The Internet is, in the word that all writers fall back on, «vast» – 30 million people all chattering away. We see this sense of size in imagery like the «information superhighway», that we are to drive on in our Vice-President's phallic fantasies. Or the vast «sea of information» of oral fantasy, inconceivably bigger than any one human being. Our power fantasies would have us penetrating and mastering this huge thing. But there is also the fear – and wish – to be swept up in it, to lose oneself in it, to be engulfed. This is how a computer columnist phrases his dislike for a windowed interface:

I like the uncluttered and unplanned void before me. It is the untamed wilderness. The prompt is a beacon, my North Star, my constant reminder that the Internet is a seething, roiling cyber-ocean, changing every second. To view it through the filtering shades of a menu or friendly-izing interface is to forget its savage reality, to dim its digital vastness (Greenberg 1994).

Another boundary we lose on the Internet is status. A famous *New Yorker* cartoon has one dog telling another, in front of a computer, «On the Internet, no one knows you're a dog». With precautions, nobody can tell whether you are male or female, young or old, nerd or body beautiful, the company president or the mailroom clerk. The result in intra-company communication is, on the one hand, more participation by women and experts (people who are not normally listened to in meetings) but *less* consensus. *Less* consensus because pressure to conform from higher in the hierarchy is reduced. Also people begin to flame (Sproull & Kiesler 1991).

Flaming starts up because there are no rules. «People who are extremely nice individuals get on a PC and suddenly it's as if they're screaming», notes the manager of an e-mail system. «There's no formal etiquette for e-mail» (Cobb 1993). Internet society has no way of disapproving breaches of «Netiquette» except by flaming in return. You could screen out the offender by a «bozo filter», but the bozo doesn't know he's being filtered out – he just doesn't get an answer.

That's another difference between Internetting and really speaking to someone. You type in your usually longish communication. Then you wait for what very often is a shortish reply. You don't get answered until the person you're addressing comes online again. That could take only a few seconds or several days.

In these negatives, these removals, communicating on the Internet resembles some much older forms of communication. I'm thinking of the confessional, where you speak to an invisible priest, often at length, often getting only a brief reply at the end of your long and hopeful statement. I'm thinking also of the psychoanalytic couch, where you speak on and on to the analyst, invisible behind your head and, again, you get (usually) a very brief reply, sometimes many minutes or even days later. Both those modes encourage regression toward dependency and fantasy – like the Internet. Both lead you to say things you would not say face to face – like the Internet.

The machine takes away some aspects of human communication, but it adds others. Notably, the machine adds that peculiar half-humanity we relate to. We mirror to the person we are talking to the ambivalent relationship we have with the computer by which we are talking. On the one hand, the computer does useful things for us. It balances our checkbook, it organizes our Rolodex, or it checks our spelling. On the other hand, the machine frustrates us by that same mindless and tireless obedience, because it has no common sense, no intuition. It can drive us nuts, and we get mad at it. In fact, a police officer, having been presented with «Do not understand» once too often, stepped back and put two shots into the computer (Simons 1985, 28). I suspect that most of us from time to time have wanted to do the same thing.

We mirror those mixed feelings of helpfulness and rage to the people we talk to on the Internet. The frustration comes out as flaming, when some hapless «newbie» asks yet again a FAQ (frequently asked question). But we are just as likely to do useful things for some needy soul at the other end, like replacing lost books or supplying data for an article. Flaming and giving act out to other people the ambivalent emotions we feel toward the computer.

I think the anonymity and this fusion of machine and other person explain why there is so much sex on the Internet. Columnist John Dvorak notes that the most successful online services, in the U.S. anyway, are those that encourage frank sexual chat. On one network, America Online, he writes, «You can do a search on just about any sexual habit or wacky orientation imaginable, and you'll find a slew of people – men and women – who list themselves as aficionados begging to be chatted with or sent mail» (Dvorak 1994). In other words, the willingness and compliance of the computer carries over – not unreasonably – into one's sexual fantasies about the people one talks to on the Internet.

In short, when communicating on the Internet, we set up a relationship with other people in which the people get less human and the machine gets more human. That is how the three signs of the

Internet regression come into play: flaming, flirting, and giving. Our feelings toward the computer as computer become our feelings toward the people to whom we send e-mail or post messages. We flame to the person as though he or she were an insensitive thing, a machine that can't be hurt. We flirt with the machine as though it were a person and could interact with us, compliantly offering sex. We feel open and giving toward the computer because the computer is open and giving to us.

This confusion of person and machine is what makes the Internet regression so special. The regression starts with a variety of phallic-aggressive fantasies, more men's than women's, but women's, too. Then both men and women have the sense of being lost in a vast, engulfing sea of information, millions of times bigger than the finite human sitting at a computer screen embarking on it. The result is an «oral» loss of boundary between person and machine. The person you are talking to on the Internet is thought of as a machine, and the machine is thought of as a person. Then, at an anal level, if you will, who is living blurs into what is dead. At an oral level, one merges. Time on the Internet – «subjective eternity» Seabrook calls it – is not part of one's real life, but a dependency or addiction to that great power.

The net result is a lack of inhibition. People express love and aggression to a degree they never would face to face. Yet, throughout the regression, the Internetter functions by means of the most advanced of ego skills: language, issuing computer commands, and knowing the mysteries of Unix or gopher or some other communications interface. The result is a regression, yes, but one that expands the mind from its highest functioning to its earliest.

Let me give you an example of this regression, a young man named Alex who appears in Sherry Turkle's fine book, *The Second Self*. Alex is a computer science student at M.I.T. who spends 15 hours a day on the computer, a true member of what is called hacker culture. Listen for the symptoms and levels I've been describing: phallic strengths, oral merger, narcissistic mirroring, the blending of person and machine –

If you look at it from the outside, it looks like I spend most of my time alone. But that is not really true. First of all, there are the other hackers. We eat together a lot, we talk about the system. And then I spend *a lot of time*, I mean a lot of time on electronic mail. Sometimes I think that electronic mail is more of an addiction for me than the computer is. I talk to people all over the country. When you type mail into the computer you feel you can say anything. A lot of it is just about the system, but sometimes it gets pretty personal. When you type into the machine you can go really fast. The touch is very sensitive. I don't even feel that I am typing. It feels much more like one of those Vulcan mind melds, you know, that Mr. Spock does on *Star Trek*. I am thinking it, and then there it is on the screen. I would say that I have a perfect interface with the machine... perfect for me. I feel totally telepathic with the computer. And it sort of generalizes so that I feel telepathic with the people I am sending mail to. I am glad I don't have to see them face to face. I wouldn't be as personal about myself. And the telepathy with the computer – well, I certainly don't think of it as a person there, but that doesn't mean that I don't *feel* it as a person there. Particularly since I have personalized my interface with the system to suit myself. So it's like being with another person, but not a strange person. Someone who knows just how I like things done (Turkle 1984, 211).

That's what makes the Internet regression so distinctive. The machine becomes us, and we become the machine.

Alex's regression starts with his feelings of reaching «all over the country», «you can say anything», «you can go really fast». Alex also feels merged with the machine, «telepathy with the computer», his «Vulcan mind meld». Once the boundary between person and machine is gone, the person he talks to on the Internet is thought of as a machine, and he thinks of the machine as a person. He feels «telepathic» with both person and machine. Once regressed that way, «Sometimes it gets pretty personal».

I like this Internet regression. I find it a fascinating marriage of the most sophisticated human technology with our half-savage, half-animal psyches. I think it's something new and amazing and quite wonderful in the spectrum of human relations.

Those who don't see it that way, however, can take comfort. The Internet regression is also temporary. Today's Internetting will change, maybe even by the time you read this. A huge influx of unskilled users is coming onto the Internet, people who lack the cheery openness that a hacker like Alex expresses. The technology too will change. Real Soon Now (as the computer magazines say), we will be able to replace today's «plain text» with digitized voices. Real Soon Now, we will be able to have pictures of speaker and hearer. Real Soon Now, computer technology will restore to the Internet the physical cues of face to face talk. Too bad, say I. The Internet Regression has been – still is – fun.

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Psychoanalysis, Science Fiction and Cyborgianism

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Do we see, in the car crash, a sinister portent of a nightmare marriage between sex and technology? Will modern technology provide us with hitherto undreamed-of means for tapping our own psychopathologies? Is this harnessing of our innate perversity conceivably of benefit to us? Is there some deviant logic unfolding more powerful than that provided by reason? (J.G. Ballard, Introduction to *Crash!*)

Ballard's questions are all rhetorical and he would answer them in the affirmative. However, his claim in the introduction to his masterpiece of clinically apocalyptic pornography that «the role of *Crash!* is cautionary, a warning against that brutal, erotic and overlit realm that beckons more and more persuasively to us from the margins of the technological landscape» (1990: 9) belatedly indicates an ambivalence to the psychological impact of technology, one which, twenty years on from Ballard's words, seems perhaps less necessary.

Ballard's work deals predominantly with the tangentially science-fictional possibilities of what he calls «inner space», that is, a psychologically-inflected form of SF in which the sole interest is the effect on the human psyche of cultural or technological extremity. This could be in the present, or in some possible, usually near, future. Ballard is concerned with what is essentially a change in the relation of the subject to its own psychical forces, brought about by changes in the interaction of the subject with technology. His focus on the pathological possibilities of the human\technology interface plays itself out in the extraordinarily plausible fiction of *Crash!*, a novel which contains almost none of the usual generic markers of SF except for a central concern with technology.

It details the growing obsession of its narrator, «Ballard», with the erotic possibilities of car crashes; particularly the conjunction of the sexuality of human bodies with the functional and decorative geometry of automobile design.

The scars and weals produced on the bodies of crash victims by the design details of car interiors, such as gearstick mountings and manufacturer's steering-wheel medallions, become in Ballard's mind the erotic stigmata of a new form of human sexuality. These obsessions are coalesced in the character of the rogue scientist Vaughan, who has turned the pursuit of the erotic crash into a deviant lifestyle; his ultimate goal is to kill himself in a head-on collision between his own car (a Lincoln Continental – a replica of the car in which J.F.Kennedy was assassinated) and the limousine containing the actress Elizabeth Taylor.

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Pivotal to the pornographic and intellectual impact of the novel is its revising of the bodies' erotic possibilities as the body is controlled, destroyed or reshaped by automotive technology. The narrator becomes involved with a woman in Vaughan's entourage who has been crippled by a crash and wears a heavy spinal brace. The deep weals on her thighs created by the straps of the brace become for him a new sexual organ, an alternative orifice made erotic by its origin in the high-impact conjunction with the car. As he ejaculates into these fleshly channels a new set of fantasy possibilities opens up to him:

...I visualized...the wounds upon which erotic fantasies might be erected, the extraordinary sexual acts celebrating the possibilities of unimagined technologies. In these fantasies I was able at last to visualize those deaths and injuries I had always feared. I visualized my wife injured in a high-impact collision, her mouth and face destroyed, and a new and exciting orifice opened in her perineum by the splintering steering column, neither vagina nor rectum, an orifice we could dress with all our deepest affections.... I visualized the body of my own mother, at various stages of her life, injured in a succession of accidents, fitted with orifices of ever-greater abstraction and ingenuity, so that my incest with her might become more and more cerebral, allowing me to come to terms at last with her embraces and postures. (1990:138)

The passage gives a sense of the extraordinary technologization of language Ballard achieves – there is none of the pornographer's usual repertoire, instead there is a clinical detachment playing against the perverse content which is profoundly alienating.

The content, particularly of this passage but of the work as a whole, is indeed perverse, and in the specific psychoanalytic sense of the term. That is, we are presented here with the possibility of the body having an alternately-zoned sexuality, with libidinal investment in an object no longer centred on the genitals. The technology of the automobile is the creator of a new sexuality, or at least a radically altered sexual body, but we should also notice how the narrator's vision of the new orifices of his wife and mother, «neither vagina nor rectum», is tied to a specific fantasy structure, one which even non-Freudians would perceive is rooted in aggressivity and incest, two of the fundamentally transgressive underpinnings of the psychic apparatus which modern civilization has had to renounce in order to establish itself.

In Ballard the narrator's fantasy, the physical and sexual identities of his wife are obliterated by the crash, by the automobile – her face and mouth are destroyed, the latter that ultimately regressive libidinal locus, and the other sexual zones of her body are bypassed in favour of the technologically-created perineal orifice. The fantasy recreation of his wife as a post-crash object, however, turns out to be simply the prelude to his desire to understand his mother's «embraces and postures», and the automotive technologizing of his sexual response is simply a means to the end, an abstract cerebration or even working-through, of his incestuous desire for his mother.

This seems a neat enough analysis, but the psychoanalytic response to the novel's *content* does not adequately deal with the many questions raised by its central concern with the intersection between the body and technology. It is the succinct manner in which the book does raise these questions that has made it the focus of much intriguing critical work (such as Baudrillard's «Two Essays» and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's «The SF of Theory» in the special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* partly devoted to *Crash!*) on the problem of the body in an increasingly technologized culture; but the proliferation of theory on the issue goes both beyond and, I will contend, not as far as, Ballard's seminal work.

The body of recent theory I have mentioned, which I have called *cyborgianism* by virtue of its pivotal interest in human-machine hybridity, has two theoretical fields in common with Ballard's characters' fantasies in *Crash!*. The first, and predominant one, is the focus on bodily change through technology. This ranges from actual prosthetics, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, to the possibility of an actual cybernetic organism indistinguishable in any obvious way from a human being. The latter is almost entirely restricted to (science) fictional texts. The second, imbricated field is a theorising of changes in the form of culture itself due to technology. These would refer to the increasing

miniaturization and accessibility of communications technology from the walkman to the satellite dish, and the consequent changes in patterns of human interaction (through computer networks, for example).

Two metaphors might be employed as a kind of shorthand for the theoretical fields of cyborgianism. The first, of course, is that of the cyborg itself, the hybrid form of human and machine, a cybernetic organism.

In science fiction, the cyborg is the culmination of a thematic lineage at least as old as the genre – that of the robot. The cyborg thus presents the same set of thematic preoccupations, usually dystopian in upshot, about what happens when machines become difficult to distinguish from humans. The history of the theme in SF reveals a consistent wish to exert control over the robot, whose simulated human form seems to dramatize the danger of technology encroaching on human identity. Interestingly, and perhaps inevitably, the exertion of control, or, in SF parlance, the «programming» of the machine, usually takes distinctly oedipal forms. This is most clearly seen in Isaac Asimov's famous «Three Laws of Robotics», formulated in conversation with editor John Campbell in the mid 1950s. The Laws are as follows: no robot may allow a human being to come to harm; a robot must obey orders given by human beings, except where such orders conflict with the first law; and a robot must protect its own existence as long as this does not conflict with the first and second laws. The Laws indicate that the servility of the human simulacra must be ensured – yet most of SF's robot narratives are enabled by the contingent breakdown of robot programming, so that finally the situation can be resolved by the recuperation of human superiority.

The tension arising from the realisation that a machine\human hybrid might supercede the human itself in most respects has been dubbed «cyborg anxiety»:

...the cyborg has stood for the radical anxiety of human consciousness about its own embodiment at the moment that embodiment appears most fully contingent. Cyborg anxiety has stood for a panic oscillation between the «human» element (associated with affections, eros, error, innovations, projects begun in the face of mortality) and the «machine» element (the desire for long life, health, physical impermeability... , dependability, and hence the ability to fulfil promises over a long term). (Csicsery-Ronay 1991: 395)

The perceived or possible superceding of human identity by machinic or cyborgian ones has produced, I will argue, two conflicting views. On the one hand SF sees the possibility as essentially dystopian, one which SF writers and filmmakers have responded to by a reassertion of some measure of intrinsic human worth.

This is neatly illustrated by the payoff line to James Cameron's 1991 cyborg epic, *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day*. In the film, Arnold Schwarzenegger reprises his 1984 role as a killer cyborg, but this time he has been reprogrammed to protect the future leader of the human resistance to machine rule, John Connor, and Connor's mother Sarah. During the course of the cyborg's interaction with these humans, but particularly the young John Connor, it becomes more humanly responsive and less robotic, prompting Sarah Connor to muse that the cyborg would make the perfect father for her son, since it would always be there to protect him.

The pseudo-oedipal structure of the human\cyborg interaction is clear here, and what makes it false is a lack of productive internal conflict between the boy and the cyborg. The boy is father to the cyborgian man, but the reverse could not be true, since John Connor has nothing to fear or reject in the cyborg. By the end of the film, when the cyborg «chooses» to sacrifice itself so that the future development of its technology and a consequent human holocaust might be prevented, Sarah Connor muses that «if a machine – a terminator – could learn the value of human life, maybe we can too».

The payoff line here is a time honoured sentiment in SF narrative, and is of course fundamentally conservative of the ontological status of the human being in the face of the challenge of the cyborg. We might recall Ballard's note of caution about approaching the «brutal, erotic realm that beckons to us from the margins of the technological landscape» to conclude that perhaps the

predominant note in SF visions of the human\machine interface – cyborg culture, for short – is dystopian, gloomy and cautionary.

Yet not all cyborgian *theorists* would concur. The conflicting view to the one just outlined is that the era of the cyborg is upon us, and that it presents us with exciting and potentially liberatory, or at least radical, avenues. Such theorists add to the metaphor of the cyborg subject that of a cyborgian culture, the second of the theoretical fields I mentioned earlier. The space of this culture is perhaps less science fictional than the figure of the Terminator cyborg, but is no less potent a possibility. Its metaphor is *cyberspace*, the term coined by cyberpunk SF writer William Gibson to describe the realm where information resides in its basic electronic state.

One of the most radical polemicists for the cyborgian culture rendered possible by the Information Age is Jean Baudrillard:

... this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extension, in the multiplicity of its organs, its tissues and functions, since today everything is concentrated in the brain and in genetic codes, which alone sum up the operational definition of being. The countryside, the immense geographic countryside, seems to be a deserted body whose expanse and dimensions appear arbitrary,... as soon as all events are epitomized in the towns, themselves undergoing reduction to a few miniaturized highlights. And time: what can be said about this immense free time we are left with...as soon as the instantaneity of communication has miniaturized our exchanges into a succession of instants? (1983:129)

Baudrillard's vision of the Information Age is thus one of dis-embodiment, both in terms of the subject and its «real» experience in space and time. The opening assertions of this passage, that the body is «basically useless in its extension» recall the rosier view of Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* that technology is a functional extension of human physicality, a way of «perfecting [the] organs», that, finally

[m]an has...become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent, but those organs have not grown onto him and they still give him much trouble at times. (1985:279-280)

In Baudrillard's view the «auxiliary organs» have outgrown man, and the relation of the physical to the technological has become a non-issue. Or, to give Baudrillard's thesis its proper focus, the impact of technology has turned from bodily *extension* to *intension*, *implosion*, and *invasion*.

That is, from being tools in the service of the body, contemporary technologies augment the space of the body itself, so that the two become indistinguishable. For Baudrillard, perceptively writing before the advent of cyberpunk SF, this represents the obsolescence of physical agency and its replacement with a technological consciousness – our medium have indeed become the messages of our culture, and our subjectivity loses the necessity for origin stories because of its electronic mediation.

Thus the subject in contemporary technoculture represents Baudrillard's simulacrum in hyperreality, which is the upshot of his comments on Ballard's *Crash!* in his «Two Essays» on the novel. That subject has what Scott Bukatman recently termed a «terminal identity» (1993), in a pun on the apocalyptic subject experiencing through the screen of computer terminal and TV.

Baudrillard is clear about the kind of subject produced by a culture in the grip of what he calls the «obscene ecstasy of communication» (1983:130):

If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more

hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore. (132)

The conclusion of his polemic, therefore, although he does not acknowledge it here, bears a strong resemblance to the thesis of Deleuze and Guattari's *The Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which calls for a reconstruing of pathology in order to move beyond the oppressive logic of Oedipus.

Where their argument most nearly touches technological issues in the rather narrow sense in which we have been speaking of them is in their two famous revisions of the body in the discourses of psychoanalysis: as a «desiring-machine» and a «Body without Organs». What both of these polemically phantasmatic images have in common is a repudiation of oedipus and zoned sexuality. If the body can be a machine in a circuit of «desiring-production» it escapes the enculturated logic of identification, desire and lack inscribed in the procedures of oedipalization.

Similarly, the BwO is a metaphor, drawn from pathological discourses, whose force lies in the continually shifting and dispersed nature of its cathexis. In this at least the BwO recalls, in a much less restricted sense, the technological creation of new bodily orifices in *Crash!*, and allies itself specifically with other aestheticizations of pathology in writers like William Burroughs and Artaud.

One further theorist of cyborgianism needs to be considered, since her work is perhaps most representative of contemporary thought on cyborg culture. This is Donna Haraway, whose 1985 (1990) essay «A Manifesto for Cyborgs» has been very influential since its appearance. Her central contention, again a polemical one, is as follows:

...the cyborg is...the awful apocalyptic telos of the West's escalating domination of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. An origin story in the Western humanist sense depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate, the task of individual development and history, the twin potent myths inscribed most powerfully for us in psychoanalysis and Marxism... The cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense. (1990: 192)

What Haraway has in common with other theorists of cyborgianism is the assertion of the revision of subjectivity that a hybrid body brings about, and by extension the revision of the culture to nature relationship which sustains an oedipalized and appropriately zoned human body in its social functions. Haraway thus proposes, perhaps more explicitly than other theorists, a new anthropology of the self.

This entails nothing less than both revising myths of origin and the history of culture in modernity. Ontogenetically, Haraway, like Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, envisions a new, post-oedipal subject. In her case the strictures of Oedipus are less normatively repressive than simply repressively patriarchal – and capitalist.

Her view, still a somewhat undersubscribed one in feminist theory, is that the question of the repressive nature of gender difference will not be changed by a reconfiguration of difference but an eradication of the question in the science fictional figure of the cyborg.

Phylogenetically, a cyborg culture equates for Haraway with a *postmodernist* one. She cites Jameson's essay, which

argues that postmodernism is not an option, a style among many, but a cultural dominant requiring radical reinvention of left politics from within; there is no longer any place from without that gives meaning to the comforting fiction of critical distance. Jameson also makes clear why one cannot be for or against postmodernism, an essentially moralist move. My position is that feminists... need continuous cultural reinvention, postmodernist critique, and historical materialism; only a cyborg would have a chance now. (1990: 194)

Implicit in all the cyborgian critical positions examined here is the twin assertion of a changed subjectivity and a historico-cultural shift. For the cyborgians, contemporary culture is made up of post-oedipal or schizoid subjects in a postmodernist world. Just as Freudian metapsychology was seen as an explanatory discourse which underpinned a particular ideology and theory of history (that of capitalism and modernity) and produced the subject of and in the normative nuclear family, so cyborgianism sees itself as the representative theory of a new order of things. That new order is troped by the cyborg subject, who is untroubled by the obsolescence of the human, and rejoices in the transcending of the compromise between culture and nature which the fragile human psyche and the «feeble animal organism» which is its body represent.

Yet, something remains troubling in the heralding of this new order. A tension appears, I would say a symptomatic one, between the critiques and the goals of cyborgian theory. The central critique of cyborgianism is against the broadly psychoanalytic account of the psychological function of the body.

The major alternatives to this position, as we have seen, are the positing of an ideologically productive schizophrenia, or the polemical possibility of an alternative body. The theorizing of both of these positions depends crucially on literature, usually science fiction, as epistemological evidence. As Baudrillard puts it, as if marking the two extremes of his own field of inquiry, «here we are far from the living room and close to science fiction» (1983:128).

The use of literature in this way is not, of course, new, and it seems most significant that the very evidential field which psychoanalysis used in part to corroborate the postulate of the oedipus complex should be used in much the same way to corroborate the postulating of a post-oedipal subject. The important difference is the use to which the evidence is put.

While literature in classical psychoanalysis exemplified pathological states or metapsychological tenets, this was useful only insofar as it had an explanatory function within the metapsychology or the psychoanalytic clinic. Cyborgian theory, on the other hand, wishes to make of SF literature a self-evident explanation of a subjective and epistemic shift *which has already happened*, when that literature has always been, and is by definition, a literature about unrealized possibility.

In other words, the explanatory force of cyborgian polemic must be doubted inasmuch as it makes psychological or anthropological claims for a «post-human» subject which exists only theoretically or in fiction. Also, if the fictional positing of such a subject has the same status as a postmodern theorizing of it, then political and epistemological claims for the cyborgian, post-capitalist state of culture become difficult to make, as Jameson's essay shows. This is also shown by Haraway casting her essay as a «manifesto» or a call to arms, rather than as explanation, and by Baudrillard's characteristic polemical tone (admittedly Haraway's other work represents a more sustained attempt at an «intradiscursive» analysis of cyborg culture).

A further, and quite serious, difficulty, is posed by the contention of some form of epistemic shift accompanying and conditioning the coming of the cyborg. Indeed Scott Bukatman goes so far as to explicitly refer to Foucault's thesis about the disappearance of man in *The Order of Things*. Part of the problem here is the utopian or celebratory impulse underlying much thinking about the postmodernist/postoedipal/cyborgian era, which may represent a theoretical millenarianism. Of course, Foucault's epistemic theory is far more circumspect about being able to theorize the «death» of one's own episteme, particularly since modernity has that which is «unthought» so central to its operation – which, intriguingly, accounts for the place of psychoanalysis as a «counter-science» in *The Order of Things*.

If this utopian impulse in cyborgian thought is to continue to use literature to attempt to establish a new anthropology of the self, perhaps it should pay more attention to SF writers like Ballard. His contention that the technologically mediated culture of the late twentieth century provides us with the opportunity to see our own psychopathologies as a game is one that understands that one cannot posit a post-oedipal subject before one accounts for what happens to the psyche and culture of oedipal subjects under such technopressure. Ballard's *Crash!* is a sublimely mordant

vision of what can happen; yet the possibility of such large-scale pathology acting itself out in the apocalyptic high technology of the late twentieth century landscape makes one somehow relieved that the glittering cyborg still only beckons to us from the (perhaps nearing) horizon.

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Mystique et Expérience Subjective

FREDERICO PEREIRA (*)

En regardant du côté de Thérèse d'Avila et St. Jean de la Croix, Maître Eckart et les mystiques arabes – Hallaj en premier – on trouve une méditation douloureuse - et apparemment intrinsèquement contradictoire – pour affronter et résoudre des apories originaires que, par ailleurs, nous affrontons aussi dans nos théories implicites ou à l'extrême développées, sur l'origine de la connaissance et sa nature, ainsi que sur la nature même de l'expérience subjective.

Entre les mystiques il y a des différences, bien entendu. L'époque, l'encadrement culturel, la rhétorique disponible, ne pourraient ne pas exercer leur influence.

Entre Maître Eckart par exemple et St. Jean de la Croix une distance énorme subsiste, à laquelle Bion, entre autres, a été sensible.

Le premier voulait traduire en termes rationnels l'inexprimable de l'expérience mystique: Gerard Bléaudun¹ le rappelle: «Le prédicateur s'irritait de se heurter à l'impuissance inexpressive des mots. Il était entraîné toujours plus loin pour tenter de communiquer l'indicible.» «Eckart rendait compte du “pur néant” de l'essence divine par une surabondance de négations.»

Jean de la Croix, par contre, tout comme Thérèse, présentent une surabondance de la rhétorique courtoise, comme l'a précisé dans son étude classique Denis de Rougemont: «Mourir de ne pas mourir», la «brûlure suave», le «dard d'amour» qui «blesse sans tuer», le «salut de l'amour», la «passion qui isole du monde et des êtres» – même si c'est une passion pour des non-choses, des non-êtres, c'est à dire une *passion de la non passion*, – voici ce qui est plus caractéristique des mystiques espagnols.

Si Maître Eckart utilise la raison et la dialectique pour caractériser l'expérience mystique, Jean de la Croix et Thérèse utilisent la dialectique du sentir et de l'intuition, donnée par d'impossibles méthaphores.

Mais, au delà de ces différences, ne peut-on penser qu'une même expérience attend à se vivre et à se donner dans le mot impossible qui pourrait la faire voir?

C'est un peu l'esprit de ce texte: l'expérience mystique est une, même si elle est variable, la voie de son expression.

Cela fait de cette expérience une expérience psychologique singulière. Et singulière puisqu'indépendante des signes par lesquels elle peut être pensée et dite. Plus: expérience singulière puisque expérience qui dans son expression combat à mort toute expression, et, dans le signe qui lui donne forme, combat tout signe et toute mise en forme.

C'est d'ailleurs en ceci que l'expérience mystique est une expérience des limites – et, comme

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¹ Gerard Bléaudun, *Bion*, Paris: Ed. Dunod.

toute expérience des limites, effort tendu vers le non-signé, recherche absolue de la Chose, Réalité Ultime, Complete Vérité.

Refus du signe – pourquoi? Parce que tout signe est substitution – parce que toute vérité de signes construite est embûche – car ce qu'elle énonce est toujours infiniment plus petit que ce qu'il resterait à énoncer. De telle sorte qu'une telle vérité moulée dans les signes n'est: *rien*. Voici le chemin de l'ascension, décrit par Jean de la Croix dans *La Montée du Carmel*: «*Rien, rien, rien, rien. Et en la Montagne: Rien*».

Pourquoi ce *rien*? Parce que le mouvement mystique est toujours une recherche absolue de l'originnaire, un effort tendu, donc, vers la désémotisation pour atteindre l'en deçà de tout sentir et de tout penser, là où le noyau de vérité subjective semble trouver le lieu de sa résidence.

Ce qui fait penser – soit dit en passant – à Sade et à sa recherche de l'Unique, à son abandon final des mots et du désir qu'ils voudraient dire sans succès, dans l'apathie libertine; ou à Pessoa qui voulait aussi accéder à la vérité des choses en dehors, en deçà, au delà des mots qui les disent et permettent de les penser («ne mettez point des étiquettes sur les arbres», disait-il); ou encore à Artaud, dans sa folle recherche du «petit mot», ce mot qui sans être un mot dirait le monde entier et le Sujet, sans toutefois les nommer.

Mais, à la différence de Pessoa et d'Artaud, chez les mystiques il y a aussi une discipline de l'esprit dans sa recherche.

Les mystiques savent que tout lien K (connaissance) se constitue facilement en refus de O (Origine, Réalité Ultime, Chose en Soi) – si vous me permettez d'employer cette terminologie bionienne. Ils sont à l'écoute du moment, des moments de transformation de K en O, ou du mouvement de K vers O. Ils connaissent les indices de changement catastrophique, et les distinguent de ce qui est pure illusion, oeuvre démoniaque.

Jean de la Croix, dans la *Montée du Carmel*: «Aussi l'âme qui veut s'unir à la sagesse de Dieu doit passer par le non-savoir et non par le savoir.»

De même: «Nous voyons également comment ceux qui s'attachent à quelques unes [des créatures] sont aussi bien qu'elles éloignées de Dieu, puisque (...) l'amour rend nos âmes égales et semblables à elles.» Toute tendance vers les créatures est obstacle au mouvement vers le Créateur, ou mieux, pour employer le mot du mystique, est obstacle à la «Transformation en Dieu».

Dans un autre langage: tout lien, K, L, H, est obstacle à la transformation en O.

Quant aux oeuvres de l'imagination, personne n'a mieux montré qu'elles sont fuite de Dieu – fuite de O – que Thérèse d'Avila, dans le *Château Intérieur*. La sémiotisation est démoniaque – et tout contact avec Dieu, par contre, ne donne lieu à trace aucune dans la mémoire, à mot aucun qui puisse la dire.

Là où des images pullulent, c'est du Démon qu'il s'agit, non pas de Dieu.

Recherche du non-pensé, du non-dit, du non-dicible: voici la recherche mystique par excellence.

Mais c'est quoi, cette recherche?

Qu'est-ce qui est recherché, quand vous recherchez le non-pensé, le non-dit, le non-dicible – demande naïvement le non-mystique au mystique.

Question naïve, et la raison en est évidente.

Mais si non-mystique, en plus est psychanalyste, la question est déjà moins naïve – car, du moins, elle a une réponse possible.

Ce qu'on recherche dans ce non-pensé/non-dit, c'est le O bionien, la réalité ultime et première, ce qui est en dehors des transformations, en dehors des liens, ce qui n'est pas α mais n'est pourtant pas β .

Je dirais, à partir d'une autre vertex: ce qu'on recherche c'est le *Soi*.

Comment pouvoir penser que dans le mouvement mystique c'est du *Soi* qu'il s'agit – alors que c'est de Dieu qu'on parle?

Le Chateau Intérieur nous le suggère clairement:

«Je suppliais aujourd’hui Notre Seigneur que par moi il parlât, car je ne savais ni quoi dire ni par où commencer (...) quand il m’a été offert ce que maintenant je dirais pour entrer en matière avec fondement.

Considérons que notre âme ressemble à un chateau... [acceptons] que notre chateau a (...) plusieurs appartements, les uns en haut, les autres en bas, les autres encore sur les côtés, et dans son centre et au milieu de tous est le principal, qui est celui où se passent les choses de plus grand secret entre Dieu et l’âme...»

«Or retournant à notre chateau, voyons comment y entrer.»

Et Thérèse se saisit d’une si étrange question, et ajoute:

«il semble que je dis grande bêtise: en vérité, étant le chateau l’âme, il est évident que nous n’avons pas besoin d’y entrer, puisque chacun de nous l’est; insensé il serait également de dire à quelqu’un d’entrer dans une salle où il est déjà.»

Mais Thérèse tout de suite ajoute cette assertion apparemment mystérieuse:

«Vous comprendrez la distance qui’il y a entre y être et y être»

– car, dirions nous, on peut y être sans y être, on peut y être tout en étant à l’extérieur: dans notre langage, les dynamiques du faux soi sont une manière en effet d’y être sans y être.

Donc, voici le conseil de Thérèse: *«que l’âme rentre en soi»*.

Un énorme et complexe chemin, décrit en détail par Thérèse d’Avila est ensuite décrit, mais d’immédiat il est précisé, utilisant la métaphore de la Source et du Soleil que:

«Il est besoin de remarquer que cette source, ou mieux, le soleil radieux, est dans le centre de l’âme.»

«Il ne perd ni splendeur ni beauté; il n’en sort jamais et rien ne peut le rendre laid.

Il illumine tout. Cependant, si sur un cristal un tissu noir est jeté, pourra le soleil envoyer ses dards: le cristal ne brillera point.»

L’âme-cristal dans le centre de l’âme, mais aussi l’âme soleil, l’âme-source de l’âme dans le centre de l’âme.

Lieu de résidence de Dieu, noyau de l’âme qui ressemble à Dieu. Retrouver l’âme en son centre, c’est retrouver Dieu – est s’unir à Dieu c’est pour l’âme s’unir à son propre centre. *Le centre du Soi*.

Qu’y a-t-il dans ce centre?

Pour y parvenir il faut un dépouillement progressif et méthodique de la perception et de l’imagination. Car la perception égare: elle attire l’attention sur l’*illuminé* au lieu de nous faire entrer dans la *source de lumière*.

Et l’imagination peut faire en sorte que les ténèbres de la nuit soient animées de créatures qui, parce qu’elles sont là, font des ténèbres *fausse nuit*.

Et la nuit de toute chose est nécessaire pour que l’âme se transforme en Dieu:

Par une nuit obscure

Pleine d’angoisse et enflammée d’amour

Oh! l’heureux sort!

Je sortis sans être vue

Tandis que ma demeure était déjà en paix.

– dit le poète mystique dans ce poème «Une nuit obscure», que presque toute son oeuvre commente.

Si la «demeure n'est pas en paix», c'est la «nuit qui est impossible».

Ce qui évoque cette apparemment paradoxale expression de Bion: «a beam of intense darkness». C'est cela aussi le processus analytique: *iluminer avec des ténèbres*, en sorte que tout objet mental devienne visible: tout objet mental au plus près de O – *car les autres objets, saturés de savoir, sont visibles même à côté du Soleil* – tout en étant *faux*. En effet, ce qui, phénoménologiquement, caractérise un *objet bizarre* ou un processus hallucinatoire c'est, précisément, l'hipervisibilité. *L'hipervisibilité de la fausse nuit*.

Revenant aux mystiques: comment peut l'âme «savoir» que dans son mouvement un moment rencontre avec Dieu qui est rencontre avec soi est arrivé?

Le «critère» – si on peut ainsi dire – d'une telle rencontre est l'*évidence de la suspension*.

Suspension qui est l'opération du «*Rien, rien, rien: Rien*» dans la phénoménologie du sentir de l'âme, et qui fait du savoir sur la rencontre justement un non-savoir.

C'est bien ce qui dit Thérèse d'Avila, dans son style consistant à «raconter du premier jet, à sauter du coq à l'âne, à s'exclamer ou à s'épancher», mais qui, pour cette même raison, saisit les mouvements réels de l'âme dans une concrétude que «la rigueur des constructions pures de Jean de la Croix paraît ne pas atteindre» – sauf dans la poésie.

Dit-elle:

«L'Époux commande de fermer les portes des appartements, aussi bien que celles du château... et [tout de suite] l'âme perd le souffle et devient l'incapable de parler; parfois elle conserve (un tout petit peu) les autres sens; mais d'autres fois elle les perd d'immédiat, les mains devenant froides ainsi que le corps, à tel point qu'elle semble morte et personne ne comprend même pas qu'elle respire.

Cette grande suspension ne dure pas longtemps...»

«... (Mais quand cette suspension cesse) la volonté reste inébrée et l'entendement si abstrait, pendant des jours,... que (l'âme) ne fait attention à rien...»

Suspension est en fait le mot adéquat, car maintenant l'âme *ne sait rien, ne voit rien, n'imagine rien, et n'a plus de mots*.

Grand trouble s'y dessine – «ou pensez vous – dit Thérèse – qu'il est trouble léger pour une personne d'être en pleine possession de soi et tout d'un coup voir que l'âme lui est prise (...) sans savoir où va-t-elle, ni qui la mène, ni comment?»

Pendant ces moments, l'âme qui ne voit plus, voit néanmoins avec les «yeux intérieurs».

«Voit» – quoi? Voici ce qui ne saurait être énoncé, car d'une telle «vision», souvenir aucun ne reste. Une *trace*, oui: pas un souvenir.

Dit Thérèse:

«Tout en étant indicibles, toutes ces choses restent aussi bien écrites dans le plus intime de l'âme qu'elles ne s'évanouissent plus jamais.»

Voici donc la trajectoire vers le plus intime du château, là où rien ne semble exister et qui cependant est tout, là où ce qui est non-vu semble fonder la possibilité de toute vision, là où reside le Soleil et le Cristal, la Lumière et la Source de Lumière, mais aucun objet *illuminé*.

Ce qui, à l'intérieur du Château, au centre de l'âme, dans le Dieu de la «transformation de l'âme en Dieu», a lieu de résidence c'est l'Unité Originnaire, l'intuition de l'Unique.

Non pas un tout, une totalité synthétique atteinte dans/par la dialectique de l'opposition sujet-objet mais «une quête de l'unité originelle précédant cette opposition comme toute opposition», selon l'expression de Sami Ali.

Quête de l'unité originelle, de l'Unique, qui est quête du vrai soi – pour utiliser ce mot Winnicottien – ou, dans le langage de Bion, de la réalité ultime, ou encore, dans la conception de Sami Ali, de *l'espace imaginaire mais en tant que pur espace*, lieu d'accueil de toutes les images suivant la logique d'inclusion réciproque que toute position mystique restitue.

C'est la logique d'inclusion réciproque, en effet, qui fait que tout ce que dit le mystique introduit le chaos dans les oppositions de la pensée finie pour finalement les abolir.

Quelles oppositions?

Outre celle, fondamentale, du sujet et de l'objet, celle du dedans et du dehors, celle du proche et du lointain, celle du visible et de l'invisible, et, aussi importante que la première, celle du signe et de la chose signifiée.

Car il est propre de l'expérience subjective mystique de ne pas se dire. Tout mot est déjà fausseté, substitution, aliénation.

D'ailleurs: à qui ou à quoi pourrait-elle se dire?

Dans l'extase mystique le sujet et l'objet sont liés à nouveau – et il n'y a pas alors *un autre* à qui adresser parole.

Car l'Autre, l'Autre par excellence dans cette expérience, est à l'intérieur du Soi – *est Soi*.

Si vous me permettez de faire un saut de 6 siècles, je vous dirais deux poèmes de Hallaj,² mystique arabe du X siècle, qui disent infiniment mieux que moi ce que je viens d'essayer de dire:

1er poème:

*«Je t'ai écrit sans écrire
C'est plutôt à mon esprit
Que j'ai écrit sans écrire
Car rien ne sépare l'esprit de son Bien-Aimé
Fût-ce l'écart d'une lettre,
Et toute lettre émanant de Toi
Parvenant à Toi
Est un réponse sans renvoi de réponse.»*

2ème poème:

*«Ton image est dans mon Oeil
Ton invocation dans ma bouche
Ta demeure dans mon coeur
Où donc peux-tu être absent?»*

Où donc peux-tu être absent?

En effet, où-en-moi, dans quelle partie de moi qui est le tout de moi, dans quel temps qui est tout le temps, pourrais-tu/je être absent de moi, moi qui adviens à moi en toi et toi qui adviens à toi en moi?

Voici ce qui, avec les limites du langage, nous met auprès de l'espace imaginaire qui est aussi en tant que pur espace le lieu de l'expérience mystique.

Pourrait-on dire alors que de toutes les expériences la plus tendu et la plus parfaite serait l'expérience mystique?

² Traduction de l'arabe par Sami Ali.

Ou, à l'inverse, pourrait-on dire que, au contraire de toutes les autres expériences, seule l'expérience mystique serait celle de la parfaite union du Soi au Soi, toute tension dans l'extase étant absente?

Pourrait-on dire que l'expérience mystique est la forme de connaissance dans la non-connaissance la plus achevée et la plus complète?

Je ne pense pas. *C'est une trajectoire*, une façon de se révéler à Soi. Mais ce n'est pas dans l'extase – c'est à dire dans l'interpenetration du Soi au Soi – que réside le versant exemplaire de l'expérience mystique. Là où le versant exemplaire apparaît c'est plutôt dans *l'oscillation* entre le silence et le dire, entre l'intuition directe et le détour par le signe.

Il ne faudrait pas oublier, par exemple, que l'expérience mystique de Jean de la Croix n'est pas dite, certes, au moment même où elle a lieu, mais elle se révèle avec une extrême contraction dans les poèmes qui à elle font référence. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que le mystique a ensuite écrit un traité pour commenter 2 strophes d'un poème qui a 8 strophes, et y consacré les 500 pages de la *Montée du Carmel*, plus les 200 pages de la *Nuit Obscure*.

C'est dire que l'intuition de l'union de Soi à Soi exige pour être vécue en toute plénitude le contraste des détours par les mots, ou, dit d'une autre façon, il semblerait que *le mystique exige l'absence pour pouvoir reconstituer le chemin vers l'union, exige la souffrance pour avoir l'intuition de la plénitude, et sollicite les mouvements de la pensée pour avoir accès au non-pensé*.

C'est à dire, dans un langage bionien, en dehors des transformations, O reste réfractaire à toute intuition. *O ne se donne que comme mouvement vers O*, ce qui n'est que l'inverse du mouvement qui éloigne d'O.

Hallaj le dit clairement:

*«Je te veux, je ne te veux pas en raison de la récompense
Mais je te veux en raison de la punition
Car j'ai tout obtenu de ce que je désire
Sauf les délices de ma passion dans la souffrance.»*

Et, plus clairement encore:

*«Que me suffise le chagrin de toujours T'invoquer
Comme si j'étais loin ou comme si
Tu étais absent
Et que je te demande la grâce sans la désirer
Car je n'ai vu avant moi personne
Qui renonce à toi tout
En Te désirant.»*

Dans la récompense, la plénitude cesse, puisque l'élan s'arrête et la recherche s'évanouit. Ce n'est pas la fin qui compte, mais le chemin pour y parvenir.

C'est à dire que la subjectivité est ainsi faite qu'elle ne peut se penser comme vécue que dans et par l'absence de l'autre, auquel elle s'adresse pour devenir objet de pensée et d'intuition. Toute subjectivité est ainsi radicalement aliénée dans le signe.

Il n'y a là rien de tragique: je dirais même, au contraire. Car c'est dans la recherche que toute subjectivité délimite dans l'espace et dans le temps que surgit le temps du plaisir et de la jouissance.

Si dans la perte absolue aussi bien que dans l'absolue rencontre le Sujet disparaîtrait dans la Mort – c'est par contre dans la pulsation du Signe en tant que nouvelle construction (*et non pas symbole de pure perte*) que la subjectivité arrive à se vivre et à se dire.

La source de toute jouissance ne réside pas dans l'absolue rencontre, dans la disparition de la faille (disparition que serait aussi, en même temps, mort du sentir et du penser), mais plutôt dans cet unique jeu qui est jeu avec les signes. Jeu sérieux et jeu ludique – mais jeu – où pendant un temps on peut même faire semblant de croire que le signe est la chose – et aimer ce signe d'un amour aussi grand que celui avec lequel, sans le sentir et sans le penser, nous avons aimé la Chose, que par ailleurs nous aimons toujours.

Voilà ce que, me semble-t-il, les mystiques nous apprennent aussi.

L'Expérience Intérieure dans *L'Abbé C.* de Georges Bataille

HENK HILLENAAR (*)

L'abbé C., le roman que Georges Bataille publia en 1950, est un texte qui dérange le lecteur: plus «nouveau roman» que la plupart des ouvrages de cette époque qui furent appelés ainsi, ce texte original, étrange et inquiétant, est resté aussi plus marginal que ces derniers. Un tel sort, quelque prévisible qu'il fût, n'était certainement pas mérité, car *L'abbé C.* nous livre sous une forme dramatisée l'essentiel de la pensée de son auteur, pensée dont l'influence se révélera être déterminante pour l'époque qui va suivre. Bataille sera en effet le maître à penser des maîtres à penser des années 60 et 70, de Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva, Lacan, pour ne citer que les noms les plus connus. A côté de Sartre et *Les Temps Modernes* qui représentent, somme tout, la tradition de l'humanisme, il y aura désormais, et cela de plus en plus, Bataille, la revue *Critique* et le courant «anti-humaniste», structuraliste et postmoderne. Nous verrons que Jacques Lacan notamment semble devoir à Bataille plus qu'il n'a voulu nous le dire.

L'abbé C. est donc, comme le fut *Madame Edwarda* quelques années auparavant, mais en bien plus long, une mise en scène du noyau «athéologique» de la pensée de Bataille. C'est cette pensée, ou plutôt cette réflexion de l'auteur sur «l'expérience intérieure» que nous présenterons ici à partir de *L'abbé C.*. De ce roman nous analyserons un chapitre plus en détail, et ce faisant, nous renverrons également à la dimension inconsciente du texte, et aux liens qui existent avec la pensée de Freud et avec celle de Jacques Lacan.

L'ATHÉOLOGIE DE BATAILLE

«Athéologie» ne renvoie pas, chez Bataille, à «athéisme». Car d'après ce dernier, même si Dieu est mort, comme on nous l'a tant de fois annoncé, l'expérience que nous avons de Lui est restée: non pas celle de sa présence mais – plus que jamais – de son absence, celle dont tant de mystiques ont, eux aussi, souffert. Bataille dira un jour là-dessus à Madeleine Chapsal:

Tout le monde sait ce que représente Dieu pour l'ensemble des hommes qui y croient, et quelle place il occupe dans leur pensée, et je pense que lorsqu'on supprime le

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personnage de Dieu à cette place-là, il reste tout de même quelque chose, une place vide. C'est de cette place vide que j'ai voulu parler¹.

Cette parole a trouvé son expression la plus poussée dans *L'Expérience intérieure* (1943), livre qui essaie de formuler, dans le sillage de Nietzsche, l'expérience de l'absence définitive de Dieu. Bataille a cependant bien peu d'un Übermensch, l'idéal qu'il poursuit serait plutôt celui d'un décadent, ce qui rend l'étude de son ouvrage plus complexe encore.

Ainsi la nuit mystique, l'expérience de l'absence divine, qui trouvait chez les saints sa raison et sa fin en la présence promise de Dieu, sera radicalisée par Bataille, pour qui Dieu *est* désormais lui-même la nuit. Transposant une parole de René Char qui définissait l'homme ainsi, Bataille appellera Dieu «le voeu le plus fou des ténèbres». Pour l'auteur de *L'abbé C.*, le néant est le commencement et la fin de tout. La mort étant toujours et partout à l'oeuvre, la vie – le «continu» – ne saurait être qu'un accident dans ce monde du «discontinu» qu'est la mort. Elle ne fait que traverser la mort, qui est plus fondamentale, ayant toujours la dernière parole.

Ce sont là des réalités que nous avons tendance à oublier, et qu'il vaut du reste mieux oublier, refouler la plupart du temps, si nous voulons continuer à vivre et à fonctionner. Mais Bataille nous rappelle – comme le font aussi Lautréamont, Blanchot, et même Proust – le revers de cette médaille: l'existence, hors de nous et en notre for intérieur, d'une «part maudite»²: agression, mensonge, sadomasochisme et autres forces destructrices qui font partie de notre réalité d'être humain, et sur la négation desquelles nous avons, au cours des siècles, «fondé l'édifice social et l'image de l'homme».³

Or, pour Bataille, nous ne saurions avoir une véritable vie humaine sans voir en face cette «part maudite», et sans avoir l'expérience du mystère qu'elle cache: celui de l'absence de Dieu et de la présence, en nous et autour de nous, de la mort. Selon lui, une telle expérience n'est possible que si nous osons nous avancer hors des lieux qui délimitent notre vie quotidienne, dans un espace qui, normalement, est marqué du signe de l'interdit. L'ordre, les codes, le projet, tout ce qui définit notre vie de travail, ne sauraient subsister en nous s'ils n'entrent pas, de temps en temps, en contact avec le monde de l'interdit, s'ils n'explorent pas leur au-delà, leur excès, leur secret.

LE BINARISME

En fait, notre vérité, notre authenticité se situe, aux yeux de Bataille, dans un va et vient entre deux mondes: le premier est appelé le «monde profane» – celui du projet, du travail: exploitation de la terre, observation de la loi morale, poursuite du «bien» – et l'autre, appelé «monde sacré», au-delà ou en-deça des limites du premier, est le monde du «mal», de l'interdit, de tout ce qui touche à cette «part maudite»: liberté gratuite, transgression de la loi, attirance pour le danger et la mort. Face à l'ascèse que demandent le monde profane, la raison et l'ordre social, que Bataille prend très au sérieux, celui-ci professe la nécessité de pratiquer, par intervalles, et cela réellement et imaginativement, toutes sortes d'excès: ivresse, folles dépenses, sacrifices et destructions, une sexualité débridée surtout. En écrivant cela, il ne pense nullement à la force régénératrice que l'excès et le «mal» ont dans la tradition populaire, chez un Rabelais par exemple. Les transgressions qu'il prône doivent uniquement nous permettre d'aller plus loin dans l'exploration du possible. Par leur éclat, leur fulgurance, elles doivent, surtout, nous faire comprendre ce qu'est la vie, une vie qui n'atteint sa vérité ultime que face à la mort.

¹ *Quinze écrivains*, Paris, 1963, p. 8.

² *La part maudite. Essai d'économie générale* est le titre d'un livre que Bataille publia en 1949 aux éditions de Minuit.

³ Georges Bataille, *La littérature et le Mal*, Paris: Gallimard, 1957, p. 141.

Le paradoxe que soutient Bataille est donc le suivant: Si nous ne vivons que dans le monde quotidien, selon la loi, et dans la logique de nos projets, nous nous acheminons, lentement mais sûrement, vers l'ennui, l'extinction des forces vitales, et la mort. Si par contre nous osons nous exposer, nous ouvrir à ce véritable «fondement de l'être» qu'est l'ombre du néant, de la mort, connaissant l'ivresse, le danger, le mensonge, l'érotisme exacerbé, nous retrouvons l'intensité originelle de la vie... Bataille redécouvre à sa façon une partie de la tradition chrétienne et mystique: «Mors et vita duello confluxere mirando», mais sans l'idée d'une transcendance, puisqu'il est sûr que la mort finira par l'emporter. En attendant, répète-t-il, il vaut mieux vivre cette réalité les yeux ouverts au lieu de la refouler et de boucher ainsi non seulement l'horizon mais la source même de la vie... Le biographe de Bataille, Michel Surya, le dit ainsi:

Bataille [...] choisit l'immanence contre la transcendance, le mal contre le bien, l'inutile contre l'utile, le désordre contre l'ordre, la contagion contre l'immunisation, la dépense contre la capitalisation, [...] le présent contre le futur [...], le caprice contre le calcul etc.⁴

Dans l'extase, le sujet humain, mystique, surmonte pendant un moment ce binarisme, ces réalités contradictoires cessent d'apparaître en tant que telles. Bataille cite à ce propos le *Manifeste* des surréalistes, dont le message est analogue. Il préconise un processus de régression et – littéralement – une ouverture de l'être, du corps humain: Bataille est fasciné par les orifices du corps: par l'oeil notamment, et par l'«œil mystique» qu'est l'anus, très présent également dans son oeuvre, ne serait-ce que par les noms qu'il donne à ses personnages: madame Hanusse, Raymonde (raie-immonde), et, bien entendu, l'abbé C. Il a en outre une prédilection pour les êtres les plus bas: la putain et le boucher avec son couteau, le porc, la boue, la merde, et cela non pas pour provoquer mais pour dire le manque et ce qu'il appelle la supplication. Aussi Bataille aime-t-il donner la place de Dieu à la prostituée, à l'être exposé et ouvert par excellence.

LE «PROJET» MYSTIQUE

Les humains qui partagent cet idéal, ce «projet» mystique, forment une communauté: Bataille parle à ce propos d'une «communauté négative», car ce que ces personnes ont en commun, c'est le manque, et le savoir du néant qui règne en elles et hors d'elles. Elles peuvent, bien sûr, partager aussi certaines valeurs positives – projets humanistes ou idées morales –, dans le fond cependant elles sont toutes des êtres solitaires, monades sans harmonie préétablie, qui se reconnaissent les unes les autres essentiellement par le manque, la supplication et la souffrance qui les unissent. Cette communauté est la plus intense, la plus vraie dans l'extase transgressive causée par l'ivresse, l'érotisme pervers ou l'imminence de la mort.

La jouissance que nous connaissons à ces moments-là est humaine parce qu'elle s'accompagne de conscience. Bataille parle même d'une jouissance «divine», car, chose remarquable, là où la présence de Dieu aboutissait à un monde fermé, un Tout – résultat d'un mouvement de l'inconnu au connu – l'absence de Dieu, quelque angoissante qu'elle soit, se révèle en définitive, selon lui, «plus divine que sa présence». C'est que, allant du connu à l'inconnu, elle mène plus loin, nous faisant faire, avant notre chute dans le noir définitif, une traversée de l'être plus intense, plus vraie⁵. Et

⁴ Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille. La mort à l'oeuvre*, Librairie Séguier, 1987, p. 383.

⁵ *L'expérience intérieure*, collection TEL, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 129 et 157.

Bataille de répéter que la mort, le mal et la transgression de l'interdit sont nécessaires à la vie, si nous voulons la vivre dans sa fascinante vérité: comme une vie pour la mort.

LE LANGAGE ET SON GLISSEMENT

Chose assez remarquable Bataille formule dès 1940 une anthropologie centrée sur la langage humain, qui va faire très long feu et que bien de ses disciples vont reprendre, en la nuancant et en la modifiant. Voici ce qu'il écrit:

En ce qui touche les hommes, leur existence se lie au langage. Chaque personne imagine, partant connaît, son existence à l'aide de mots. Les mots lui viennent dans la tête chargés de la multitude d'existences humaines – ou non humaines – par rapport à laquelle existe son existence privée. L'être est en lui-même médiatisé par les mots, qui ne peuvent se donner qu'arbitrairement comme «être autonome» et profondément comme «être en rapport». Il suffit de suivre à la trace, peu de temps, les parcours répétés des mots pour apercevoir, en une sorte de vision, la construction labyrinthique de l'être⁶.

Bataille retrouve ainsi au niveau du langage le binarisme qu'il a tant prôné au niveau des idées. L'un des premiers à emprunter à la linguistique moderne ses concepts de base, il distinguera dans le langage deux processus qui s'appellent et se complètent: Dans celui de l'énoncé, il reconnaîtra les contours de ce qu'il a lui-même appelé monde du «bien» ou du «projet». Mais derrière l'énoncé se cache l'énonciation, cette force du dire dans le langage, ou Bataille retrouve l'expérience intérieure du manque, de l'ouverture, de la supplication, du vouloir en dernière analyse. Or l'énonciation peut se soumettre à l'énoncé, suivre celui-ci, en renonçant à son propre dynamisme, ou, par contre, aller dans un autre sens et explorer l'inconnu: Bataille a de longs exposés sur «le sacrifice du langage» ou encore sur «la perversion du langage», anticipant dès 1940 sur les théories philosophiques et littéraires qui règneront à partir de 1960...

Ainsi l'ouverture du corps qui est racontée dans le langage en tant qu'énoncé s'accompagne d'une ouverture du *corps subtil* –l'expression est de Lacan –, c'est-à-dire du langage en tant qu'énonciation, et cela grâce à toutes sortes de figures de style qui y maintiennent mouvement et ouverture: la condensation et le déplacement, la répétition, l'oxymore, et surtout ce «glissement des mots» dont Bataille parle tant – «Ce qui rend un mot mystique, c'est son itinéraire», disait Michel de Certeau –, toutes des figures qui dérangent, qui essaient de dire l'impossible, de faire voir ou pressentir «ce dont on n'a pas idée» ou «ce qui ne ressemble à rien».

UNE MYSTIQUE A REBOURS

L'Abbé C. est la «dramatisation» d'une telle expérience: Le roman, qui, comme une pièce classique, comprend cinq parties, raconte l'histoire de deux frères jumeaux, Robert et Charles C. Robert, l'abbé dont parle le titre du livre, représente, assez paradoxalement, le monde profane, celui du travail, du projet, c'est-à-dire ici de la religion comme projet humain. Son frère Charles, le libertin de l'histoire, est le représentant du monde sacré, si essentiel aux yeux de Bataille: il vit de transgressions, d'excès et d'ivresses de toute sorte. Dans ces deux personnages on peut reconnaître également les deux visages d'un seul être humain, et dans leur affrontement la lutte, mieux encore, l'expérience intérieure du narrateur (ou de l'éditeur) de l'histoire.

⁶ *L'expérience intérieure*, pp. 99-100.

Le roman raconte le passage – les pâques – de Robert, l'abbé, qui quitte son propre monde et «passe» dans celui de son frère Charles, son alter ego, véritable conversion qui s'effectue surtout grâce à la présence de la prostituée Eponine. Mais au cours du récit, Robert rencontrera aussi d'autres femmes, et il connaîtra les effets du vin, et ceux, plus cruels et plus mystérieux, de la trahison... Le livre décrit donc une espèce de mystique à rebours, ou le héros rejoint peu à peu le monde de l'absence divine. Pour décrire ce cheminement, le récit emprunte à la mystique traditionnelle – Bataille est un grand lecteur d'auteurs mystiques – tout un arsenal de termes, idées et procédés. Le titre du livre est à sa manière déjà porteur de secret. Est-ce qu'il renvoie à un abbé quelconque, ou, comme plusieurs autres noms figurant dans ce roman, à une obscénité? Ou parle-t-il de l'itinéraire de l'abbé R(ober) qui au cours du récit adopte peu à peu les façons de voir et d'agir de son frère C(harles)? Bataille ne rejette évidemment aucune de ces solutions, mais il joue en même temps avec la notion d'«abc»: l'arbitraire de l'ordre alphabétique va ici de pair avec l'idée d'abécédaire, c'est-à-dire de méthode, de voie à suivre. Tout cela est dans le mysticisme athéologique que décrit ce récit.

UN CHAPITRE: «L'ÉVIDENCE»

Voici donc, à titre d'exemple, l'un de ces vingt-huit chapitres de *L'Abbé C.*, qui a comme titre «L'évidence». Ce texte, choisi au hasard – car tous les chapitres qu'écrivit Georges Bataille se prêtent à une analyse du même genre – se situe au milieu du livre: Charles et Eponine veulent tous les deux entraîner Robert, l'abbé, dans leur «expérience» qui est sous le signe du libertinage sexuel. Ils passent la nuit ensemble, mais ils ont peur d'un autre amant d'Eponine, le boucher du quartier, qui semble rôder autour de la maison avec son couteau... C'est Charles qui raconte cet épisode:

Dans l'affaissement qui suivit, je me dressai, saisi d'un tremblement déagréable.

J'entendis une galopade; quelqu'un dans la nuit courait à travers les rues, mais le bruit s'éloignait. Il me sembla même que, dès l'abord, il venait d'une rue transversale. Eponine écoutait avec moi. Je passai la main sur son front: il était humide et froid. J'avais moi-même une sensation de sueur froide, j'avais la migraine et mal au coeur.

Je me levai. Je vis de la fenêtre, dans la rue, une ombre se glisser. L'ombre qui s'éloignait se perdit dans l'obscurité. En un sens, j'étais soulagé de voir le danger passé. Le boucher s'en allait, si c'était lui. De le voir, néanmoins, m'avait donné un coup au coeur. J'avais mal à l'idée d'une horreur aussi humiliante: c'était hideusement comique, et, dans la nuit très sombre, si triste que j'avais une sorte d'effroi à fixer l'endroit où l'ombre avait disparu. Je songeais au boucher: le personnage le plus sinistre..., mais, encore qu'à la fin l'idée d'Eponine eût cessé de me sembler folle, j'avais un doute. Je m'étais refusé jusqu'alors à chercher, mais je venais de voir l'ombre glisser et elle pouvait encore se dissimuler en quelque recoin obscur de la rue. Je voulais échapper à ma pensée...

J'avais d'ailleurs à me demander comment nous avions pu ne rien entendre au moment où l'ombre s'était, comme il fallait croire, arrêtée devant la maison... Le problème était simple: logiquement, le contraire s'était passé. Arrêtée sous la fenêtre, l'ombre dut entendre nos râles!... Nous n'entendîmes rien. Cette pensée elle-même était lourde. La première l'était davantage. Sa soutane aurait-elle été boueuse si Robert n'avait pas erré, dans la nuit, comme il le fit la première fois, le jour où Eponine et moi le reconnûmes? Au surplus, n'avais-je pas eu le sentiment que cette ombre était celle d'un homme en soutane, ou celle d'une femme en longue robe noire? L'évidence était si bien faite en moi, et j'étais si peu surpris, que je revins vers

Eponine: je riais.

– Etrange! lui dis-je, dans la nuit, les bouchers ont l'air de prêtres.

Le poids du sommeil qui la gagnait tirait les épaules et la tête d'Eponine au sol. Elle était assise au bord du lit, et ma phrase l'éveilla, mais la pesanteur parut l'emporter. Mon humeur était si belle que ce vain effort, à la faible lumière de la lampe, me fit rire un peu plus.

Voulant qu'elle m'entendît, je lui pris les mains:

– C'est Robert! lui dis-je.

Elle leva la tête et me regarda, égarée: elle se demandait si, soudain, elle n'était pas devenue folle.

– Oui, Robert, l'abbé... A moins que le boucher ne sorte en soutane. Mais non, «c'est Robert!»

Elle répéta le nom:

– Robert!

Je lui tenais encore une main.

C'était si évident, si renversant. Le jour éclatait soudainement dans la nuit. L'obscurité était claire, les larmes riaient...

Eponine riait, elle cachait ce rire dans ses mains; mais elle était nue, et cette nudité riait. C'était un rire doux, intime, excessivement gêné.

Je regardais ce rire, ou plutôt il me faisait mal.

C'était la même chose qu'un excès d'angoisse; dans l'excès d'angoisse, ce léger rire est sournoisement étouffé. Ce rire est au coeur de la volupté excessive et la rend douloureuse.

Le plus intimement que je pus, je glissai à l'oreille d'Eponine:

– Tu es la même chose que Robert.

– Oui, dit-elle. Je suis heureuse.

Je me couchai près d'elle sans la toucher. Elle me tournait le dos, le visage dans les mains. Elle ne bougeait pas et, au bout d'un long temps, je vis qu'elle s'était endormie. Le sommeil à mon tour me gagnait. J'avais le sentiment d'une renversante simplicité. En tout ce qui venait d'arriver, il y avait une renversante simplicité. Je le savais: mes angoisses ou les mines de Robert étaient un jeu. Mais comme je dormais à demi, je cessai de faire une différence entre une simplicité qui me renversait et la conscience d'une immense trahison. Je l'apercevais soudain: l'univers, l'univers entier, dont l'inconcevable présence s'impose à moi, était trahison, trahison prodigieuse, ingénue. Je serais en peine de dire aujourd'hui le sens du mot, mais je sais qu'il avait l'univers pour objet, et qu'il n'existait nulle part, et d'aucune façon, rien d'autre... Je cédai au sommeil: ce fut le seul moyen de supporter. Mais j'eus aussitôt la certitude que la «trahison» m'échappait. Et ne pouvant me résigner à cette universelle trahison, je ne pouvais admettre davantage qu'elle m'échappât! Je le dis lourdement (ce qui précède rend mal ce que j'éprouvai), mais dans l'alternance du sommeil et d'une évidence irrecevable, je trouvai l'apaisement. Cela tenait d'un conte de fées, j'étais heureux. Si je disais maintenant que la mort est mon apaisement, j'irais trop loin, en ce sens du moins: il y eut dans cet insaisissable glissement une évidence soudaine: dans la mesure ou je me souviens, l'évidence demeure, mais si j'écris!..

TRAGÉDIE ET AVENTURE MYSTIQUE

Le lecteur quelque peu averti reconnaîtra dans ce chapitre comme partout ailleurs dans *L'Abbé C.* – le récit ou la mise en scène d'une aventure mystique: le passage de la nuit des sens et de l'esprit à la lumière de l'union amoureuse, mystique, en l'occurrence avec la divinité de l'absence, la prostituée. Cette union est signifiée ici par les paroles mystérieuses que Charles adresse à Eponine et qui constituent le cœur du texte: «Tu es la même chose que Robert». La structure du chapitre, les thèmes, les procédés stylistiques et le vocabulaire, tout concourt à nous faire participer à cette «expérience intérieure», ou du moins à nous la rendre plus proche et plus acceptable.

La structure est double: d'un côté, nous retrouvons dans ces lignes l'écho ou l'ombre des trois voies traditionnelles de l'ascension mystique, devenue ici plutôt une descente aux enfers: les voies purgative (la nuit, le froid, la souffrance), illuminative (l'obscurité devenue claire, l'évidence) et unitive (la jouissance, la renversante simplicité, l'universelle trahison). De l'autre côté, Bataille nous donne un texte en cinq parties, formule dans laquelle il est permis de reconnaître celle de l'ancienne tragédie ou le héros s'achemine inexorablement vers sa haute et funèbre destinée. La mise en scène de l'expérience intérieure comporte, comme celle de la crise tragique, cinq étapes, occupant ici non pas cinq actes mais cinq paragraphes: l'angoisse – «l'affaissement» et «le mal de cœur» – du premier paragraphe est suivie par la décision prise au second – «je me dressai» – puis, dans le troisième, par la réalisation du désir de transgression – «c'est Robert» – et par le rire extatique qui s'ensuit au quatrième paragraphe. Le tout trouve sa solution dans la mystérieuse conscience – entre sommeil et savoir – de l'universelle «trahison», conscience qui remplace la présence divine à jamais enfuie...

LE «GLISSEMENT»

Ce texte assez bref semble souligner notamment quatre notions chères à son auteur: «L'ombre qui se glisse», «l'évidence», «le rire» et «la trahison». Chacune d'elles revient avec insistance, parfois sept ou huit fois, dans ces quelques lignes. Ensemble, elles permettent une mise en scène de l'expérience intérieure: dans l'ombre qui se glisse autour de la maison, déposant ses excréments sur le pas de la porte, Eponine a d'abord cru reconnaître la présence d'un de ses amants, du boucher du quartier armé d'un couteau dont il menaçait Charles, son rival. Mais en ce dernier le sentiment s'installe peu à peu qu'il s'agit d'un homme en soutane, c'est-à-dire de son propre frère Robert, qui, tel le héros du *Cantique des Cantiques*, court désormais la nuit à travers les rues, cherchant sa bien-aimée, Eponine, sa chute et sa chance. Robert est en train de passer ainsi dans leur monde, celui de la transgression, de la violence et de l'érotisme. C'est cela, l'évidence qui illumine cette nuit mystique: rien ne les sépare plus désormais, si bien que Charles peut déclarer à Eponine: «Tu es la même chose que Robert».

Ainsi, une confusion s'opère au-delà des limites que nous impose la discontinuité «accablante» de la vie quotidienne. Boucher et prêtre perdent leurs contours, les deux frères et la prostituée se confondent dans une discontinuité «heureuse» ou le rire les amène. En effet, ce rire qui envahit Charles et ensuite Eponine, est bonheur, perte de soi, mais aussi savoir: conscience d'un état d'union pénible mais bienheureux. Pour rendre une telle expérience indicible, l'oxymore est le meilleur interprète: les larmes du corps rient, accompagnant l'évidence de l'esprit, son obscurité qui est clarté.

L'auteur reprend à ce propos le mot essentiel du *Discours de la Méthode*: «évidence», qui entérine chez Descartes le règne de la raison, mais qui pour Bataille dit la présence de son contraire, celle du monde irrationnel qui nous gouverne. Dans ce dernier, sujet et objet, devenus non-savoir et inconnu, se confondent, tout en procurant à ce même sujet une conscience aigüe de ce qui lui arrive, et du monde secret où il pénètre. Ce secret n'est pas la castration, comme le couteau du boucher aurait pu nous le faire croire, car celle-ci inaugure la vie dans la discontinuité à laquelle les personna-

ges de Bataille essaient justement d'échapper. Non, le secret est appelé ici «la trahison prodigieuse» de l'univers, celui-ci perdant ses limites, ses contours. Le narrateur a réalisé qu'au-delà de notre monde quotidien, discontinu et banal, aucune consistance, aucune identité, aucun savoir ne tiennent. Tout y est simple mais d'une simplicité qui renverse et fait perdre pied: tout y glisse comme glissent les ombres dans la nuit ou les corps amoureux lorsqu'ils se perdent l'un dans l'autre. Sentiment exaltant sans doute, mais pénible aussi, et à la fin insupportable car menant à la mort.

Nous touchons ici à l'indicible, à l'expérience qui vise à «introduire dans un monde fondé sur la discontinuité toute la continuité dont ce monde est susceptible». Tragédie ou cheminement mystique: le narrateur, lui, préfère parler d'un «conte de fées». Beaucoup de choses, en effet, nous échappent, mais la réalité d'une expérience sortant de l'ordinaire ne s'en impose pas moins à celui qui se laisse aller à cet «insaisissable glissement», osant partager dans une communauté de lecteur la réalité du manque et de la «trahison» qui se cache au coeur de toute existence.

INCONNU OU INCONSCIENT?

Pour éclairer son itinéraire, l'athéologie de Bataille se sert plus ou moins clairement des théories Freudiennes sur l'inconscient. On l'aura remarqué dans l'emploi de certains symboles – celui du couteau du boucher, par exemple, ou de l'analité presque obsessionnelle ailleurs dans le roman. Plus frappante encore est la façon dont les mécanismes fondamentaux du travail du rêve deviennent chez Bataille la clé même de l'expérience intérieure. Dans le «glissement» et le «tu es la même chose» qui mènent le jeu des personnages, nous reconnaissons le déplacement et la condensation dont parle la *Traumdeutung*.

Plus spécifiquement encore, la transformation du boucher en prêtre nous renvoie au phénomène de la régression, l'un des plus typiques de l'inconscient humain. Le conflit oedipien et l'acceptation de la castration, qui forment l'enjeu de la menace du boucher, sont contournés au profit d'un état pré-oedipien auquel le narrateur préfère ramener ses héros. Ce texte comme du reste toutes les évocations mystiques de l'expérience intérieure semblent bien être des représentations d'un monde pré-oedipien. Il ne manque en effet rien ici de ce qui caractérise cet état bienheureux et pénible à la fois. L'essentiel est, bien entendu, l'absence d'autrui, l'autre en tant qu'autre étant remplacé par le même. La scène à laquelle nous assistons ici ne raconte pas l'amour de deux ou si l'on veut trois êtres humains, mais l'extase narcissique d'un individu en qui toute identité se perd. Dans ce roman, la sexualité n'est pas décrite comme une rencontre mais comme un effort violent pour retrouver l'impossible unité du commencement. Il n'y a même pas de place ici pour un début de «roman familial». Celui-ci est remplacé par l'idée d'une communauté dans le manque, ou d'une vue dans un univers de trahison. Un tel refus, ou une telle fuite devant la loi de la castration, la loi du père, n'est autre que la perversion. Bataille nous la propose comme une recherche, un choix conscients. Mais cette hantise du tout et du rien, du même et de la mort, dit aussi la résistance de l'auteur contre l'inconscient tel que Freud le conçoit, c'est-à-dire constitué à partir d'une histoire personnelle. Il est remarquable dans ce contexte que, la perversion étant devenue ainsi un projet – le seul admissible dans l'expérience intérieure telle que Bataille la conçoit –, celui-ci ait été le premier à appeler la littérature «la perversion du langage». C'est à ce projet aussi qu'il se réfère lorsqu'il écrit:

S'il fallait me donner une place dans l'histoire de la pensée, ce serait, je crois, pour avoir discerné les effets, dans notre vie humaine, de «l'évanouissement du réel discursif», et pour avoir tiré de la description de ces effets une lumière évanouissante: cette lumière éblouit peut-être, mais elle annonce l'opacité de la nuit⁷.

⁷ *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Gallimard, t.V, 1973, p. 231.

BATAILLE ET LACAN

Jacques Lacan a repris plus d'une idée ou intuition de Georges Bataille. Mais, chose assez paradoxale, le psychanalyste a tendance à rationaliser le philosophe. La pulsion ne semble en effet plus tellement intéresser Lacan. Ce qu'il retient, c'est surtout le rôle du «corps subtil», du langage humain qui médiatise le labyrinthe de l'être. Et à ses yeux, l'homme ne sera pas plus propriétaire de son discours qu'il ne l'est de son désir.

Lacan se reconnaîtra également dans les idées de Bataille sur le vide qui habite le langage. Comme l'auteur de *L'expérience intérieure*, il mettra l'accent sur l'absence divine, celle du père en l'occurrence. Ce qui nous reste du père, ce n'est que son nom, fondement arbitraire de l'ordre social, rendant également possible le jeu, plus ou moins pervers justement, du langage. Moins radical, moins unilatéral que Bataille, Lacan ne suit nullement son ami dans les préférences de ce dernier pour le monde de l'irrationnel. Chez Lacan, on le sait, le code de l'Autre, et avec lui l'Oedipe, restent toujours à l'horizon. Là où Bataille débouche sur la mort dont l'expérience intérieure est comme l'approche ou le frôlement, Lacan préfère opter pour la structure ouverte du sujet parlant. Car le langage tel qu'il est défini par Lacan reste essentiellement ouvert, le sens d'un signifiant y étant toujours reporté sur d'autres signifiants. Plus encore que chez Bataille, l'énoncé est traité par lui en enfant pauvre. Herméneutiquement parlant, nous sommes condamnés avec lui à rester sur notre faim. Ce qui unit les deux auteurs, c'est la tendance qu'ils partagent à vouloir sacrifier le sens des signifiants – et notamment leur sens refoulé, dérivant d'une histoire personnelle – aux structures, les signifiants devenant avant tout les traces d'un manque ou d'une perte. Mais avec Lacan nous restons loin de toute herméneutique. Dans ce domaine les analyses de Freud, dont, comme on sait, les théories doivent beaucoup à la littérature et à la science littéraire, mènent plus loin. Chez lui le mot signifiant est avant tout porteur d'un contenu, même si ce contenu n'est jamais définitif et obéit aux lois, notamment, du déplacement et de la condensation.

LE LANGAGE DE LA PERVERSION

Quoi qu'il en soit, il semble bien que Bataille, qui ne voulait pas du tout être psychologue, ait contribué à la naissance de l'un des grands «systèmes» psychologiques de notre temps, celui de Jacques Lacan, et cela grâce à une théorie qui est le fruit des dispositions «psychologiques» assez spécifiques, «perverses», de son créateur. La belle biographie de Michel Surya a confirmé ce que beaucoup de ses lecteurs devinaient déjà: Dans l'imaginaire de Bataille l'image de la mère et celle de la mort sont intimement imbriquées, tandis que l'image du père y est surtout une source de mépris, d'opposition et, sans doute aussi, de désirs refoulés. Tout cela se retrouve dans son «a-théologie», et dans sa mise en scène qu'est *L'abbé C*. Ces livres nous invitent à chercher notre vérité ou plutôt le mystère de notre être dans un grand rire du côté de la mère, là où règne le narcissisme en horreur et en extase, dans les parages de la régression, de la nuit.