

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



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ON

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Edited by FREDERICO PEREIRA

Las Navas, Avila

July ♦ 1997

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Institute for the Psychological Study of the Arts (University of Florida, USA)

Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada (Lisbon, Portugal)

Janus Pannonius University (Pécs, Hungary)

Group for Psychoanalytic Studies (University of Massachusetts, USA)

Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Littéraire (Université Paris VII, France)

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P A P E R S

The symbol as presence (*)

FREDERICO PEREIRA (**)

The basic issue that I am going to discuss here concerns the *reduction* of symbolic devices as generally conceived in Psychoanalysis: Reduction of the Symbol to only one of its sides; reduction to its mainly negative side, meaning, mainly a substitutional replacing one.

The symbol regarded as loss – and revolving around the symbol understood as such –, there is a tragic theory of symbolic activity.

To discuss these ideas, I will deal with two theories: that of Bion and that of Lacan.

Bion's theory is better known. A function – which Bion voluntarily does not specify more clearly – known as an α function, transforms purely sensorial objects into dream thoughts and dream equivalents, as well as into waking up thinkable thoughts.

«The α function – says Bion – operates over all sensorial impressions and all the emotions the patient is conscious of.» (Learning from Experience).

This function literally creates new objects, memorizable and linkable between themselves, which are the α objects.

If the α function does not perform well enough, the impressions and emotions which it should transform remain at the level of the β objects. Those elements which are not materials of dream or thought are, however, materials of expulsion, of evacuative projection and of projective identification.

In a certain way, one can say that the β elements are a certain type of *things*, *non-thought things*, things of the world which remain beneath thought.

Using a debatable Kantian reference, Bion says that the α elements would be a kind of *phenomenon* and that the β elements would be a kind of *thing in itself*.

A specific group of α elements forms a net, thus giving rise to the hypothesis of the breast which, not being *there*, is the desired breast. While desiring the good breast, the pre-subject is full of bad breast. Here, we can find a basic ordering by means of a splitting process.

However, the bad breast pre-object is submitted to a new transformation and links itself to the *idea* of the absent breast.

It is the *absence* of the absent breast that leads the apparatus that thinks thoughts to think the «breast» thought as an *idea* of absent breast.

As a consequence, absence is an essential side of transformation towards the *idea* of breast.

(*) Key not adress to the International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis, Avila, Spain, July 1997.

(**) Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, Rua Jardim do Tabaco, 34, 1149-041 Lisboa, Portugal. E-mail: fpereira@megamet.pt

Absence as loss. Loss which is equally at the centre of the very transformation of β objects into α objects, that is, at the centre of the matrix which gives rise to the possibility of thought itself.

Within the frame that occupies us now, Loss and Absence flow in Bion in two ways. Both the ascension to the idea of breast and the α -work itself belong to the order of loss, of absence: *of the negative*. They belong to the order of radical loss, of definite fracture: the thing-in-itself, with its Kantian evocation, is what thought can never capture, as essence of the thing in itself and essence of the thought.

Thus, thought makes abysses, it is a factory of abysses: those which separate meaning beings from beings that they themselves mean.

Thinking is regarded as losing – thus, we can understand the relationship between thought and the so-called depressive elaboration, and maybe it is easier to understand the concept of mental pain.

If the mental apparatus is saturated, or if a functional impairment operates on it, then there might be a world of things but not a world of thoughts.

In the situation of non-saturation and of α function activation, there will be *thought* but there will not be a *thing*, considering that things are relegated to the intangible world of things in themselves.

Since the situation is this, in fact, thinking is necessarily painful because it implies building abysses between the Subject and the World; it implies that to enter the field of symbols means to leave the world of things.

In Bion, there does not seem to exist a *Theory of Things*, nor for this reason, a *Theory of Connection between Thought and Things*.

Therefore, Bion's reference model is a resolutely idealistic model, in which his own assertions lead into a succession of references, such as, Kant, Plato, and the Mystics.

At the end, the encounter with the idea of God is the main landmark of these aspects of Bion's thought, which has an effectively relentless logic: from Nothing (Zero) to Everything, but to an Everything which is in itself Zero because, after all, there is no representation in God.

One could say: the Origin is not thinkable because it is a thing in itself; Fate is not thinkable because it does not contain a representation. God is the only idea which in this system is pure Presence and not re-presentation. In God (as a logical idea), as well as in things in themselves, there is no remittance, there is no double-face, there is no sense or meaning: there is only Being in its emptiness-of-thinkable-being and in its emptiness of Thing.

In short, to think is to lose; it is to sink into the abyss which separates thought from things in order to ascend to the sphere of the symbol. Every thought is, at its root, a thought of absence. The result is inevitable mental pain.

If we take a close look at Lacan, now, we can find the same *fracture*, the same *béance* between the Subject and the World of Objects.

In a certain way, it is possible to say that with Lacan all objects are *thought of* because, right from the beginning, they were inserted in the Symbolic Order, and, thus, they are not more than symbols of the Originary Object which, to be thought, had to be lost – and lost until the end of time. After all, all re-encounters are illusory.

And in the beginning – if one can speak of a beginning – there was the *Spaltung*, the void, «the division of Being revealed in Psychoanalysis, between the Self... and the discourse of the conscious subject...».

«This division, which Lacan considers as creating a hidden structure in the Subject, the unconscious, this division, I was saying, is due to the fact that all the discourse and all the Symbolic Order (...) *mediates* the Subject, thus, ensuring a quick lay-off from the Truth».

As Lacan says: «In essence, the symbolic order can only sustain itself in itself, which is to say that it cannot relate to the real».

The same happens with Moral Law: Lacan states that «the experience of moral law offers no intuition to the phenomonic object» (Kant and Sade).

On the contrary, it is access to the Symbolic Order – hence, to the Law that originates it – that sustains what the symbol represents, provided that *what the symbol represents* is radically apart.

The symbol is different from what it itself represents: it is the *condition* of what is represented.

The condition of what is represented is the condition of *that something* which is represented coming to the world in the position of «lacking».

Lacking, at present, and not purely and simply absent, because there is still «la suture», which connects the Subject to the Symbolic. As J. A. Miller says: «‘La Suture’ nominates the relation of the Subject with the chain of his speech... There, he appears as an element that lacks, under the category of a having-place. Given that lacking, he is not pure and simply absent».

Therefore, what kind of non-presence is this? The kind of the signifier. The subject stands as a signifier non-absent from his discourse in the sense that he says *I*. But is it possible that being non-absent, he is present in the Order of the Discourse? No, it is not. There, he is only represented, and that re-presentation is in itself supra-ordered precisely by that which originates the Order of the Discourse, meaning, the Symbolic Order.

Enigmatically, Lacan used to say:

«The signifier is what the subject represents to some Other signifier.»

«Then, one can say that the human being is more an *effect* of the signifier than its cause. The insertion into the symbolic world makes us a representation being.»

Representation of each one into the *I* which is said in discourse, representation by Others in the multiplicity of dialogues that they establish upon the Subject, and representation in what makes him a Subject of the representative Order itself, that is, of the Symbol as a creator of the fault, of the void, of the «manque à Etre».

Therefore, even before being part of the Symbolic Chain, the Subject is already there, through symbolic exchanges that others build up concerning him.

And when the subject inserts himself there, it is only in so far as he is split through a constituent *Spaltung*, which at the same as it allows him to say *I*, it refers the subject of enunciation to another world.

As Lacan says: «The *Spaltung* operates on the whole intervention of the signifier between the Subject of enunciation and the subject of the enunciated».

Therefore, discourse itself is an enigma: *Who speaks? What is (truthfully) said there?*

«The register of the signifier means that a signifier represents a subject to another signifier (...). As the signifier produces himself in place of the Other (the symbol), the subject emerges, but at the price of being immobilised. What was there about to speak disappears, not being more than a signifier.»

A signifier of what? That is what one *tries to discover*, speech being an enigma par excellence.

However, «one tries to discover» within a movement that is radically condemned, considering that every discovery is only possible through the *presentification* of new signifiers which new enigmas will bring about.

Thus, access to the symbolic, while allowing the Subject to express itself, also blocks that access with the establishment of an Other Order.

The *Subjectivation of the Subject* is, after all, an *alienating elaboration*: in order to express himself, the Subject alienates himself in a Symbolic Order that establishes him as the signifier. More than that, to fulfil the originary *Spaltung*, the subject alienates himself in an *imaginary identity construction*, through which he has the *illusion* that what he says is exactly what he says.

As is known, it is this illusion that defines the place of the Ego.

«The Ego is the place of the Subject’s imaginary identifications», says Leclaire. And according to Lacan: «the Subject’s drama concerning the Logos is that it tests his own “manque-à-être”. And it is because he protects himself in this moment of fault, that an *image* assumes the position of bearing the whole price of desire: projection, function of the Imaginary.» (Lacan: *Écrits*).

This *imaginary constitution* of the Ego is precisely what most opposes to the Subject's truth.

But then again, one might ask: which truth might this be that, while being spoken, alienates itself – is lost – in the Order that establishes what can possibly be said?

It might be the *truth of desire*. But then: which truth might this be that is the truth of desire?

And it is here that we find *loss* once more, «non-suturée» now, and alienation again – a double loss.

Loss of a real object – si j'ose dire – loss forever. A real object that language seeks to articulate without ever succeeding – precisely because it is a real object, representation over-determined by a Symbolic Order and, at the same time, established by it.

«This is the reason – says Lacan – that underlines the radical incapacity of Man to find whatever it is that can fulfil him.» Everything is a symbol or an image – signs of loss, signs of absence of the thing.

«Freud reveals – continues Lacan – that it is thanks to the Name-of-the-Father that Man does not remain tied to the sexual service of the Mother; that aggression against the Father is at the basis of Law and that Law is at the service of the desire by means of the interdiction of incest.

Therefore, it is the assumption of castration that creates the fault that is at the origin of desire... Desire reproduces the relationship of the Subject to the lost object.» (J. Lacan: *Du Trieb de Freud et du Désir du Psychanaliste*, 1964)

Evidently, this desire is not silent; it explodes in its symbolic articulation, which is the *demande*. It explodes there, it is true, but once again in the form of loss, considering that in relation to the *demande*, desire never explodes in the right place, so to speak so.

Desire is produced either beyond or beneath the *demande*.

«Desire is beyond the *demande*, that is, it surpasses the *demande*. It goes farther and is eternal because it is impossible to satisfy... But desire is also produced beneath the *demande*. (In this case) it is the unconditional and absolute *demande* itself, imitating the ecstasy of desire, which recalls the radical *manque-à-Etre* that perceives desire.» (J. Lacan).

This dialectics of eternal bad timings, of impossible meetings, seems to be «*symbolicogenic*». Françoise Dolto clearly spoke of *symbolicogenic castration*, this fault that composes the *manque-à-être* and promotes a movement of replacement by symbol, by representation.

But this dialectic also has a symbolic name: *Phallus*, which designates «the privation, or the *manque-à-être*. The *Phallus* is in itself a symbol of the impossible fulfilment of the subject and, in a way, what promotes the infinite symbolic drift through which the object of desire would be the object that the Other desires. Any type of possession of that very object would be illusory. This Movement sets frustration and the chain of «*symbolicogenic castration*».

As we see, in Lacan, it is also on the grounds of loss that subjectivity is rooted.

One question may finally arise: *But what moves desire?* It seems to me that it is what Lacan calls the Status of the Letter. Status of the Letter in the Unconscious – as an olfactive, visual, aural element, which fulfils a primitive void, being immediately replaced by an alienating symbol.

It could be that in the symbol, the letter aims at expressing itself but the radical gap that builds up the subject leads the *letter* to be lost in the symbol right from the start. Or, as one could also say, the symbol, while being the only means by which the letter could express itself, is exactly the means through which the entrance of the letter into the Symbolic Order is declared impossible.

Every *letter* element that accesses the Symbolic Order ceases at that very moment to be a letter and starts being a signifier.

So: gap, fault, loss.

A part of this dialectic evokes Hegel and the originary power of the negative. But it also evokes Heidegger – to whom Lacan himself was sensitive, I think.

Leaving Hegel aside – a lot has already been said about the Hegel-Hyppolite-Lacan triangle –, let us consider Heidegger.

Let us put it this way: Heidegger firstly questions *things*.

What are things? «The Greeks – says Heidegger – «had a very precise term for «things»: *πραγματα*, that is, that which has to do with the trade that establishes the *πραξις* when it emerges as a concern».

Basically, the *πραξις* is the action while taking place, the action-in-its-own-taking-place.

In order for things, as *πραγματα*, to appear in the field of being as *πραγματα*, it is necessary to establish a transformation of the *πραξις*.

In fact, it is through the transformation of the *πραξις* into *νοειν* that the *πραγματα* appear in the form of a knowable thing-that-is, *that* about which one can think, and then *that* which may arise in the area of speaking.

In the discovery of the World's matters (*weltlichkeit*), there is a kind of succession of *πραξις* – *νοειν* – *λογος*.

Why then, in the horizon of the *πραξις* does the *νοειν* that establishes things as things appear?

A passage through the *ready-to-hand* is necessary.

The ready-to-hand (that which characterises the things that still have not been made *present*) is present in its *readiness-to-hand* - beneath which, however, it is undone as a thing-that-is.

This means that the *readiness-to-hand* of the ready-to-hand makes it *what* the *πραξις* has to co-exist with, which means it makes it a non-thing-as-a-non-*πραγματα*, or in other words, *what in the World still has not been marked*. In fact, as Heidegger says, «readiness-to-hand is the kind of Being characteristic of those entities which are proximally discovered within-the-world».

On the other hand, the ready-to-hand is «what can be *used for* something», what contains in itself *this* of referring to: the ready-to-hand which in its readiness-to-hand has not yet been object of attention.

As Heidegger also says: «That the World does not mark itself to attention, such is the condition of possibility so that the useful does not leave its state of not-surprising-us to be *placed ahead*. And it is in this that is established the phenomenal structure of Being-in-itself of this thing-that-is» (112).

But, alas, the useful becomes *surprising* – it leaves the state of not being marked to become something that is now an object of discernment.

It is necessary to ask: how does it become *surprising*, and thus change its phenomenal structure?

Precisely through a *fracture in its readiness-to-hand*.

Quoting Heidegger:

«*But when an assignment has been disturbed* – when something is unusable for some purpose – then the assignment becomes explicit. Even now, of course, it has not become explicit ontically for the circumspection which comes up against the damaging of the tool. When an assignment to some particular «towards-this» itself, and along with it everything connected with the work – the whole ‘workshop’ – as that wherein concern always dwells. The context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection.»¹

And Heidegger proceeds: «with this totality, however, the world announces itself.»

¹ Heidegger. *Being and Time* (translation J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson). Oxford: Blackwell.

As one can see, it seems that here also the *emergence of the World* depends on the fault, the fracture, of the readiness-to-hand. In the place where there was a *πράξις* in its own taking place, appears a World which is presented to thought.

The echo between these ideas and those of Lacan seems obvious. But it becomes even more obvious if to the fracture we add the *emptiness* – which in its turn echoes with *absence*.

«Similarly, when something ready-to-hand is found missing, though its everyday presence [Zugegenheit] has been so obvious that we never take any notice of it, this makes a *break* of those referential contexts which circumspection discovers. Our circumspection comes up against emptiness, and now sees for the first time *what* the missing article was ready-to-hand *with*, and *what* it was ready-to-hand *for*. The environment announces itself afresh.»

The phenomenal structure of the useful being-in-itself is replaced by the phenomenal structure of the *being-for*.

But Heidegger adds to this a movement of fault, of fracture, of void, these other considerations which, if we proceeded in the field of pure fault, would seem absolutely enigmatic, if not incomprehensible.

«In such privative expressions as “inconspicuousness”, “unobtrusiveness”, and “non-obstinacy”, what we have in view is a positive phenomena character of the Being of that which is proximally ready-to-hand. With these negative prefixes we have in view the character of the ready-to-hand as “holding itself in”.»

In other words, if things become present – noticed – to the extent that they surprise, disturb, resist, by losing their ready-to-hand state, *it is because in themselves they already had a positive phenomenal status before the rupture of that state of usefulness, which made the πράξις possible.*

That is: it is the *positive phenomenal status* of the useful underneath its usefulness that makes discernment possible, related with the *πραγματα* as *πραγματα*, things that become noticeable, that ascend to *νοεῖν* and become capturable by *λογος*.

It is presence as presence that allows the intuition of absence as presence of what became absent.

Obviously, this analysis by Heidegger is different from the one that is to be found in Lacan, and *might* also be discerned in Bion.

This different analysis is not arbitrary. Heidegger’s theory of the sign reveals that this non-Lacanian analysis of Heidegger is effectively non-arbitrary.

Firstly, the sign is in itself a *reference to*, just like the useful being which still has not been made present because of its disturbance, its absence.

Concerning the sign, reference to what?

Firstly, not to the *fracture* which in loss, in absence, would be announced. On a first analysis, such a fracture would be only a Nothing.

Heidegger says:

«A sign is not a thing which stands to another thing in the relationship of indicating; it is rather an item of equipment which explicitly raises a totality of equipment into our circumspection so that together with it the worldly character of the ready-to-hand announces itself.»

Then, *in the sign the useful thing is made present as useful and the usefulness ascends to discernment as a feature of the World, of things.*

This is the same as to say that in a *primary state* (Heidegger mentions the primitive Man) «the sign coincides with what is indicated. Not only can the sign represent this in the sense of serving as a substitute for what it indicates, but it can do so in such a way that the sign itself always *is* what it indicates. This remarkable coinciding does not mean, however, that the sign-thing has already undergone a certain ‘Objectification’ – that it has been experienced as a mere Thing and misplaced into the same realm of Being of the present-at-hand as what it indicates. This ‘coinciding’ is not an identification of things which have hitherto been isolated from each other: it consists rather of the

fact that the sign has not yet become free from that of which it is a sign. (...) This coinciding is based not on a prior Objectification but on the fact that such Objectification is completely lacking.»

This means that in the symbolic formation, its first state will not be a division between the symbol and the symbolised thing, but a *state of co-presence*, of *agglutination*, and this presence as agglutination will later make it possible to think about absence.

If this is the case, rather than rising above the loss of a World, the symbol would probably be the central way of constituting a world.

Such an assertion, which seems to go against Bion and Lacan, is exactly the central issue of this reflection.

The essence of desire is not limited to the «essence of absence» that only produces fantasised objects which condemn the subject to an incurable insufficiency of Being, both because while being said the object is lost – and the subject is also lost –, and because being thought transforms the real object into a thing-in-itself which is out of reach.

In multiple versions of the analytical thing, there is an excess of idealism produced by the objectal impossibility that another World establishes.

As Clément Rosset says, each time one insists upon a fault which might characterise the desire to define its object, the world finds itself unfolded into another world... around the following itinerary: the object lacks to desire; from here it is concluded that the world does not possess all the objects – it lacks at least one, the object of desire. Then, somewhere, there will be something that contains the key of desire, somewhere which is another world.

Desire would point out to Another world – which, at the same time, states itself as an impossible world.

In fact, this way of thinking seems to be based on a difficulty that is hard to overcome: things only exist to the extent that they are represented, and outside the representation either they are a part of the unattainable Real, or they are unattainable things-in-themselves.

The Unconscious is regarded as pure Ancient Drama.

And it is true that the Unconscious is Drama – representation.

But what if it was also *production*? What if – as G. Deleuze says – it was also a factory?

What if even language – and along with it symbolic activity – was more than the mourning of lost object(s), more than the result of symbolicogenetic mournings?

Heidegger points this out, as we have seen, and this is also what, for instance, J. B. Pontalis evokes, especially in his recent *Ce Temps qui ne Passe Pas*.

It is very possible that, in a certain way, language is mourning, a sign of loss, but it «*also carries us to what it is not, to what exceeds it. Love, poetry offer this possibility... Analysis offers it sometimes*».

Language and symbolic activity will, then, have a positive status before the negative one. They designate *what is really there* before leading into the mourning of what is made absent.

Before being a sign of fault, fracture, absence, the symbol is *a process of construction* and not simply representation in Ancient Dramas.

I think that this idea of the positiveness of symbolic activity is present in Freud in the same way or even more than the theories of the negative.

So, let us consider Freud. Firstly, let us look at the reflections about *Negation*, which he brought to us in 1925.

Besides analysing what one may regularly find in clinical work, and especially in the Clinic of obsessive neurosis, which reveals how thought admits what was once an object of repression as long as it is affected by the symbol of negation – besides this, what matters now is to find the first step through which Negation is established and what its consequences are.

Freud clarifies the relation between negation and judgement: «*That thing which is there, what do I want to do with it*»? This is the fundamental question, says Freud: «Expressed in the language of the most ancient drives... judgement is: “I would like to eat that”, or “I would like to throw that out”. In a more general way, it would be: I would like to put this inside me and to keep that away. Or even: this is inside me, that is outside me».

This primary polarisation establishes two worlds right from the start: an internal world, which is a purified-Ego-pleasure, and an external or pre-external world, which is the rest of the world. Ejection, which establishes the purified-Ego-pleasure, is precisely the pioneer of negation.

But in a second moment, ejection can be replaced by repression which, in its obedience to pleasure, erases from the World the apprehension of what produces unpleasantness, remitting it to the field of the unconscious.

It is clear that the generalised repetition of such an operation would make any judgement impossible, making thought impossible.

The Ego of the subject has to find a means to free itself from the demands of the pleasure around repression, thus, having access to the internal and external real. This means is precisely what Freud pointed out in 1925 – Negation.

«The performance of the function of judgement – he says – had not been possible until the creation of the symbol of Negation had gifted thought with a first rule of freedom in the presence of the consequences of repression, and along with that, the compulsion of the pleasure principle.»

This means: firstly, introjection/projection are agents of the *construction of Worlds*, and namely, of the World of purified-Ego-pleasure. *Drama is not what is being discussed here, but factories, as Deleuze would say.*

Secondly, projective expulsion is symbolised by an operator, Negation, which makes judgement and thought possible.

This operator is efficient because he *symbolises an internal process of the Subject*, which does not directly have anything to do with the presence/absence of the primary object.

This *symbol of negation*, as Freud very strictly names it, is essentially *constructive*: it is not a substitutional process. The symbol of negation expresses an *operation of the subject* and it is one condition of his access to subjectivity.

It seems to me that we are far from a symbolic activity regarded as being elaborated over the desert of the Object's fracture.

On the contrary, what is considered here is a symbol that *expresses the constructive action of an internal operator, therefore, co-presence and not dialectics of the negative.*

A second incursion into Freud inevitably leads us to the *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and to the *Fort/Da* case.

As it has circulated widely, the story is well known: whenever his mother was absent, Freud's grand-child had the habit of holding a reel which had a thread around it; he would throw it far away saying a saddened *Fort*, to recover it soon after by pulling the thread and saying a happy *Da* when it was back right in *front of him*.

Freud provides multiple interpretations for this famous game, which is not going to be mentioned here in detail. Retaliation – to throw it far away; dominion – to pull it back towards him; pulsation of dominion assisted by the compulsion of repetition - to throw it far away and pull it back towards him, etc., etc..

In all these sets, as we have the habit of seeing them, *the reel symbolises the Mother*, and the truth is that Freud himself seems to make us tend towards this explanation.

Then, the *symbol* «reel» would be established in the Mother's absence because she was absent and to compensate for that absence symbolically.

The problem that arises is that, as I put it, the story of the reel game *is not well told*.

In truth, the child did not throw the reel «far away». The child threw the reel *into its own bed*.

As Freud reports: «he would throw the reel with a great expertise, having it held by the thread on top of his bed... in such a way that, once *there*, it would disappear; he would then say his very

meaningful o-o-o-o, and then, pulling the thread he would remove the reel *off* his bed, saluting its apparition with a happy “*da*”».

Thus, the reel was thrown *into the bed*, hidden *there*, and not in any other place.

It is not, then, a *symbol of the absent Mother* (the reel) which disappears just like the Mother when she is absent, but rather a symbol of the child himself, which being *here, present*, becomes absent, disappears by itself in the Mother’s absence.

So, the symbolic Fort/Da game seems to me a lot more complex than what is usually perceived: I would say that it is not in the area of *Drama*, but rather in the field of *Production*.

This interpretation of Freud’s text has the same meaning as a footnote to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, whose relation to the text seems a little enigmatic. In that footnote, describing Ernst’s symbolic productions in more detail, Freud says:

«... one day that his Mother was absent during several hours, she was greeted with a Bébi-ooo when she came back, an utterance which was not understandable at first. But soon it was revealed that during the time that the child was alone, he had found a means of *making himself disappear*. He had found his image in the mirror... curling up then, in a way that its image in the mirror would become *Fort*.» So, *Bébi-ooo* means: Baby is gone.

This other game clarifies the classic *Fort/Da*. At one level of its interpretation, Fort/ Da would not mean Mother is gone/ Mother is back, but it would mean *bébi-fort/ bébi-da*, which is baby is gone/ baby is back.

And this is why the reel was not thrown to some *far away place*, but to the baby’s own bed, behind the curtains and hidden amongst the bed-sheets.

The baby plays with its own appearing/disappearing/appearing, with its being here/being far away/being here.

Evidently, this game is possible to the extent that the baby is *present to the world* by starting to be *present to himself*.

Then, it is under a *background of presence* of himself to himself and from himself to the World that Fort/Da is set, and not only under a background of the Mother’s absence.

Maybe it is possible to say: it would not be I who is being carried by the symbol in its facet as signifier towards another signifier, but rather (or also) *I who carry the symbol* while being a thing that, whilst signifying, is the same thing as what the symbol means – which interestingly echoes the interpretation of Heidegger’s theory of the sign, that I presented previously.

I would still like to add another dimension I find in *Fort/Da*, by saying that what *can be found in Fort/Da* is the *thickness of a relationship* and *not the fracture of an absence*.

With the Mother’s *going and coming* movement, the baby co-ordinates its own *going and coming* movement.

The mirror game tells us:

Mother *Fort* – baby *Fort*

Mother *Da* – baby *Da*

and in this *Fort-Fort/Da-Da* quadrangle, it is the presence of the baby to the Mother and of the Mother to the baby that organises itself in the pulsation of an identification movement.

Under a background of presence, then the symbol is, and it is only because firstly it *is* that it can then *represent*.

*

From all the symbols that may emerge from the density of the Being, there is still one that deserves a special reference. It is what Christopher Bollas calls the *Transformational Object* – or,

maybe better, my way of seeing a side of the Transformational Object discovered by Christopher Bollas.

This Object – which does not install itself in the space of the *manque-à-être*, nor in that of the thing-in-itself, nor in the various nuances of the α processes – is *pure transformation*.

This Transformational Object is not a represented object, nor is it capable of being represented. It is beneath the dialectics of representation. It is a *pure operator of transformations*. It irritates, tranquillises, calms down, allows sleep, or it opens the eyes, allows contention or determines projective expulsion/deflection... *A non-thought-psychic operator*. Can one say that *it is out there in the World*? No, precisely because in the narcissistic universe in which it is created, there is not an *out there* nor an *in here*, but only a *worldliness* dissolved in the pre-subject or a pre-subject that embraces the Globality of the World.

What there is is a function of the pre-subject *and* of the pre-object, a [subject/object] function, a pure operator composed of a *primary synthesis*, a *subject-object pasting, agglutination*.

This means: first creation through a primary synthesis, not even fantasy, pure operator, function.

Maybe of *that* which is *effective, active, productive* – and not merely representative – one could probably say that it is the first symbol.

A symbol of what? Of the pre-Subject *and* of the pre-Object in its *mutual primary synthesis, in its mixture*. But a symbol which *is*. Not a symbol that *points to*. To evoke Heidegger, a symbol more in the field of *praxis*, action in its own taking place, than in the field of *voelv*.

There is nothing to say about it – and it is precisely in the silence of words that it can be felt, or obliquely, in poetry, music, movement...

There is nothing to say because such symbolisation *does not have a precise object*. On the contrary, it is in some way necessary to find out, to build on the object of such symbolisation: *the Object, which is an open field to all constructions*.

The symbol *operates*, the symbol *is*.

This is very obvious in the Symbolists and, generally speaking, in Romantic aesthetics.

As Todorov reminds us, the symbolising side and the symbolised side are under constant interpenetration, that is, the symbol *means* but it does not stop *being*. In this sense, it is above all, an *expression* and, precisely for that reason, a *production*.

As a consequence, maybe we should take into account that by saying what seems impossible to say, the symbol opens itself to its own revelation by the other, a revelation which is a *constructive process* and not a *tempo* of a programme of uncovering.

The consequences at the level of a Theory of Interpretation are obvious: Freud had already introduced a movement which is not the uncovering of signs, nor the establishment of arbitrary signs which «mean something». It is rather the rhythm of the «nachträglichkeit», which lights up what is already known with new lights, thus, creating it and producing new mental elements.

And this surely forces us to think again about the problem of the subject's truth, in a double movement. To the symbols with which the subject speaking loses himself indefinitely in the symbolic drift established by an absence or radical loss, we have to add the symbols in which and with which the subject *expresses* himself, constructs himself, and, by doing so, builds worlds which, whilst being capable of signifying something, firstly *are* something.

Then, to the negative dimension of the symbolic, it is legitimate to add a positive dimension: THE SYMBOL AS PRESENCE.

This is a programme of reflection about the Tragic Theory of the Symbolic, which greatly dominates us, to which we should add the Romantic theories maybe abandoned too quickly. Names such as Moritz, Novalis, Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel, Schelling, amongst others, might appear again in the frame of this agenda of re-thinking symbolic activity and, therefore, the dynamics of interpretation.

And then the symbol will appear in its *double sided nature* and not only in its *reduced state*:
absence but presence
meaning but expression
representation but production/construction and primary synthesis
void of Being but yet Being
Tragic version but Romantic version.

Survey of the theoretical tendencies at the «International»

MAURICE DESPINOT ()*

A participant to some of the «Encounters on literature and psychology», the idea came to me it might be interesting to find out what the various trends of the presentations in these International Conferences were. I was not however among the first participants and have only read the papers which have been published, so this survey cannot be considered as a historical study.

The documents available to me were the six «Proceedings» of the Conferences so finely edited by Frederico Pereira and the Volume of the fourth Conference edited by Vera Camden. Perhaps it will be interesting to observe that what began with writers, ends to day with someone speaking about writing about writers.

I have read more than one hundred papers, the topics being novels, poems, some plays and a few movies, but I confess that my presentation is far from being an exhaustive study.

1. My first question concerned the concepts used to study literary works, and this suggests the following broad classification:

- 1.1 Psychoanalytical concepts
- 1.2 Psychology and sociology
- 1.3 Literary and linguistic concepts

1.1 For Psychoanalysis, I had to consider two different groups:

- 1.1.1 «Classical» Psychoanalysis (i.e. Psychoanalysis according to IPA criteria)
- 1.1.2 Non classical Psychoanalysis (among which I found jungians and lacanians)

1.1.1 Traditional psychoanalytic concepts are used in more than half of the studies. As could be expected, Freud's predominance is obvious but I was surprised to notice that, except for a few English papers, Melanie Klein was ignored or disqualified. Wilfrid Bion is saved from this

(*) 14, rue Abbé de l'Épée, 13005 Marseille, France.

ostracism, as if his kleinian origin could be forgotten. On this point, US and French analysts agree, a rare occurrence indeed!

As a whole, references to the «oedipus» complex are far more important than those dealing with the pregenital period and the concepts of child psychoanalysis are absent.

1.1.2 The second group of psychoanalytical papers represents about 15% of the papers, the lacanian trend being the more frequent. It means that, as a whole, psychoanalytical studies are substantially dominating: 65%.

Scanning and reading these papers I came to the conclusion that it would be interesting to study the style of these psychoanalytical texts. A reversal of perspective: Psychoanalytical studies of literature have now become the object of literary criticism!

Thus, abstraction and algebraic symbols would characterise both Lacan and Bion, but difference would appear with the use of hypotheses for Bion and categorical laws for Lacan. The degree of certainty in the lacanian group seems more important, perhaps on account of the fact that traditional psychoanalysis is confronted with conflicting notions and clinical facts, whereas theory predominates in lacanian studies.

1.2 About one third of the papers use psychological or sociological notions. The use of a psychoanalytical vocabulary is becoming so frequent that it has been sometimes difficult to make the difference between psychology and psychoanalysis, to differentiate vocabulary and meaning.

The psychological notions used in the papers I examined are not really specific and for instance, there are not many papers which use Cognitive theories. Sociology and psycho-sociology are well represented, often the papers deal with the influence of patriarchal society or racial prejudice on the life of the characters.

The effects of living conditions and cultural ideology on personality are often taken into consideration, as if Kardiner, never mentioned, had a lasting influence.

1.3. The third category, Literature and linguistic concepts, concerned only three per cent of the papers but of course there is nothing surprising in this, since the scholars who founded this yearly Conference considered psychological or psychoanalytical «tools» as essential to the study of literature. This in any case explain the scarcity of «literary» papers.

2. My second question dealt with the themes of these papers.

In the present study, I shall content myself, with the psychoanalytical point of view. If I had to speak from a sociological perspective, I would have had to add an item of futurology: I found some interesting papers about cyberculture and cyborgs.

The following grid with six items proved useful, although one can see that the categories are not of the same epistemological level:

- 2.1 The study of the text
- 2.2 The study of biography
- 2.3 The creative process
- 2.4 The author-reader relationship
- 2.5 Form and aesthetics
- 2.6 Theoretical subjects

2.1 The study of the texts is what is best represented and concerns more than half of the papers. Analyses consider plots and the behaviour of the characters. One single character is usually the subject of analysis. Of course, as Robert Silhol suggested (1984), the various protagonists may be considered as split parts of the author's psychic structure, but all the same, there are not many instances of such multitopic studies.

The model is usually freudian: repression of representation and return of the repressed in an unconscious form: unconscious as far as the character is concerned, and unconscious for the author. Oedipal conflicts and neurotic cases are what is most frequently found in the studies. But there are some papers about self integration, identity, splitting and psychotic defences.

If we apply the pleasure principle to the study of literature, we may say that, at first we enjoy the pleasure of reader, and participate in an imaginary way to the life of the heroes. Next, on a second level, we have the pleasure to acquire a knowledge about the behaviour of a character (and behind this, of an author who is unconscious of what he does). There may therefore be an omnipotent fantasy in the analysis of texts (perhaps sometimes of patient too!). The critic occupies the place of a super ego detecting and showing drives the author tries to hide. This of course makes me even more of a dangerous suspect: I criticise the critics.

2.2 Biography

More than one third of the papers study the life of the author. Circumstances, relationships, diseases and, frequently psychic disturbances are described.

Usually the studies use both biography and text analysis. Green (1973) considers biography as necessary to the analytic study of literature.

But this is not often used for research dealing with the creative process.

2.3 Freud inaugurated the study of creation with his paper on Leonardo. I expected to find that this type of study was an important part of the publications, but in fact, I found that only 4% of the papers were dedicated to this topic. Interestingly, one of these papers shows the difficulty – and the interest – of such studies.

As I said about biography, the pathological tendencies of the author are frequently linked to the particularities of his writings and to his gift as a writer. Statistical evidence shows that artists are more prone to psychic troubles than the average population. As you may know, this discussion is raging on the web between psyarters!

This does not prove that creation needs pathology, but it may be true that if someone has easy access to his own dream life, his vulnerability is great.

Freud himself linked creation to sublimation and, with Bion, we may consider that drives are the promoters of creative activities. In the last part of his life, Freud thought that dream work was not only censorship but resolution of psychic conflicts. This may be applied to art creation. In this line, I found one paper studying the therapeutic function of writing – Guillaumin proposed a theoretical model for this process (1983).

Usually, the author is supposed to be unconscious of the fantasy he uses for his creation. There are some exceptions. D. H Lawrence is credited with having used his psychoanalytical knowledge to construct his characters, and Kafka with having imagined a censorship to crypt his novels.

I believe this question of creation and play between conscious and unconscious fantasy is a line worth developing. The concept of binocularity, which Bion discovered with psychotic patients (1950), could be a powerful tool of investigation of literary creation.

2.4 It was for me a surprise to find no paper substantially dedicated to the relationship between author and reader. Norman Holland (1968) has shown what important similarities and differences there were between writing and reading. A. Green wrote a great deal about this – saying that first task of a text's analyst was to analyse his own counter-transference toward the text. But he did not show how he does it himself, when he analysed Hamlet.

2.5 Papers dealing with aesthetics are rather rare – no more than 5%.

According to these analyses, aesthetic feeling is both a result of meaning and form, but there is no psychoanalytical research about form. Is it not surprising, literature being an art, that psychoanalytical studies of literature should avoid the study of aesthetics?

Freud's positions may be the first answer. He built the theory of form as premium for repressed representations, and said psychoanalysts had to look beyond aesthetics. We may associate this dismissal to the fact he often recognised he was poorly gifted for aesthetic feeling.

The real difficulty is to find what link there is between specific forms in texts and our emotions. Phonology and psycho-analytic researches on preverbal interactions in young children and autistic patients have shown that drive investment of the mouth and phonatory motricity have a strong determining influence in language acquisition (Boubli, 1997). The idea that phonation is rooted in our drives opens the way for research on the emotional value of form (Fonagy, 1970). The results of these studies would perhaps confirm some of the intuitive allegations found in literary studies.

2.6 The theoretical papers

Ten per cent of the papers deal with psychoanalytic theories, which is an unexpected trend. Their objective is to provide information about the concepts used in analytic studies of literature, and this preoccupation may be the result of the diversity of psychoanalytic schools represented at the «International».

3. Some remarks to conclude.

The papers I have read are remarkable for their diversity and richness of analysis. The freudian repression/symptom model predominates, but post freudian concepts are frequently used such as Self integration, Bion's psychoanalytic elements and the lacanian «jouissance».

This evolution is the happy result of an encounter between two fields and the result of the clinical influence on psychoanalytic theories.

This influence can be seen in a paper suggesting an original orientation for research: literature may be an element of psychoanalytic technique. The author shows how, during a session, he felt convenient to quote a poem, and he studies the effect of this quotation on the continuation of the session and the following.

It could be questionable to quote a poem, a movie or a novel, never mentioned before by the patient. But the recalling during a session of an author, quoted before is not rare.

Winnicott discussed poems with a patient and, with another, went as far as quoting a poem.

It seems to me that this gives a good illustration of the relation between art and psychoanalysis. The need to use a poem to produce an emotional representation shows that it conveys more than an usual verbal communication. Form or image may evoke sensations and feelings which are not accessible to the verbal code. Reading pleasure results in the encounter of meaning and emotions connected with form and bodily sensations.

The «International» originality is the confrontation of literary intuitions (a complex and valuable process!) with psychoanalytic interpretations. The quality of these encounters and the difficulty of the task, clearly shows how the materiality of the text is a challenge to the psychoanalytic approach.

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Persona and Me

NORMAN N. HOLLAND (*)

This is a great film, everyone says, the finest film of perhaps the greatest director of our century – and I don't enjoy it. Oh, I admire it, all right, but I don't like seeing it. I agree that it's a great film, but for me a singularly unpleasant and painful one.

Persona is a puzzling movie. As Peter Cowie, the Bergman scholar, says, «*Persona* stands as the most mysterious and perplexing of all Bergman's films».¹ John Simon agrees: «*Persona* is Ingmar Bergman's most difficult film; indeed it is probably the most difficult film ever made.»² That's just the reason I should like it. At the time I first saw it (and ever since), I have prided myself on my ability to decipher puzzling movies like *Last Year at Marienbad* or *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* or, for that matter, Bergman's own *Seventh Seal*.³

I bring to this film a driving personal need. For me, things have to come together rightly. That means, I need to be able to fit the parts together so that they make sense, so that they cohere. I need to feel that if any element were added or taken away or moved within the work that something has been changed and the whole diminished. I need to see the film as a unity (holistically). I need to solve it.

To do that, I need themes, some idea that will say why all the different elements are there. Call it a «unifying principle». This film won't come together for me or it comes only barely and with difficulty.

Other critics, I know, share my problem. Perhaps that is why there is more written about Bergman than any other director, and I suppose I am just adding to that great mound of criticism. Sorry about that. No, I'm not sorry. I'm doing what I like – and need – to do, make sense of this experience.

Many critics have read this film many ways, all valiantly trying to make sense of it, and in some cases succeeding.⁴ I prefer to meet the film in one particular way. I'll look at it in the light of

(*) University of Florida, Department of English, P. O. Box 117310, Gainesville FL 32611-7310, USA.

¹ Peter Cowie, *Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography* (New York: Scribners, 1982) 227.

² John Simon, *Ingmar Bergman Directs* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972) 215.

³ Norman N. Holland, «The Puzzling Movies: Three Analyses and a Guess at Their Appeal». *Journal of Social Issues* 20 (1964): 71-96.

⁴ Critics I have especially profited from (in addition to Cowie and Simon) are: Marilyn Johns Blackwell, *Persona: The Transcendent Image* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Susan Sontag, «Bergman's *Persona*» (1967), *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969) 123-45; Egil Tornqvist, *Between Stage and Screen: Ingmar Bergman Directs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); Robin Wood, *Ingmar Bergman* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

the classical psychoanalytic account of infantile sexuality or, as we might say today, the primal psyche, the beginnings of our being as we feel hunger, love, and rage and fright at mother's absence. I see in this film the mind of the baby, the schizophrenic, the dreamer, the mind we all regress to in disturbed moments.

I can isolate four elements in that primal psychology and a fifth particular to Ingmar Bergman: one, loss of boundaries between self and other; two, as a corollary, delusion and unreality, uncertainty about what is real; three and four, the two sides of ambivalence: one, rage and violent anger and two, sexuality, that is, polymorphous sexual acts and relations, particularly those associated with the lips, mouth, eyes, and skin; and five, this is the one special to Bergman: the wish and fear that closeness will lead to humiliation. As Bergman himself has said, «I think it's terribly important that art exposes humiliation, that art shows how human beings humiliate one another, because humiliation is one of the most dreadful companions of humanity, and our whole social system is based to an enormous extent on humiliation»⁵ When I'm interpreting the film (not just experiencing it), I see it with these five items in mind.

The very opening of the film is the act of projection, the lighting of an arc light as the two electrodes get close to one another. Then we see the film clicking through the projector. In effect, Bergman is telling us, You are watching a film being projected.

In fact, Bergman originally wanted to title this film *Kinematography*,⁶ which we would translate as «projection» or perhaps «projector». His producer objected, and they settled on *Persona*. A *persona*, the mask worn by a Greek or Roman actor, combines a symbolic face with a kind of megaphone to project the actor's voice. Projection again.

Once the arc lights are on, Bergman gives us a dozen poetic images, associated with hands, sex, god, barriers. In his account of the film, he calls this a «poem», and speaks of the film's «impatience to begin». I could interpret, as many critics have, the individual images in this sequence, but I would find it unconvincing. Some of the images are personal to Bergman (the hospital where he first conceived the movie), some are images from other films of his, some images comment on this film, but I think one could add, subtract, or reorder these images with no loss.

Once the arc lights are on and the prologue is over, I know that I will begin to believe in the story as story. I know that I will lose my sense of the true state of affairs he is showing me here, namely, that I am seeing a film projected. I myself have begun projecting into, so to speak, the future of the film. I know I will lose touch with reality, and because I love movies I long to do so. The film has frustrated me so far.

What comes next is a series of close-ups of old people's faces, hands, and feet, evidently in a morgue. Thematically I still feel chaos, but it's more specific now. We see characters who waken, notably a boy who reaches out toward a huge screen on which is projected the face of a woman, sometimes one, sometimes the other of the two women in the film which follows. To my psychological eye, this suggests a child reaching toward a mother, the dominant theme of our earliest minds. And it prefigures important references to children in the film.

At this point, however, we are still in the prologue. As the credits flash on, they are cross-cut with very brief repetitions of these images. I feel the point is simply that this is a chaos coalescing into something focused and specific.

⁵ Nils Petter Sundgren, Interview with Ingmar Bergman, broadcast on *Forum*, Sveriges TV, February 21, 1968. The interview is translated and printed in Peter Cowie, *Sweden*, 2 vols. (London: A. Zwemmer; New York: A. S. Barnes, 1970), 2: 188. Among the critics, Blackwell (63) and Simon (305) have also pointed out this theme in Bergman's work.

⁶ *Bergman on Bergman*, Interviews with Ingmar Bergman by Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima, trans. Paul Britten Austin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 202.

Fade to white and a single brighter line at the bottom of the screen. This, as the lights dim down so that we see a scene, becomes a door in a hospital, through which a nurse enters to see a psychiatrist who tells of the actress, Elisabet Vogler. She is now in the hospital, deliberately mute. Nurse Alma, the psychiatrist announces, is to take care of her.

I am now into the story, no longer thinking this is just a movie. It was a relief to turn from the grim, mysterious, disordered images to the lovely face of Bibi Andersson.

Cross-cut with the doctor's description is a momentary but important shot of Elisabet playing Electra, her make-up almost duplicating the persona of the ancient actor. Bergman shows us the moment onstage when she almost got the giggles but instead turned mute. The image is important because Electra helped murder her mother (talk about primal psyche!). Electra is also a princess, an infant. Her illness has to do with the mouth and with a regression from her role as a professional speaker. *Infant* means literally *in+fans*, not speaking. We hear this aggressive psychiatrist diagnose Elisabet's illness as an attempt to pretend no longer, to find real being.

The nurse whom the psychiatrist has put in charge of her, nurse Alma, is a very self-possessed young woman who (as she tells the mute Elisabet) has her life all mapped out: marriage, career as a nurse; she's even thinking about her retirement. *I am now, like Alma, free of the chaos of the prologue. I am into the «reality» of the movie – or I was...*

During the interview between Alma and the psychiatrist, Bergman makes the first of many breaks in film convention: circling 360° round the figure of nurse Alma as she listens to the psychiatrist. He reminds us that we are watching a film, as he does later, when he breaches the 180° rule for the two-shot of a conversation. Here, as at many other points in the film, we will see something onscreen and hear a voice or other sound offscreen breaking into the film frame. To me, his violating film conventions is one way he develops the idea of loss of boundaries.

The psychiatrist sends the nurse and the actress off to the doctor's summer home on an island in the hope that Elisabet will get better. *Alma* means soul and *persona* means mask.⁷ The therapy here will be to break through the mask and find the soul, and that is just what happens, but not as the psychiatrist had planned.

On the island, nurse Alma chatters on and on about her thoughts, her faith, her plans, her life, while Elisabet remains silent. I take it that we are seeing a psychoanalytic situation but reversed. The neurotic actress is acting like the silent analyst, the apparently healthy nurse like the patient rattling on in free associations. The «analyst's» silence evokes more and more talk from the «patient». (Talk-orality.)

As she talks, nurse Alma has a good deal of wine to drink (orally regressing), and her associations get more and more sexual. A variety of scenes between the two women suggest a homoerotic tinge to the relation between them. Further, Alma had assumed that Elisabet, as an artist, would be especially compassionate and understanding. She visualizes the actor as «other», different somehow, also associated with what is sexual, taboo, freer than ordinary life: «You with your experience.»

Trusting, Alma recounts her first love affair, associated with smoking (more orality). Then, very embarrassed, she tells of an impromptu orgy on the beach where she and another woman played threesomes with two boys who found them sunbathing nude. Intellectually, I read this as the polymorphous perversity we associate with infancy, as well as the oral themes of taking in (sunbathing), and oral sex. *Emotionally, I feel threatened that this woman who has ordered everything in her life, who is a thoroughly decent woman, who has a fiancé, should lose control and deceive him this way. I feel my own need for self-control.*

⁷ Cowie (1982, 233) attributes to Jung the idea that the *persona* is «intellectual», and the *alma* (the inner, soul image) is «sentimental», «that person in dark cloak and shadowed face who crouches in the cellar of the sub-conscious». But this is Cowie, not Bergman, and perhaps not even Jung.

So far, Elisabet has said nothing, while Alma has revealed her innermost secrets. This is a kind of psychoanalysis, isn't it? I am seeing a regression, but not a therapeutic one. The nurse's inner needs are breaking through into her apparently stable, even rigid, surface self, which proves shaky and porous. An object-relations analyst like D. W. Winnicott would talk of true and false selves (*alma* and *persona*). Alma herself asks in despair, «Can you be two people at once?» The nurse started as a woman with her life all laid out: career as a nurse and plans to marry her fiancé. Things are breaking down, boundaries are loosening.

At this point, trusting Alma reads a letter that Elisabet has sent to the psychiatrist, laughing at the young nurse and her painful revelations. Talk about the bad analyst or the bad mother! Elisabet is almost literally a therapist who goes out and tells funny stories about the patient. Alma is humiliated and furious.

In revenge, she leaves a shard of broken glass where Elisabet will step on it. Then she watches, seething with rage, as Elisabet cuts her foot. Bergman renders the scene in his first long shot since the two women came to the island. Bergman considers this shot «among the most successful I've ever made»⁸.

At last! The contrast brings home to me how oppressive and relentless I have found so many close-ups. Enough! I want some relief from this close, intense personal relationship. I want to be separate for a while. Bergman gives me my separateness, but with it, rage. For him, closeness leads to sexual humiliation, as here. For me, it leads to – what?

As we watch Alma watching Elisabet cut her foot, the film seems to break and burn a hole right at Alma's face. It is as though the physical film were burning with rage just as Alma is. The film breaks, and we go back to a brief reprise of the images of the projector and the opening prologue.

At this moment, I feel a regression in the film itself, apart from the characters. This film, which Bergman wanted to title Kinematography, is a film that questions, that works with, the very nature of film itself, the film experience as a projection into and out of ourselves. The film regresses, and there is a parallel regression in my own experience of the film. That is, the film is chatty like Alma, while I sit silent like Elisabet. Is Bergman suggesting that the film projects itself into me, loses itself in me? I think he is. In my projection into the film and the film's projection into me, he is drawing my very personality into the film in the manner of the primal psyche.

Then, at the point where the film breaks, I feel that Bergman, or his film, turns on me. He – it – shows me how he has been fooling me, getting involved with this nurse and this actress when they are really just silver grains on film. This is another break in boundaries. It feels to me as if the film itself were angry, burning, frustrating me, attacking me, pushing me back from the story to the chaos of the prologue.

And I feel angry at it in return. This film is not behaving as a film should! It should have a resolution. It should not have puzzlingly random images. It should be clear what is film and what is me. It should be a story «out there» without involving me in it. It should, at some deep level feed me, gratify me, with things I enjoy looking at and understanding. Instead, this film deliberately taunts and frustrates me. It is angry at me, and I am angry at it, and I damn well don't like it!

After picking up some of the images from the opening «poem», the camera gradually comes into focus on Elisabet. Bergman returns to his story, but now with a difference. From here on, events will be fantastic, unreal. The line between the «reality» of the two women and the impossible fictions is simply gone. And accompanying this delusional quality is anger and humiliation.

Alma is still furious and the two women quarrel again and again, screaming at each other, slapping and scratching faces. I am seeing an adult rage derived from an infant's primal ambivalence.

⁸ Bergman on Bergman 109.

There is also sex. We see a kind of dream sequence in which Alma makes love to Elisabet's husband while Elisabet watches (although it is not clear whether it is a dream, Alma's fantasy, or Elisabet's). The husband seems to be blind, and he seems to believe that Alma, despite her protests, is Elisabet. The film presents this as if it were literally happening, but it is quite impossible. It has to be a disturbing dream or fantasy, but you don't really know. (Some critics have mistaken it for «real».)

The hostility continues as Alma hatefully tells Elisabet how she has failed as a mother, and again, the film conventions collapse. Bergman does the same scene twice, once with the camera on Elisabet and once with the camera on Alma. Thus, Alma twice rants at Elisabet for things Alma could not possibly know, how and why Elisabet became pregnant, how she tried to induce a miscarriage, how she hated her son at birth and thereafter, how she has always been cold to him.

In effect, Alma has projected herself into Elisabet's mind or vice versa. At this point the boundaries between the nurse and the actress are quite down. And it is at this point that Alma has to try to hang onto her collapsing identity. «No, I am not you.... I'm Sister Alma.... I'm not Elisabet Vogler. You are Elisabet Vogler.» Much earlier in the film she had said «We could change into each other». Now she is frightened of that possibility. Now she is inside the actress' mind resisting, fighting to get out, to be separate.

Before and after her statement that she is sister Alma, as if to tell us that she isn't, Bergman twice gives us the most famous image of this film, its signature shot. Bergman creates a face onscreen one half of which is Elisabet's face and one half Alma's. (Indeed, Bergman has written that this was his original inspiration for the film, the similarity in facial structure between the two actresses.)⁹

Cinematically, this is another break in film convention. Psychologically, I see, quite literally, the loss of identity, the merger into another, characteristic of the infant's mental life (and the regressed adult, as Alma now is).

Alma's speech deteriorates. Her words burble out without any sense or sequence. In Bergman's imagery, «As I see it, Alma's aggressions in this dream situation take on such enormous proportions she finds she can no longer use words. She becomes violently disturbed; loses her ability to express herself. She's like a machine that has gone to pieces but just goes on turning madly, and her words, without any ordered context, just come tumbling out».¹⁰

Alma's rage at Elisabet is mixed with the faintly homosexual love that has been going on since their sojourn on the island began. Now Alma scratches the skin open on her arm and lets Elisabet suck her blood. I read this as Alma's acceptance of the nature of the artist, not someone compassionate or wise, but a kind of vampire who sucks the life out of other humans to make them into art. (Or the therapist who digs into your mind – at the beginning of the film, Alma had said she thought art was therapy.)

I also read this grotesque act psychoanalytically as the primal ambivalence to which Alma has regressed. She creates quite literally the devouring mother toward whom she feels a consuming love and hate. Now shots of her furiously slapping Elisabet give way to her caring for Elisabet in the hospital and a repetition of earlier shots where the two women stroked each other's hair and leaned on each other's neck.

Finally, in silence, the two women decide to leave the island. Both return to their roles. Alma tidies up the cottage and takes in the outdoor furniture. At the edge of the film frame, we glimpse a ship's figurehead, a woman's head and body, her expression perhaps a scream, but fixed and artificial.

What does it mean? How can I fit it in?

⁹ Bergman was in the hospital. «I was lying there, half dead, and suddenly I started to think of two faces, two intermingled faces, and that was the beginning, the place where it started.» Looking at the rushes in a movieola, each actress thought the face was the other's (Simon 39).

¹⁰ *Bergman on Bergman* 203.

Alma resumes her nurse's uniform and clamps her hat on her head as if she were putting the lid on these seething emotions. A shot shows us Elisabet acting the same part, Electra, that she was acting when she went mute, but this time she is acting in front of Bergman and his cameraman Sven Nykvist. The movie ends with the image of the projector with which it began. I am reminded again that this is only a movie. The electrodes of the arc light separate and there is only darkness.

* * * *

To my mind, Bergman has recapitulated here all the elements of the primal psyche. The whole film is built on the nurse's regression from a perhaps too-well-ordered personality at the beginning to primal sex and rage and delusion at the end.

Critics read the ending two ways. Some think that what Alma has gone through is therapeutic. She leaves the island a wiser person. As she says, «I have learned quite a lot. Let's see how long I can cope with it». I see it differently. I read her experience on the island as an unsuccessful therapy, and her leaving the island as what psychoanalysts call «a flight into health». The patient avoids the pain of psychoanalytic insight by seemingly becoming healthy, no longer in need of treatment. Here, Alma is pasting her role as nurse as a shaky defense over the primal psyche underneath, the inner sexual and aggressive drives that have been revealed in this pseudo-psychoanalysis. Similarly, it is not clear that Elisabet has learned anything, although she apparently – only apparently – goes back to work.

In other words, I see their story as a deep regression with no purpose and no positive result. I can feel in myself a parallel regression to the earliest psyche of infancy, the need, the anger, the confusion, the loss of a sense of reality. And no resolution. That is why I simply don't like this profound, brilliant, disturbing film.

If I stand back, I can read *Persona* psychologically as about that regression. More specifically, one can read *Persona* as about projection and introjection, putting mental states out into the world or taking them into oneself, breaking down the boundary between inner and outer. The most basic boundary that fails in the film is that between the two women, in the famous shot where Alma's and Elisabet's faces merge into one. They have a more literally oral merger when Alma scratches open her arm and lets Elisabet suck her blood, as literally, Elisabet has been absorbing Alma's personality as she feeds on her for what she needs as an actress.

Yet another boundary broken, another aspect of the primal psyche, is the sex in this film. First, there is prim and proper Alma's description of her orgy on the beach with massive orgasms followed by an abortion. Then there is the sexual dream or fantasy of having sex with Elisabet's husband. And throughout their time on the island there is this half-expressed sexual desire and tension between the two women. It is symbolized as each of the women in her turn comes through the gauzy curtains, vampire-like, to gaze on the sleeping face of the other.

We merge with that other person, we become one with them, but that's dangerous in two ways. If you get too close, and this is particularly true for Bergman, zap! The other person can hurt or even destroy you. Like the arc lights that begin and end the picture: when they get close enough, they burst into flame. Alternatively, you can lose your own identity (as in the shot of the merged faces). Yet this is what art is, losing oneself in the artistic experience – dangerous!

There are, in other words, two sides to infantile ambivalence, desire and rage, and there is plenty of rage in this film. Alma is furious after reading the letter. Elisabet looks at pictures of the Warsaw ghetto and of a monk's self-immolation in Vietnam, rage in society. In the second half of the film, Alma acts out a half-dozen scenes of fury: Alma scratching Elisabet's face and vice versa: the two women slapping each other; Alma threatening to throw boiling water in the actress' face.

Above all, or beneath all, there is Bergman's special sense that to become close to another person is to be humiliated. The most obvious example is Elisabet's patronizing description of Alma in the crucial letter. They come after Alma has almost obsequiously spoken of the actress' importance, her talent, her wisdom, her experience. But Elisabet herself, when she failed onstage,

suffered the most humiliating thing that can happen to an actor. She blew her part. She had to leave the stage because she could not continue. Alma humiliates Elisabet when she describes her appalling performance as a mother. And we in the audience, we come in for our own little shaming, when Bergman shows us how foolish we are to be concerned with these women who are nothing more, really, than darknesses on a piece of celluloid. His film, in a way shows us up, when it refuses to talk to us, when it frustrates and rejects us, burning itself in the middle, presenting random, incomprehensible images.

Critics say that, in this picture, Bergman was testing film itself, seeing how far he could go. Certainly Bergman is one of the most self-conscious of artists, constantly writing and giving interviews in which he dissects his own art.

He starts from a platonic or puritan position that art is a fraud. Bergman repeatedly describes the physical film, one third of which is darkness, as an illusion, a fraud, and himself as juggler or magician. Throughout his movies, Bergman uses theatrical elements: the circus in *Sawdust and Tinsel*; the actress in *Smiles of a Summer Night*; the juggler with supernatural powers in *Seventh Seal*; the magician in *Ansiktet*. Here, his references to the projector call attention to the unreality of film. He insists, This is only a film you're watching. Know it. Accept it.

The comic characters in the little slapstick film in the prologue¹¹ represent the forces we humans try to elude: death, inner fear, supernatural dangers. We try to sleep or hide, as these two women do. But, as I read him, Bergman is saying art trivializes these. This complex film you're watching is just a step up from farce. Similarly, the figurehead we twice see at the end suggests (to me) art is a dead, wooden thing masking over terrible human emotions.

At the time he made this film, Bergman was preoccupied with the changes taking place in 1966, and it's useful to remember them. In the United States, we were nearing the height of the Vietnam War, and demonstrations and counterculture were much in the air. We Americans tend to think this was a purely an American phenomenon, prompted by Vietnam. There were, though, student uprisings about that time in Tokyo, Mexico City, Paris, and many other cities. 1966 was nearly the height of the Cultural Revolution in China. It was the time of «swinging London». For some strange reason, «the sixties» were a worldwide phenomenon, one of those *mentalités* that crops out from time to time.

I read «the sixties» as a breaking down of traditional boundaries, both internal and external. Sexual liberation loosened the boundaries between men and women and between the heterosexual and the homosexual. Drugs and mysticism obliterated the distinction between truth and delusion. Clothing became soft and fluid. Colonies broke loose from the imperialists (notably Vietnam). Youth, not age, became the source of wisdom. If so, then this film is part of that breakdown.

Bergman was much troubled at this point in his career by what he felt was the failure of art to serve as a way of coping with the various crises of the time. When he presents painful historical realities in this film, the self-immolation of a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, the Warsaw ghetto, he presents them as *images*, not the thing itself. Artists are one step removed. They can't deal with reality. Elisabet's silence suggests her own feeling that art doesn't do any good, and she, the artist, is heartless to Alma, to her husband, to her son. She laughs when Alma tells her she thinks art makes people better.

Art, Bergman kept saying during these years, was a deception and illusion, the mere trickery of a juggler or a magician, worthless, and that is the dominant motif in the screenplay for *Persona*. The screenplay, however, was much changed in the filming, and Bergman introduces other themes, although I still see this one.

¹¹ Bergman scholars have identified the little farce as echoing a slapstick comedy he made as the film-within-a-film in an early film, *Prison*. That in turn echoes a childhood effort at film, drawing similar scenes on transparent filmstrip.

He makes me aware his film is an illusion. The characters exist in a world of delusion, where Alma knows things about Elisabet that she could not possibly know, where Elisabet cannot cope with real life, only acting. Bergman adds, however, another kind of delusion. He plays with the physical reality of the celluloid film to remind us that we are deluded into believing the fiction of its story, just as a child is not very clear about what is real and what is not. (It is also Bergman's little joke on «projectionists». Some have rushed to stop the film when it «burned» in the middle of the movie.) But, after all, the physical film we are seeing onscreen is itself a film of a piece of film.

This film's preoccupation with film is very much in the artistic style of the mid-1960s. One of the buzz-words was «self-reflexive». We valued novels and film that talked about the nature of novels and film, and we re-read classic novels and film to understand them as «self-reflexive». But in *Persona*, Bergman, as I read him, is looking at one special aspect of art, the regression toward a confused and angry childhood that we feel when we experience art fully, *when I experience this film fully, which I prefer not to do. It is easier to look at Bergman instead, and, I suppose, that is why I am writing this section.*

When I look past the film to Bergman, I see in his interviews and the like, a deeply ambivalent attitude toward film. He feels danger and fear: «Just like circus performers, who of their own free will climb the big top to perform their daring somersaults to amuse the public, we risk our necks and our reputations to meet the demands made on us.» Because they pose a risk, «I hate the public, I am frightened of it and I love it».¹²

Like an infant, he feels helpless but in control: «To shoot a film is to undertake the taming of a wild beast.» One could be devoured: a film is «a tapeworm 8000 feet long which will nourish itself on the life and mind of the actors, producers, and creators».¹³ We are in the realm of the primal psyche or, as Freud and the early psychoanalysts called it, «the oral stage» of devouring or being devoured.

There is more in Bergman's own regression, something one would expect to find in any filmmaker *or, indeed, any film critic*. A child sees or hears something strangely exciting and disturbing. Often this happens at night. An adult would understand it as something sexual, but the child does not and wonders things like, Those strange noises and postures, are they fighting or what? Are those limbs that appear and disappear being cut off? Am I in this scene or just watching? If I am in it, what will happen to me? Such childhood experiences lead to an adult fixated on looking, as at movies or the theater. One would expect to find such experiences in the childhood of a director like Bergman *or, indeed, a film critic*.

In his many personal reminiscences, Bergman often refers to seeing things in his nursery, «things for which no name exists!»¹⁴ He has said many times that the decisive experience of his childhood was the magic lantern he was once given. It became his favorite, even obsessive, toy, and, as an adult, he called his first autobiography *The Magic Lantern*. Another favorite toy was a miniature theater (which he portrayed in *Fanny and Alexander*). Similarly, he was hooked on cinema when he received his first crude movie projector.

Like the child in what analysts would call «the primal scene», Bergman watches the film every night (as rushes). Yet he feels that he is in it: «I myself become, finally, an integral part of the film, a ridiculously tiny piece of apparatus whose only fault is requiring food and drink.»¹⁵ He is a deceiver, but he is also being deceived. In this film, one could single out as evidence of the conflict around watching, the three anti-visual representations of sex. Two are distanced, only verbal, and the dominant emotion is shame: Alma's story of sex on the beach and her account of how Elisabet

¹² Bergman, «Dialogue». In publicity brochure from Svensk Filmindustri for *Wild Strawberries* (n.d. [1957?]).

¹³ Bergman, «What is Film Making», *Film Makers on Film Making*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1967) 184, 185.

¹⁴ Bergman, «What is Film Making» 186-87.

¹⁵ Bergman, «What is Film Making» 184.

became pregnant. The third, the one in the middle, we see, but the male lover (Elisabet's husband?) is apparently himself blind.

As a psychological critic, I might reasonably infer that Bergman's own talent is driven by some visual experience of sex at an age when he was not ready for it. That trauma, I would speculate, was heightened by conflicts left over from a still more profound layer of childhood, the primal psyche: massive rage, uncertainty about what is real, «oral» concerns, and his own special feeling that to be close is to be humiliated. Thus film and theater became not only satisfying but useful as defenses. But to all these, of course, he brings an adult's ability to sublimate, control, and master these conflicts, to turn them, in his case, into brilliant, wonderful art. He uses the talent nurtured by years, beginning in childhood, of wondering about and working with film to make it function as both a source of pleasure and as a defense.

Nine years after this film, Bergman read Arthur Janov's 1970 book, *The Primal Scream*. He was much taken with it. He wanted to make a four-part television series developing Janov's ideas, but it did not materialize.¹⁶ Curiously – or not so curiously – Janov's idea of a regression to the very first, outraged scream of childhood is very like the regression in this film.

As in the infant's mind, realities are confused. The barriers between self and other person and between self and film are down. As far as I am concerned, Bergman portrays a pathological regression, and he achieves one – in me. As he told an interviewer in 1964, shortly before making this film, he saw «more and more clearly that the film as an art form should communicate psychic states, not merely project pictures of external actions».¹⁷ In *Persona*, I think, he succeeded in doing just that, not communicating, but creating a psychic state.

I don't think Bergman did this out of any personal experience of psychoanalytic regression. To be sure, Ira Konigsberg began a psychological reading of this film by announcing, «Ingmar Bergman went into analysis at the age of forty. Six months later he withdrew. I am told by a friend of Bergman that his analyst said to him that he already knew too much». But when I asked Professor Konigsberg about this, he backed off, saying that his informant was quite unreliable, and the story might simply not be true.¹⁸

I have a reason for believing that Bergman did not create *Persona* out of some knowledge of psychoanalysis. I cannot find in his various autobiographical writings and statements any reference to either Freud or Jung or any other psychoanalyst. I don't find psychoanalytic or psychological language in his writings, despite his frequent preoccupation with his own childhood. He seems strangely free of the folk versions of psychoanalysis that circulate among intellectuals.

I think this film, undeniably a masterpiece, simply came out of Bergman's own psyche, the same access to his own childhood that responded so positively to Janov's primal scream therapy. Freud said that artists had an unusual amount of drive, sexual and aggressive; an extraordinary capacity for sublimating those drives; and a special «laxity» of repression.¹⁹ Bergman looked into himself, where he found this primal psyche, and he was able – miraculously – to translate it into one of the greatest movies ever made. This was his genius – and my frustration. *He could regress, I cannot. I can't enjoy Persona because, as I see it, it brings me face to face with my own limits as a critic and as a human being.*

¹⁶ Ingmar Bergman, *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography*, trans. Joan Tate (New York: Viking, 1988) 231.

¹⁷ Oscar Hedlund, «Ingmar Bergman: The Listener», *Saturday Review*, February 29, 1964.

¹⁸ Ira Konigsberg, «"The Shadows Possess a Power": The Struggle for Self-analysis in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*», *Literature and Psychology: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Literature and Psychology*, Urbino, July 6-9 1990 (Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, 1991) 163-67. Ira Konigsberg (ikonigsb@umich.edu), «Re: *Persona*», e-mail to the author, 5 May 1997.

¹⁹ Norman N. Holland, «Freud on the Artist», *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) esp. 9-11.

The greening of literary studies: Bibliotherapy and reader-response criticism

STEPHEN BONNYCASTLE (*)

In most universities in Canada, and probably most universities in the United States as well, honours programs in literary studies are fundamentally based on a historical organization of the literature to be studied. Normally, in the field of English literature, there is a series of required courses identified with major canonical authors or historical periods: Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Enlightenment, the nineteenth century, and the modern period, for example. There are many benefits which accrue from the use of this paradigm, but I have always felt that it obscures some important aspects of the experience of reading literature. My purpose in this paper is to suggest an alternative way of conceiving of literary studies which would recognize and encourage these hidden, but important, aspects of the experience of literature.

The experience of which I am thinking is that which occurs when a reader reads a book and it takes him or her by storm. It is involving, fascinating, and perhaps even enchanting. The book, and the world of the book, seem to the reader to be the most important thing in life, and coming to the end of it seems like a disaster, one which forces re-entry into the normal world of day-to-day living. In a classification of the pleasures of reading, Roland Barthes called this kind of reading hysterical, without implying a pejorative meaning, I think (100). The book could be said to create a hallucination in the mind of the reader; its world is taken for reality.

In my experience of this kind of reading, the book comes alive in the present, in the present of my life. Even if I am aware, as with *Hamlet*, that the writing, and the action of the plot, are located hundreds of years ago, *the play lives for me in the present*. To be more specific, when I first read *Hamlet* carefully, at the age of twenty, I was entranced by Hamlet's status as an intelligent student - he was, perhaps, an ideal self-image for me. When I read the play now, I am taken up with Hamlet's

(*) Royal Military College of Canada, Department of English, Kingston, Ontario K7K 7B4, e-mail: Bonnycastle-S@rmc.ca

need to live and act in a world riddled with corruption, spying, and political chicanery, in which telling the truth openly is almost impossible. (No doubt this interest reflects an aspect of my current life-situation.) This change in my response to the text illustrates, in a local and personal way, Frank Kermode's argument that classics retain their unusual status because they can be re-interpreted differently in different ages – that is to say, that although they cannot be made to mean anything at all (i.e., the meaning of a classic is not entirely indeterminate), their original meaning in their context of production is almost certainly different in some key ways from their meaning to-day (44). The main problem with the historical paradigm for literary studies, in my view, is that it ignores, or at least underestimates, the importance of the contemporary meaning of works written in the past. Shakespeare our contemporary is obscured in the search for the historical Shakespeare.

My way of focusing on the present meaning of works for readers is to adopt the outlook proposed by bibliotherapy. This term originated in the 19th century, and was used to designate the use of reading to help patients in hospitals achieve calmness, along the lines of hydrotherapy and music therapy. Today bibliotherapy has two main meanings. Clinical bibliotherapy is the use of reading within the context of psychotherapy to promote healing, understanding, growth, and the health of the client. Usually this refers to the use of stories, not self-help books. But bibliotherapy can also take place outside a clinical context.

The key element in non-clinical bibliotherapy is that a book enters the life of a reader, and the reader is changed in some significant way as a result. Usually this happens because the book addresses life-issues which are foremost in the mind of the reader. This may not always be the case, but usually the intensity of the reading experiences I described above is related to a significant overlap between the concerns of the book and the issues in the life of the reader. This allows the book to take on an important meaning for the reader in the moment when it is read.

In the remainder of this brief paper I would like to address the question of whether (and how) the agenda, practices, and results of bibliotherapy can be introduced into programs of literary studies at the university and college level. I would like to focus on three main challenges raised by this project, and conclude with a significant caveat.

1. NEW CANONS BASED ON READER-RESPONSE

To promote bibliotherapy in the classroom, we need to find books which our students can read with engagement, and to which they can respond in a lively and diverse manner. This is a big challenge, and not a new one for most teachers of literature, but in bibliotherapy, or what we might call «life-issues reading», it comes at the top of the list of priorities, above the need to cover a historical period thoroughly, or to teach the great works of the standard canon. Bibliotherapeutically speaking, there is no point in having students read works to which their response is apathy or indifference.

Our project, then, is to produce a new canon of literary works to which students respond with energy and intensity. It is clear that the choice of books that deserve a place on this list will depend on the particular group of students we are teaching. The canon for men will be different from that for women, and the canon for teen-aged undergraduates will be different from that for mature students. I teach in a military university, in which groups of about ninety students live together within a clearly-defined hierarchy. I can sometimes engage them by choosing books which focus on these communal or regimental aspects of their lives.

The book with which I have had most success in evoking a lively response from students is John Fowles's *The Magus*. As many of you will know, it is fundamentally about a young man's search for a way of life which will suit him and which will allow him to get beyond his tendency to be inauthentic and dishonest. He explores these issues – lively ones for many young people – through his involvement with two women his own age, and one older man, the magus (or wizard) referred to in the title, who organizes an extraordinary sequence of adventures for him. There is also a female ins-

tractor, Mrs de Seitas. The presence of these two archetypal figures makes it easy to raise issues related to authority and teaching. Other novels with which I have had notable success in classes are Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, David Lodge's *Small World*, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. I have found that all of these books are more engaging for men than for women, and I would especially welcome recommendations which focus more on women's experience.

2. USING STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO CREATE KNOWLEDGE WHICH THEY VALUE

I have always found that classes in which students express their responses to literature are more lively than those in which there is no opportunity for them to do this, or no desire on the part of the students. But many students feel frustrated if these responses do not lead to knowledge which is worth having. It is a common misperception on the part of teachers and students who know only a little about reader-response criticism that its goal is to simply allow these responses to be articulated. A second stage is also essential.

In my opinion the ultimate goal of the next stage is well described (in a general way) by Norman Holland in a number of his books – that is, for students (and teachers) to come to some sort of recognition about their own characters or identities, which lead them to interpret works of literature in identifiable and, to some extent, predictable ways. For example, Holland works out the following identity theme for Robert Frost:

To be in touch with, to create, and to restrain huge unknown forces of sex and aggression by smaller symbols: words or familiar objects. Or, more briefly, to manage great, unmanageable unknowns by means of smaller knowns. (189)

We could say much more about the idea of identity themes, the various objections to it, and the resistances against it, which arise in the classroom. All I want to say at the moment is that for a class to come to some knowledge of and agreement about the identities of its members is a wonderful goal, but often I find it is not attainable. Some more easily achieved goal is worth formulating. I have two suggestions.

The first is to help the class articulate a distinction which splits the members into two identifiable groups, in which the difference between the two groups seems significant to them. A natural one which arises in reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is that between people who have a «classic» sensibility and those with a «romantic» outlook on life. Another is the distinction Coleridge drew when he said that all people are naturally either Platonists or Aristotelians. From these distinctions one can go on to predictions about how a «romantic» person might respond to a particular story, such as Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

Sometimes a story itself will suggest an interesting split in the class. I have found this to be the case with the following brief narrative, from John Gardner's *On Moral Fiction*:

Thor and Woden Defending the Kingdom of Light

It was said in the old days that every year Thor made a circle around Middle-Earth, beating back the enemies of order. Thor got older every year, and the circle occupied by gods and men grew smaller. The wisdom god, Woden, went out to the king of the trolls, got him in an armlock, and demanded to know of him how order might triumph over chaos.

«Give me your left eye,» said the king of the trolls, «and I will tell you.»

Without hesitation, Woden gave up his left eye. «Now tell me,» he said.

The troll said, «The secret is, watch with both eyes.»

Woden's left eye was the last sure hope of gods and men in their kingdom of light surrounded on all sides by darkness. (3)

The question which I ask about this story is, «How do you respond to Woden's giving up of his right

eye?» It is an intelligent and noble gamble by a heroic figure, or is it a stupid thing to do? The split which this reveals in the class is that between those who regard these god-like figures with a degree of reverence (and for whom it is unlikely or inconceivable that the god of wisdom could do something silly), and those who are happy to see the gods mocked, or made to appear stupid – i.e. people who are hostile to the authority of gods, heroes, and perhaps unsympathetic to highly-placed people in general. Which side of this split a student finds him or herself on will have significant implications for his or her response to other works of literature. I have found that many students appreciate this kind of distinction, which allows them to see and appreciate differences between them and their peers.

3. THE RELEVANCE OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

My second goal, which also is less ambitious than that of working out the identity-themes of students, is to think of the class in the way a therapist thinks of a group with which he or she is working. This will bring certain issues into the foreground which otherwise might remain obscure. To begin with, when participation in discussion is relatively free and uncontrolled, which students speak most, and which remain silent? Which students are able and willing to interrupt someone who is speaking, in order to get their views expressed?

There are also roles which are available in the group process. Who can stand out against the group? Who is concerned to generate consensus? Who defends people who have difficulty getting in on the conversation, and encourages them to speak? Who finds conflict difficult to accept? Who most wants to keep the group from wandering off on tangents? Who wants to be the group leader? Who wants to set up a conflict so that he or she can emerge as the group leader? The roles which students habitually adopt are important clues to their identities.

In group therapy work, there is often a useful distinction to be made between discussion of events which take place in the lives of individuals outside the group, and which they report on (e.g. a conflict I had with my wife last night), and, on the other hand, discussion of events which take place within the group (e.g. George just tried to squash Alvin, or Marie ignored what Shirley just said). Often the latter sort of discussion is more productive, since the events took place in front of everyone (in the «here and now»), and it is possible to get several views about what everyone experienced, as opposed to one person having the «authoritative version of events», because he was the only person who actually witnessed them.

Reading a text in common has many of the features of experience in the here and now, and so a literature class offers a rich opportunity to reflect on how different people have processed the same material. This can lead to important insights about how individuals characteristically take part in human groups. Leading a group which is exploring these issues requires some of the same skills as leading a therapy group. I feel that many teachers could benefit by immersing themselves briefly in some of the literature about group therapy, such as Irwin Yalom's marvellous textbook, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*.

A CONCLUSION AND A CAVEAT

I feel that the university study of literature can be enriched in many ways through incorporating some of the ideas and techniques developed in the field of bibliotherapy. I feel, however, that anyone who does this needs to pay attention to the paradigm conflict between these methods and the ideology inherent in the traditional study of the history of literature. At a deep level, understanding the past and understanding the present may be in harmony. But at a more superficial level, a teacher is asking a student to adopt two contradictory stances toward a work of literature if he or she combines focusing on the past (in the historical paradigm) and pursuing the goals of bibliotherapy, or reader-response criticism.

The caveat is that any teacher using the methods of bibliotherapy needs to realize that students are not in therapy, and they have not made a contract to pursue self-knowledge, however attractive that goal may seem to the teacher. I think we need to be careful about crossing the line into inappropriate intervention in students' lives. But we can perhaps be comforted by the idea that if we do, their resistance may automatically erect an effective barricade against us.

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Textual play. The transformation of the reader (*)

LÁSZLÓ HALÁSZ (**)

Let us play in another way! We cannot take even one thick novel to the desert island where we shall have to live. But some works – together they can be fitted into a slim volume – are there. Let us see them as representatives of an unknown (literary) culture. A message about the human condition, the adventures of the self. Aesthetic, psychological, sociological, and historical information is at our disposal as we wish. In a paradoxical way we cannot get any other literary works.

1.

Dr. Yu Stun, the storyteller and a former teacher of English, is a spy for Germans during the First World War in London. His task is to give information about the location of the site of British artillery before an Irish captain working for English can arrest him. The doctor finds the name of Stephen Albert, who lives near London, in a phone directory. Albert could send this message. When the doctor gets off the train he has to turn to left at each crossroads. It comes to his mind that to turn always to the left means to reach the centre of a labyrinth. He knows about this since his great-grandfather Ts'ui Pen, having abandoned his politician-scientist-artist career, wrote a novel, and built a labyrinth, in which «everybody was lost». Later on he was killed by a stranger.

The time of the story is in the second decade of our century, its place is a capital and its environs of one of the belligerent countries; its plot concerns the activities of spies and counterspies. Nevertheless, it does not portray that world. It is as though the writer is saying that real or fictive stories based on real events do not say anything important about man and his stories. Do we believe in the reality of the events in question without cause? But even if they are real, they are only scenes from the tales about the labyrinth component.

El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan (*The Garden of the Forking Paths* written by J. L. Borges in 1941) is a multiple play with a labyrinth in the labyrinth of writing. The storyteller

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(**) Institute for Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1394 Budapest, P.O. Box 398, Hungary.

begins his wandering (playing with losing and finding) in a regularly forking labyrinth, a book containing the names of people with a phone-line (labyrinth 1). A labyrinth – which can be placed in a garden as well – is often planned and built with the aim of making people lose their way. Nature provides models such as hidden streams, bending corridors, dead-ends and caves consisting of a network of rooms. And the uterus is also such a model. The genital organ of a mother is an entrance, and her inner organs constitute a winding way between walls. In the centre of the labyrinth there is an embryo. At the birth this embryo has to go along the delusive paths of darkness to defeat death and come to life. This is an archetype of mysteries: the way in the labyrinth is the metamorphosis reviving man. The playfulness connects labyrinth with literature. A frequent theme of narrative works is that a protagonist should overcome great difficulties. At the same time, the protagonist is not known because he conceals his face or because he takes on another form, or because he does not know himself. In other words, the protagonist has a mask, he has some secret (Huizinga, 1955). The labyrinth cannot be solved rationally, it is a memory and arousal of a kind of emotional shock (Santarcangeli, 1967).

The storyteller proceeds to his goal in an unknown town like in a circular labyrinth (labyrinth 2). The round, circular labyrinth is itself also an archetype, namely of a circle (or a sphere). The divided circle-form, the mandala, appears in cities built on the old circle plan. At the same time, the mandala surrounds and protects the psychological completeness against exterior effects (Jung, 1985). It is a unity of micro – and macrocosm. In the circular labyrinth the storyteller identifies the garden of forking paths (labyrinth 3) which is the labyrinth or its copy designed by his great-grandfather (labyrinth 4).

The great-grandfather's novel is also a garden of forking paths, a labyrinth returning to itself. A book can be endless only in a way – says Albert, the circular way. It is a book the last page of which is identical with the first one and «it can be continued ceaselessly» (labyrinth 5). It shows a world in which each antagonistic possibility can be realized. «(...) su antepasado no creía en un tiempo uniforme, absoluto. Creía en infinitas series de tiempos (...) No existimos en la mayoría de esos tiempos; en algunos existe usted y no yo; en otros, yo, no usted; en otros, los dos. (...) En uno de ellos soy su enemigo.» («Your ancestor did not believe in stable, absolute time. He believed in an endless series of times (...) Times mostly do not exist; in the case that you exist and I do not, in other times I exist and you do not, in some other times both of us exist (...) In one of the times I am an enemy of yours.») The relative stability of the self stops as well (labyrinth 6). This is what the storyteller has been taught by Albert living in the centre of the (3rd) labyrinth and revealing the secrets of the (5th and 6th) labyrinths. The storyteller is a good learner: although one of his selves is a friend of the solver, the other one is his enemy. He kills him so that the name of the victim should be published by a newspaper article on the murder. That is, the name of the city to be demolished is Albert (labyrinth 7).

However, he himself is thus sentenced to a violent death, too. But they are reversed mirror images of each other in another respect. Yu Stun is a Chinese in Great Britain, Albert creates a Chinese environment in his English home. Earlier Yu Stun has been a language teacher=a translator of languages, today he is a spy=a gatherer of military secrets. Today Albert is a researcher of secrets of a foreign culture, earlier he has been a Chinese missionary=a translator of religious values. In connection with Ts'ui Pen's work Yu Stun as a beginner listens to Albert, the expert. At the same time, Albert as an interpreter (reconstructor) of the novel-labyrinth has changed his profession like the writer-constructor of the novel; he has devoted his whole time to the works and a foreigner has killed him, a foreigner who is a descendant of the author and who as a storyteller is also an author himself. The story is going along forking paths of the Double (labyrinth 8).

Anyway, roles are not rigid. In another future – the reader imagines and «writes» it based on the cues of the text – similar stories can arise. Considering that each story is valid, it makes no sense to ask which story is true (labyrinth 9). We know everything from the point of view of the storyteller. The bizarre turns of the logic of dreams interwoven with latent contents can be seen in the tale which is not accordance with everyday conceptual thinking (labyrinth 10). The dream

images of being lost in narrow corridors, in crossings of paths are common human anxiety experiences. The aim is to understand the self. At the depth of the labyrinth there is often a mirror in which one can see that the God or monster is oneself (Santarcangeli, 1967).

The mirror has a prominent role in constructing the self. Between the sixth and the eighteenth month a baby can anticipate his/her dominion over his/her physical unity only in his/her imagination. He/she identifies with the similar image of the complete form in which he/she perceives himself/herself in a mirror. He/she constructs a model based on which his/her self will be built. The mirror stage is a «drama» in the history of the formation of an individual. This drama brings about satisfaction if the unbroken unity of the exterior and interior past can be experienced. At the same time, all the phantasies on dismembered, separated, duplicated, transformed body «on alienated identity» go back to here (Lacan, 1966: 93-94).

Even the perihypnic thinking just before sleep is characterized by incoherence; the categories of the mind and their relationships are falling away. This is the case with the self, too, in dreams or other dreamlike hypnoid states. The feeling of physical self is a condition of selfconsciousness and experience of self-identity which is an experience of continuous connection between self-states of different periods. Without such an experience one can feel lost, but perhaps extremely free and a winner over time. When leaving physical bonds (both the real time limits and the conditions of the neural system, which also works as a biological clock directing the rhythmic processes of the organism), one takes newer and newer forms: a new self and fate in the labyrinthine forkings of the time which is transformed to spatial relations (labyrinth 11).

The author composed the blurred images of borders of time, space and self like a mathematician and disciplined them by use of a philosopher's analytical-discursive language. The title of the short story not only marks its theme precisely; at the same time it refers to itself: the fabula and the sujet (labyrinth 12). At one time the spy stories about mysterious yellow men were popular reading material. The short story relies upon another literary genre instead of actual happenings in the outer world. The enigmas about people and their stories can always be rewritten, since their lives and deaths which cannot be known certainly go back to mythological texts which are hidden in this easily-readable labyrinth as a pastiche (labyrinth 13).

2.

Finally the man could go on with the novel-reading. He was sitting in his favourite armchair of green velvet, with his back to the door in his study looking at the park. He has given himself to the book. He has go to the last meeting, as the woman gently begins to kiss her lover in the forest-hut. But now he did not go there for this.

As they left each other in the door of the hut, the woman, according to their plans, started in the path toward the north. The man stole in the opposite way between woods and paths. Soon he entered the house. «Subió los tres peldanos del porche y entró. Desde la sangre galopando en sus oídos le llegaban las palabras de la mujer: primero una sala azul, despues una galería, una escalera alfombrada. En lo alto, dos puertas. Naduie en la primera habitación, nadie en la segunda. La puerta del salón, y entonces el punal en la mano, la luz de los ventanales, el alto respaldo de un sillón de terciopelo verde, la cabeza del hombre en el sillón leyendo una novella.» («When feeling the pulsating blood in his ears the woman's words were echoing: first, there is a blue room, the next are a decorated corridor and a staircase covered with a carpet. Two doors are on the top. Nobody is in the second one. Afterwards the doors of the salon, then a dagger in your hands, the light is filtering in through the window, there is an armchair with green velvet, and the man – whose head is against the back of the armchair – is reading a novel.»)

If Albert had known the *Continuidad de los parques* (*The Continuous Parks* written by J. Cortazar in 1956) he could have stated with satisfaction that the short story was completely endless. The protagonist is a man who – in a house in the centre of a garden labyrinth – is reading a

novel about a man who is committing a murder planned by his lover against a third one who is the former man who is reading a novel about... The omniscient storyteller out of the text has written from the point of view of a man who is reading that a man, who... And a lot of men and women are reading about a man who...

Perhaps Albert would not have liked it, but his creator must have liked the fact that this text was of another sort. An extraordinary part of the play parodying the schema of a crime and love story is that the protagonist has a role as an actor and a reader simultaneously. It is said word for word that the reader is always there. This is not strange either for the author of the first story. For him – says Genette (1966: 130) – the author of a work exists only through the several relations with the other works in the field of reading. The history of literature is a history of the ways of, and motives for, reading as well. According to this, one literature differs from another one mainly in the ways of reading.

There is no literary text without the reader's creative act which is equivalent to the writer's – says *The Continuous Parks*. But this statement is also refuted ironically by writing an absurd tale violating the rules of everyday reality. While the reader is presented as a cocreator, at the same time he is also presented as someone who depends on the text: one has to do what it requires. The double change of viewpoints suggests to an everyday reader who picks up the text like an exceptional reader who is unable to do it as he is in the text, too. The violation of the critical limit has serious consequences. Questioning «the innocence» of perception of existence, irony moves towards the absolute dimensions from the momentary and obviously innocent concealment of a little self-deception (De Mann, 1983: 213). Nothing is impossible in the text-world, in the impossible world of possibilities. There is no limit to the reader's identification with the protagonist here. The metamorphosis of the protagonist is also unlimited. He gets into the labyrinth of the short story as an unsuspecting reader, and then becomes a conspirator in starting the whole endless cycle again as a simultaneously selfdestroying and reviving immortal being, a reader in the moment of committing the murder.

The tension mixed with the astonishment of the reader-in the text like the reader-out of the text is solved by the unexpected and sudden change of role when it turns out who the murderer is, as in an ordinary crime story. The mirror built into the text-labyrinth – in which you cannot separate the real picture from the imagined one – multiplies the protagonist and the reader of the short story. The reader-in the texts meets his own murderer's face, the murderer looks back as a reader, the reader-out of the text is projected into the reader-in the text=murderer «in the endless series of times» – as Albert would have said.

The protagonist has a – not real – mask according to the requirements of his actual role. He is changing his character-masks quickly. In the theatre of the ancient world the mask was called the *persona*, which is the origin of the word: personality. If one identifies with one's mask=persona, one will be identical with one's role-personality. A mask has a demoniac power. At the same time, a mask is one of the ambiguous motifs of carnivalesque folk-plays, expressing the temporal, changing and violent character of the coincidence of natural limits (Bahtin, 1968). From this point of view not (self)illusion but transformation, unlimitedness and rebirth are remarkable, among others between the author and the recipient as well.

The play is not only a fight with difficulties and secret, is not only agon, but mimicry, too. But when someone often becomes someone other than himself/herself, does he/she at all know who he/she is really? Especially, if he/she changes his/her face by quick rotation of the masks or by transformation. As though he/she were sitting in a caroussel=Ringlspiel (spiel=play). This play is the ilinx which looks for the vertigo and tries to destroy «the stability of perception (Caillois, 1958: 23). Irony itself is the «vertige de l'hyperbole» says De Mann (1983: 218) based on Baudelaire.

The play becomes complete. Its form realized by efforts and going through difficulties, the so-called ludus meets with absent-minded jubilation, ecstatic unbridledness, *paidea*. The vertigo of *paidea* is not only fascination; to tip the physical balance shows the momentary functional trouble of the organ of balance. In the middle ear there is an ancestral apparatus the name of which –

because of its form – is «labyrinth». It gives information about physical balance, the position and movement of the body. The continuous labyrinths?

3.

When he began to write his story he thought that «his own life might be a fiction, in which he was the leading or an accessory character». He was not happy about this. The story about a writer writing a story nowadays is nearly trivial. Although he himself found his own work as avant-garde, «in his heart of hearts he disliked literature (...) of overtly metaphysical character» like Jorge L. Borges. He decided instead of discussing his narrative process he would describe «the several complications of his character's conviction that he was a character in a work of fiction».

«His author could as well tell some other character's tale or some other tale of the same character as the one being told as he himself could in his own character as author his "reader" could as easily read some other story, would be well advised to (...) Even if his author were his only reader as was he himself of his work-in-progress as of the sentence-in-progress and his protagonist of his, et cetera, his character as reader was not the same as his character as author, a fact which might be turned to account. What suspense.»

He did not understand how the reader was able to follow him. He concluded that «one or more of three things must be true: 1) his author was his sole and indefatigable reader; 2) he was in a sense his own author, telling his story to himself, in which case; and/or 3) his reader was not only tireless and shameless but sadistic, masochistic if he was himself (...)» your author bless and damn you his life is in your hands! He writes and reads himself (...)

In the first story the discursive language fitted in the protagonist's extraordinary story. Now, in J. Barth's *Life Story* (written in 1966), however, it directly rules the way of communication. The writer is more than ambivalent. He himself thinks the story about a writer writing a story is contrived, nevertheless he resigns himself unwillingly. He doubts the existence not only of his own short story, but of his own self, stating and denying at the same moment self-ironically. For practical purposes, he is also a part of a fictive world, a poetical figure who reads his own self. The text is a snake coiling round and biting itself. Literature and reality out of literature are blending together. It seems that the distinction between them is meaningless as both are products of construction. One learns to see the world through the artefacts of culture which mediate society's stereotyped ways of seeing the environment. Each culture and method of communication are built on the common play between expectation and observation (Gombrich, 1959). Man is a storytelling animal. Narratives help us to organize and reorganize our experiences (Hillis Miller, 1990). From this point of view it is not important how fictive a story is. In an extreme formulation: «There is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative» (Doctorow, 1983: 25). «There is no mimesis, only poesis. No recording. Only construction» (Scholes, 1975: 7).

Nonetheless, there is a difference between an intentionally nonfictive autobiography or biography or any other nonfictive historical narrative and even their fictive variations. When constructing nonfictive texts temporal limitations have to be taken into consideration, the author is constrained by data. In the case of fictive texts, even if their components come directly from the social-historical world and refer to it, nonfactual factors appear are free in this sense. «(...) the reader of a nonfictional narrative understands it to have a stable univocal origin, that its narrator is identical to a real person: the author named on its title page» (Cohn, 1990: 792). Again, the narrator of a fiction is always a constructed character, even if he/she speaks in the first person singular, he/she is separated from the author. What any kind of fictive short story can do a nonfictive narrative cannot: «it cannot present past events through the eyes of a historical figure present on the scene, but only through the eyes of the forever backward-looking historian-narrator» (Cohn, 1990: 786).

If these borderlines do exist, they have not always been appreciated, especially recently. The genres are blurred. Not merely between fictive and nonfictive, but between narrative and expository

texts as well. Stories are full of equations and tables, documents seem to be confessions, methodological problems appear as personal memories. All these are signs of change in social thought (Geertz, 1983). The story, the events can be presented by a nonfictive narrative in just as artistic way as by a fictive one. As if the *Life Story* showed the opposite. Although it makes free play with the differences between the author and narrator, and the author as a reader, the text seems to be a literary-aesthetic and psychological essay more than a literary work.

Again, this possibility suggests that a literary work – denying «the family resemblance» (Wittgenstein, 1956: 66) between fiction and nonfiction – is strikingly separated from a (scientific) expository text. The former one is full of «literariness», the latter is not. But if this is so, why did an expert remark that he had never found the free-floating aesthetic energy to the extent that he once encountered in an ophthalmological textbook? (Cysarz, 1926). This «épater le bourgeois» statement is in full accordance with a recent definition: «Literature comprises any linguistic work, written or oral, which has significant aesthetic qualities when described in aesthetic categories» (Hirsch, 1976: 134). That is, if a text is described by aesthetic categories, the appearance of remarkable aesthetic qualities is rather probable.

Do additional criteria change this ironical situation? A literary text is a linguistic text proposing an inner field of reference which the meanings of the text refer to (Hrushowsky, 1984: 235). The writer's name is decisive marker of a certain style, a group of texts, a genre, a school or a whole historical epoch (Steiner, 1982: 509). But a competent reader – if he/she wishes – is able to fit any kind of text, including the ophthalmological textbook in question into a frame of reference of several authors each following the other. «(...) if readers feel some need to process a text as a literary artefact (...) they will attempt to apply a set of special interpretative conventions» (Short & Candlin, 1989: 202).

The *Life Story* recalls that literature meant for a long time what one had read; what one knew was one's literature. Up to late 18th century a competent reader did not read historical texts, philosophical texts and (serious) literary narratives in different ways. He/she was in almost no doubt that a literary work referred to the world, expressed a clear truth about life and helped to improve character. It is quite probable that the pragmatics of reading would not have shown that a literary reader had great but not unlimited freedom of interpretation, and that DEFT mechanisms were at work in the service of the reader's identity theme. But when (narrative) literary reading became separate, the interaction between author and reader was not obvious from one moment to the next, and when it became obvious, there was no doubt as to the representative places of the author and the reader.

The Garden of Forking Paths cuts a way to the reader's phantasy by means of certain specific cues. Without mentioning even a word, the story (author) thinks of «the implicit reader» who is responsible for revealing the potential multiplicity of the textual relations (Iser, 1978: 278). *The Continuous Parks* goes further; the reader enters the story directly. But in Barth's story the self-forms and fates change different aims not only through the passage of time; not only the reader-out of the text realizes that fictive reality has become a bloody one and this latter sublimated to a poetry, that the protagonist has become a reader lost in a labyrinth suddenly, then the reader became an author and so on, but the reader-in the text can see himself in both ways simultaneously. That makes it easy and difficult for the reader-out of the text to identify and find the appropriate frame of reference.

The narrator-author thinks his task too much and too little. He is anxious that he cannot do anything with it, like the reader also. To blur borderlines lead to their disappearance. The writer and the reader are one and the same as creating each other. The title of the story is justified. This intentionally artificial thinking out is principally equivalent to a life story of conflict between real flesh-and-blood protagonists. This is his *Life Story* of the storyteller without any story who creates and reads himself.

4.

«Stai per cominciare a leggere il nuovo romanzo *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* di Italo Calvino. Rilassati. Raccogliti.» We are in a bar of a railway station. A man enters. «Io sono l'uomo che va e viene. Ossia: quell' uomo si chiamo "io" e non sai altro di lui.»

The protagonist in the title of the novel (*If on a winter's night a traveller* written in 1979) is the storyteller himself. But the author and the Reader are also one and the same traveller. The peculiarity of the journey stems from the multiplication of the traveller. The Reader is directly in the story, an associate not of the author, but of the storyteller, at the same time the stories are followed by readers. The author-Reader-reader-storyteller are travelling together on a secret mission: a time-trip back to themselves. The trip leads through ten (story) worlds. Although characters, space, cultures, names, and methods of narration differ from each other, repetitive parallelisms such as love between the actual storyteller and (several) woman partners; between the Reader and the Woman Reader, plus her sister; and happy ending and interruption motifs; the metamorphosis of characters appear. The wandering in the labyrinth is fascinating. This simultaneously consists of acts directed by human instincts and of physical and mental constructs. Especially of the text itself.

Here a reverse world dominates. It is not looking into real labyrinths that shows how one can lose oneself in the world of books, but inversely. It is not the lovers' physical union that shows how readers identify with the hero of a work, but inversely. It is not the author who produces his/her reader, but the other way round. There is no need to learn reading, but nonreading. The translator, Marana is not working on interpreting an original piece, but on apocryphal variations. The mirror does not serve constructing and reconstructing the self, but losing him/her.

And the self is such a great burden that the owner takes the view that the key to full self expression would be his/her non-existence, rather than his/her existence. According to our obvious experiences the coherence of a story is made by the logical chains of causes and motives leading to the events and by the stability of the storyteller-self's ideas and styles. Thus, narratives – either everyday or extraordinary – suggest to us that the self is a well defined unity in which occasionally possibly contradictory traits are ordered into a clear pattern. Maybe, in spite of this we are unable to recognize it, but the self cannot do anything about it

This time, however, the self seems to be inconceivable. He/she is slipping out of his/her hands. He/she is interrupted losing his/her control, losing his/her stories. The cause of the trouble is not that the storyteller does not attribute any importance to the self, but rather that he thinks him/her very important. The self fills up the other with mind. The self is able to give up his/her self, is able to adjust to the other, is able to change. Without him/her there is no writing, no reading, no communication. It is not the problem that the self is not as stable as he/she would like it to be – if he/she could influence it –, but that he/she is not unstable enough.

Even, he/she has limits, he/she has not really lost, even he/she has identity. That is why the author of the book is not content with living his/her possible self in the storyteller who never expresses himself completely and his only stable trait is to be another self=style. At the same time, the author takes on Flannery's self, the author's in the book. He thinks that he will write a novel full of beginnings and the hero would be a Reader. And owing to his existing self Flannery is not able to write well – «Come scriverei bene se non ci fossi!» – to leave the limits of his life story, his existence completely. That is why he feels close to him the copyist who eliminates his self because his reading-self hinders it.

«Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self. For everything we "know to be true" about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision.» This situation is one which is called *postmodern* by jeopardizing the self itself. «The fully saturated self becomes no self at all (...) Selves as possessors of real and identifiable characteristics – such as irrationality, emotion, inspiration, and will – are dismantled (...) persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction» (Gergen, 1991: 6-7). Precisely this occurs in

the apocryphal literature and in all kinds of falsifications. But in a book which says that writing is equal to hiding something to be found; well, in this book the author just indicates his real name in a more striking way than it is usual. He puts it on the cover, but the reader also sees it together with the title in the first and the last sentences. The reader cannot fail to be aware of the author's identity even if he/she wants to. He/she must interpret everything in this frame directed by the authentic name of the author. The point of irony is to direct the process that texts which doubt the originality=value of a work of art cannot be separated from the author's originality.

«Io leggo dunque *esso* scrivo» – says the Reader. But the author reveals the whole manipulation in advance. He keeps a distance from himself and all the falsifications – all the pastiches. He keeps floating them. He persuades us that the «Author's death» supposing that the author feels deeply and exists independently of his work, is not equal with the glory of language without the author's self. And if the paradox that the reader can be born only by the author's death has some reason, it is correct only with its pair: if both are directed by the author. As he does it, indeed.

He expects from his reader the floating dialogue, the play of opposite efforts, language and attitudes which he claimed from his text. According to the initial antagonistic instruction «concentrate - relax», he stimulates the reader to an absent-minded indulgence and a critical distance which comes out of it. Everything is inspired with irony, in an even more complicated way than in the previous texts. The subject is free negatively, as the reality is not there, the subject is floating. Irony is an extremely easy play with nothing (Kierkegaard, 1961).

The author is playing with the most different ways of writing, playing with secret and hidden essence. And he is playing with the power of reading. «Possiamo impedire di leggere: ma nel decreto che proibisce la lettura si leggerà pur qualcosca della verità che non vorremo venisse mai letta...». With the Reader who realizes during lovemaking that his body is covered with printed pages. With the storyteller who invents and annihilate worlds according to arbitrariness of his fantasy, but when he believes that only abstract words can be written on paper, an attractive woman appears suddenly. Playing with Messianistic absurdities of social world, and at the same time with the alienating mixture of the signifying (word) and the signified (object). Playing with the shockingly new method of storytelling which goes back at least a thousand year old past. *Mille e una notte*. Thus, it is a pastiche itself. Playing with transformation, metamorphosis.

It is unsurpassable when the author makes a programme by which he is transforming the living man into a dead man and then he gives life to a new variant in the next story world. In vain, he warns us that all these are only words, words, words, that the language (play) is a master, he takes on the role of the big player, the Demiurg. And so he gives opportunity to the alea, that is a play of the fate besides the other components of play: the effort of agon, the similarity of mimicry and the cavalcade of ilinx. He builds the unpredictable, surprise, adventure into his programme by mediation of the writer in the novel, by the translator and the Reader who play with various levels of reality. Stories are generating each other, considering that they are also transforming together with the characters. Everything is similar and everything is different.

«(I) I, Calvino, write that

(II) You Reader, read that

(III) Flannery-Marana write that

(IV) "I have an idea to write a novel consisting of mere beginnings" which starts as follows:

(V) Attention, Reader, "You begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel: *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*" which says:

(VI) "I am the man who goes here and there"» (Frasson-Marin, 1986: 401).

Whichever can be connected with whichever in pairs, fours, fives, sixs. More than twenty paths returning to themselves are bending in the labyrinths of levels of reality. And the whole is in a big circle: the writer also plays with his authorship. The playfulness connects labyrinth with literature.

The traveller returns his starting point. The text(ing) finds and invents itself. It does not exclude the romantic and modern, the two former big vocabularies for understanding the self. And

it is not averse to the schemata of mass-culture either. Everything is renewed by the extending frame of relativities, by the interaction between different roles and opinions. Self-reflexive doubt and irony are reinforced by doubting *the* truth, by realizing the multiplicity of viewpoints. One learns to revise oneself from several points of view, taking this serious business upon oneself. While the text dismantles the idea of personal essence, it increases self-consciousness by programming self-irony. After all, it infuses itself against its own mentality.

The text, a set of instructions addressed to the reader as to how he/she can (re)construct the possible worlds will be peculiar as the author not only initiates a continuous dialogue with the reader, but he makes the Reader responsible. The Reader as a protagonist, the champion of agonal plays whose test is fighting his way through the text-world. He can succeed if he does not lose, if he understands the composition and cues. But if his business goes too smoothly, he will perform his joyless task like a machine. That is why he is changed by the text. The point of his play is to arouse the Reader's interest and tension and hinder its satisfaction by delay.

If solving a task is interrupted, the finishing of it is stimulated by the tension generated. The wide playground for wishful fantasies gives an opportunity for the reader to fill in the empty spaces. If he/she thinks that the writer goes where he/she cannot follow him, he/she can turn back the events and characters to the routine, well-known schema-based way. Again, the author avoiding an unintended effect due to the repetition of incompleteness is able to use further deviating factors which increase the reader's arousal. The Reader encounters one, even two Women Readers. «Basically we have a love story in our hands: the reader's love towards novel-reading and a story full of events, moreover the Reader's love for the Woman Reader like as in each fable» (Pedulla, quoted by Frasson-Marin. 1986: 325).

A psychoanalyst must have an experience of evidence. Why could the reading just not be a wishful (basically) sexual act when any kind of artistic enjoyment comes from the restitution of an interrupted contact with the mother's body? The idea is not remote from a significant source of text theory. There is no object whose relationship to pleasure would be constant. Nevertheless, for the writer there is such an object: the mother tongue. «The writer is someone who plays with the mother's body» (Barthes, 1976: 37).

The baby models himself/herself based on his/her mother. Like his/her mirror image which follows all of his/her movements, he/she sees his/her mother as one who responds to all of his/her impulses. The mirror image is «a homolog of the Mother/Child symbolic relation» (Lacan, 1977: 196). A reader is not only erotically attached to a text like a child longing for his/her mother and seeing himself/herself in her as in a mirror, but he/she feels that the text needs to have him/her like a mother longing for her child, who had been an embryo in her uterus, a labyrinth.

The state of reading is getting into the labyrinth of text-mother and it produces a new form from a text and a potential reader, like a genuinely embracing loving couple transforming into a new form: «un unico soggetto» of two heads and four arms and legs. «Della lettura delle pagine scritte, la lettura che gli amanti fauno dei loro corpi (di quel concentrando di mente e corpo di cui gli amanti si servono per andare a letto insieme) differisce in quanto non è lineare».

If we disregard the differences which separate love and reading from each other, the connection can be reinforced by further similarities. A mixture of chance, curiosity, interest, hope and doubt, sympathy and desire is at work. This stimulates reduction of psychological distance. The communication becomes «dense» through the spatial closeness. Lovers are telling themselves to each other. Meanwhile they are rewriting their biography. Confidential information and realization of similarities are bases of identification. Love is a hypnoid state. Its working is helped by attention concentrated on each other and detachment from the disturbing outer world.

Real relations are reorganized. The weaker stimuli (a word, a look) overcome the obviously stronger stimuli of outer world. Illusions are aroused together with increasing suggestibility: «phantasies which you have believed» – belief in everything that you can imagine. The suspension of disbelief – as in reading. What is hypnotic fascination on the one hand, it is an extraordinary psychological adventure on the other. What is narrowing consciousness on the one hand, is en-

larging it on the other hand. Love is also increased by enigma and incompleteness deviating from a smooth way. The catharsis of cognition is also common. Both love and reading go beyond a mere existence to try to grasp something inconceivable.

The Reader, the Woman Reader and her sister, reading in a different way, are double opposites complementing each other like one man-two women in the novel beginnings, these triad formations mirroring in each other's regards. They proclaim more impossibility than possibility to finding an unbroken identity. The reader's identification is more interrupted and broken than continuous and intensified. The mixture of incompleteness, frequent transformations and identity diffusions does not help the model-imitating identification based on empathy. But in the various situations the many kinds of figures offer the reader the chance to feel some traits as his /her own and to discover some of his/ /her own traits in them. And the frequent deviations which hinder the spontaneous indulgence can stimulate searching for causes and correspondences.

5.

Finally, whose riddle has to be solved? The protagonist in the title is the storyteller himself. But the author and the Reader, and the reader are also one and the same traveller who finds his/her life story: enigmas can be always rewritten as certainly as we can never get to know about people and text in the garden of forking paths as in continuous parks on a winter's night. The peculiarity of the trip comes from the multiplication of the traveller-self. The Reader is directly in the story...

The main characters' profession says a lot: writer, reader, language teacher, translator. Who make codes and interpret them. Among the other characters, spies, counterspies, riddle (labyrinth) makers and solvers often appear, that is, people who code and decode. Written texts come into being in a situation of disturbed understanding, whether amateurish stories of life stories of the self in an amateurish way or stories of professional storytellers.

Translation is a special case of hermeneutical activity which overcomes strangeness - says Gadamer (1972), adding that to make a master of literary tradition surpasses even the adventure of a trip and that unambiguity of intended meaning easily becomes uncertain. The main problem of the (literary) culture represented by our stories is a real paradox: how can be the possibilities of understanding be extended if the (eventually overcome) trouble and difficulties are increased according to a programme. The closed space of the trouble is the self.

The narratives in which the self tells himself/herself – obviously not independent of the world around – are fragmented, they do not conclude from each other; sometimes they diverge, sometimes they meet. But even in this case they can often contradict each other. If the representatives of the culture do not accept that the text of their selves is chaotic, confused and unintelligible, they have to see it as «polystoried» and polyvalent. In theory, the possibilities of interpretation will be inexhaustible; there is uncertainty that following meaning n there will not be meaning $n+1$, because of the alternative relations between stories. That is why we can find the metaphors which generate each other: the self is a complicated text referring to oneself, the (circular) labyrinth is a complicated text referring to itself, the complicated literary text recalling and questioning earlier ways of writing is the result of a labyrinthine text-production enriching understanding itself.

The creative imagination is decisive even if the author does not have to invent its subject or events in a fundamental way. Even then the voice of operations of reconstruction is repressed by that of construction. Our texts are not life model-, but text model-based. But the linguistic problems of the writer and reader are interwoven with presentation of life and death conflicts of his/her own and others' characters. Yet, the territory between texts and the series of effects of former texts are full of directly human references.

According to the evidence of the works in our imagined island however, much earlier is the culture which gave life to them; in a wider sense the mimetic function cannot be eliminated. «The interest which literature has for human beings, it has because it possesses a humanly interesting

content, because what literature presents or says concerns readers as human beings» (Lamarque-Olsen, 1994: 265). Our texts are not mirrors of nature, but they say something, more precisely they say a lot of things. This thematic aspect substituting for a genuine mimetic aspect explains «the cognitive value of literature» (Lamarque-Olsen, 1994: 438).

Independent of the declared programmes, the reader not only relies upon his/her textual knowledge, but upon world knowledge and within this upon real people, especially his/her experiences about his/her own self. And these themselves most obviously appear (re)constructed in stories. The reader always chooses them out of the set at his/her disposal which he/she finds the most suitable, as he/she is reminded by the text read. In this sense the reader never sheds his/her naivety. This attitude helps in finding the stories which reinforce his/her own «real» stories in literary narratives as in other ones.

Literature is a large-scale «staging» anthropologically. It presents everything that it could not be presented otherwise. «If anything at all was imitated then, it was not in order to copy what was there but to “detach from the irrational welter of givens the life-supporting items (...) to endure living vis-a-vis the precariousness and exposure of being human”» (Gehlen, quoted by Iser, 1993: 298).

At the same time, literature is an instrument of coping with challenges of life in a world where change is surprising, where limits are fluid, where one has to prepare for the incalculable. This is why patterns of perception and meaning, and the continuity, are interrupted. The expected manner of syntax is violated; the formation of the usual image of personality is blocked by presenting unsuitable and incongruous traits; a given style of speech is broken by a completely different one. Thus, it becomes «a test and a field of perception» for enduring «the continuous and insoluble problems» (Peckham, 1978: 230).

The reader is a partner as much as he/she forms combinations by decomposition, modification and connection during self(schema)-reinforcing operations which renew his/her schemata. Thus, he/she tunes not only his/her intellect, but his/her emotions, according to the affective force which comes from the labyrinth (as an archetype), the basic theme (as violence, sex, death) and play as (ludus and paidea).

The quick and sudden changes of condition merciless destroy (select) the beings which have only the characteristics for efficiency. Again, the survival of the species is successful which carry the burden of characteristics of jacks-of-all-trades seems to be inexpedient (Calvin, 1996). The elementary forms of sociobiologically well-rewarded playfulness belong to these. The reader playing with text have many faces like his/her literature not without any interest. He/she does not want to throw out (eliminate) anything from himself/herself. He/she collects everything and varies it; who knows what and when the good of it is. The strategy of risk-avoiding is useful. The time is scarcely approaching when the clear and restful streamlined pattern is the master.

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Reading Lacan: Stylistics and castration anxiety

ERIK NAKJAVANI (*)

We may begin by posing three interrelated questions. (1) Is it legitimate to speak of stylistics of theory? (2) If so, what constitutes its fundamental characteristics? (3) Lastly, does Lacanian psychoanalytic theory fall within such stylistics boundaries?

The first two of my three questions may imply that theory and its consequent theoretical entities are self-evident phenomena and require no definition. However, as we all know, the problematics of theory are vast and enormously complex. Therefore, before proceeding any further we need to formulate a general definition of theory.

THEORY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DEFINITION

It seems that Martin Heidegger, who defines theory as a fundamental mode of human behavior, may provide us with a helpful point of departure. «Theoretical behaviour», he writes, «is just looking, without circumspection» (99). From his point of view, «looking» or «observation» signifies a certain prototypical human «concern», which is «primordial» (99). He goes on to add that «the fact that this looking is non-circumspective does not mean that it follows no rules: it constructs a cannon for itself in the form of methods» (99).

Paul Ricoeur defines theory somewhat more specifically. «The hallmark of theory is visible in the first place», he argues, «in stable interrelated patterns normally known as laws; it is the search for these laws which constitutes the end for which method constitutes the means» (62). The search for laws or structures always simultaneously offers us indispensable heuristic methods and *objectifying* processes. All hermeneutic activities subsequently derive from these preceding structural activities. I believe this is true regardless of whether or not one takes these laws to be immutable, inherent structures of natural and human phenomena, as the structuralists do. In any case, I think of them as «conceptual structures», which always bear the inscription of human intervention. The discovery of laws results in theoretical entities, or what is referred to as the episteme of a given period. They find their most well-developed and precise models in mathematics, which provides the language of sciences and which is a human construct through and through.

(*) University of Pittsburgh, Comparative Literature Program, Bradford, PA 16701, USA.

Finally, to borrow a term from German theoretician Béla Juhos, one may refer to theory and theoretical entities as «fictions» (*fictiven*). For the purposes of our discussion, the conceptual discovery and articulation of structures, or theoretical fictions, may be more advantageously called «narrative of structures». As such, theory is and remains always and everywhere referential. Even, or perhaps particularly, self-referential, speculative theory and metatheory, which, by status and definition, have to be regarded as referential. At any given historical time, these narratives of structures allow us to sort out and organize our chaotic lived experience. These narratives of structures provide us with access to coherent signifying, interconnected theoretical entities or «laws» that govern the conceptual reality of the phenomenon under observation.

Defined as the narratives of structures, We must then conclude that theory is always and everywhere referential. Clearly, that is so because theory primarily is constructed upon an epistemology whose roots are deeply located in our own perceptions. Heidegger's concept of «looking» obviously involves the act of looking at *something*, which constitutes its object. This referential looking still holds true when that object is merely self-reflexive and involves the act of *looking inward*. That is why this epistemology is inseparable from its referentiality. And to the extent that the assertions I have made are valid, I will say that this type of epistemology will entirely coincide with its referents.

Can such a phenomenological definition of theory be acceptable in the context of a discussion of structuralist theoretical stylistics? With Lacan, I believe, it can. Lacan's varying uses of the term «structure» spans nearly five decades. The trajectory of its variance begins in the early 1930s with «structure» simply indicating «social structures» or «a specific set of affective relations between family members» (Evans 192-93). It subsequently allies itself with Saussurian structural linguistics and its further development in the works of Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1950s. It eventually culminates in the mathematical concept of structure as «topology» (Evans 192-93). Interestingly, the constant in Lacan's evolving concept of the structure is that it «retains this sense of something both intersubjective and intrasubjective» (Evans 193), which sounds and indeed is less stringently structuralist. His intricate evolutionary concept of structure seems to approximate that of post-formalist Moscow-Tartu School, particularly Mikhail Bakhtin's structural linguistic concerns, which address and accommodate the subjective within the concept of structure.

Heidegger's two broad but significant requirements of theory, non-circumspective observation and the nature of the observer's chosen methods, can then make structure visible and articulate it as something simultaneously intersubjective and intrasubjective. Non-circumspective observation opens up to us amorphous expanses of the sensual and the perceptual in lived experience (*le vécu*). The canon of methods comprises the conceptual detection, apprehension and articulation of lived experience's structures as what Ricoeur calls «laws» or theory. They make up in their entirety a dialectical ensemble of narratives of structures. The course of this dialectic moves from lived experience, or the *unthought*, to thought and its further whole or partial systematization and articulation in the theoretical.

STYLISTICS OF THEORY: STRUCTURALIST AND FORMALIST DEFINITIONS

The logical next step in our inquiry is to ask: What fundamentally characterizes the stylistics of what I have just called the narrative of structures? Two related schools of thought seem to offer the most promising theoretical ground within which we may formulate our response. They are the Prague School of structural linguistics, with its Saussurian heritage, and Russian Formalism, which finds its origin in the nineteenth century philology promulgated by Alexander Potebnia (1835-1891) and Alexander Veselovsky (1838-1906). I am expressly thinking of the contributions of theoreticians Bohuslav Havránek, Jan Mukarovsky of the Prague School and the Russian Formalist Victor Shkolovsky. They formulate devices, functions and stylistic differences that separate popular, standard, theoretical and poetic languages.

In «The Functional Differentiation of the Standard Language», Havránek ascribes a primary «communicative function» to linguistic devices that govern the theory and practice of popular, standard and «theoretical» or «scientific» languages. Havránek asserts that only through the intermediation of «intellectualization» and its devices and the subsequent «automatization» of its function can the standard language accede to the status of theoretical language (5-6). Through the «intellectualization» of the standard language, Havránek seeks to highlight the lexical, grammatical, and semantic devices that render possible the making of «precise and rigorous, if necessary abstract, statements, capable of expressing the continuity and complexity of thought» (6). These «statements» will culminate in a scientific speech or language, which he equates with theoretical language. They «reflect the rigor of objective (scientific) thinking» (6). For him, the signal traits of theoretical language are «*intelligibility, definiteness [and] accuracy*» (8). That is understandable and a matter of logical progression of his thought. Such a language necessarily presupposes the prior existence of a referential grid that is based on perceptual and conceptual experiences, with which it must coincide in the manner prescribed by Havránek. One may consider this coincidence as the theoretical language's privileged moment of definitional and statutory purity. They «reflect the rigor of objective (scientific) thinking» (6). The referentiality of this grid requires that it be objectively rigorous and exigently self-limiting, never exceeding the demands of unireferentiality. The demands of unireferentiality make it imperative that in such a language the signifier and signified have an unimpeded, that is, simple, direct, one-on-one correspondence. Evidently, in this sense, such a language finds its fullest precision in scientific theory, which unalterably seeks and, at its best, finds the unireferential condition of mathematical formulae. It follows then that theoretical language characterizes itself not by «foregrounding» itself as language, as is true of literature but rather by highlighting the immediate comprehension side of the communicative process. Immediate comprehension emerges from communicative acts that conjoin recognition and cognition as two features of the same operation.

Do Lacanian writings and utterances, as a whole, conform to this concept of unireferentiality as I have just defined it? I go straight to my conclusion, and declare that it frequently does not. Therefore, we need to deal with the problematics of reading Lacan's texts in the context of how they deviate from the structuralist stylistics that pertain to theory. As a result, we need to deal with how and to what degree the problematics of reading Lacan is involved in violating the norms of structuralist stylistics of theory and what the consequences of such violation are. Perhaps it will suffice to say: the experience of reading Lacan forces even a competent, and extremely friendly and well-meaning critic such as Jane Gallop, to strike a plaintive note. She writes: «After years of study, I have come to believe Lacan's text is impossible to understand fully, impossible to master – and thus a good illustration of everyone's inevitable castration in language» (20). To the extent that one may consider castration a universal concept in psychoanalysis, Gallop's assertion seems to subsume all the vociferous and exceedingly bitter criticisms of the unusual density of the Lacanian theoretical style.

Whatever our psychoanalytic orientation towards the rather complex concept of castration may be, perhaps we may all agree that castration fantasy generalizes itself beyond the well-delineated fear of injury to or loss of the genitals of either sex. It is therefore symbolic and acquires a universal status. It may then be experienced in an unlimited number of ways as humiliation, injury, loss, punishment and defeat. It is a concept that totalizes the conscious and unconscious intimations of all modalities of harm to the self. Now our task is to identify the sources of this feeling of harm in the castrating experience that Gallop attributes to reading of Lacan's texts. We must ask: What are the components of Lacanian style that elicit such strong affective responses of deprivation, loss or even despair? What components of his texts and utterances elicit these negative affective reader-responses? In other words, we must seek to locate, articulate and make intelligible the point of intersection(s) of Lacanian style and the reader's psychic structures of castration anxiety.

As I have already alluded to, for me, the field of inquiry logically lies in the expanses of deviations of Lacanian theoretical language from the norms of theoretical language as defined by the structuralists. How does this deviation make itself manifest? I would suggest that the «foregrounding» of language qua language, its concomitant indeterminacy at the expense of «automatization» devices and their communicative functions set the parameters of Lacanian stylistics. In other words, the ensemble of components of language that characterize poetry, which are not reducible to unireferential concepts, cause this deviation. It is our common knowledge that poetic devices that affect lexical, grammatical and syntactic structures open the way to indeterminacy in contradistinction to «automatization» devices and their communicative functions. This foregrounding of language qua language opens Lacan's texts to the operations of various rhetorical devices and, therefore, denies them the definitional conditions of «*intelligibility, definiteness* [and] *accuracy*» that Havránek demands from theory. As a result, for each reader, depending on his or her prior culture of reading, there will be constant semantic shifts, a type of unending reader's response to a theoretical text that, as Wolfgang Iser has shown, is ordinarily reserved for literary works. This exchange of one mode of reading for another is unsettling, particularly for the reader who responds to the theoretical text from the depth of the modernist theoretical tradition. I would suspect that through reading Lacan's texts many readers are initiated into the exceedingly demanding, and often mysterious domain of postmodern theory, whose goal is to efface the borderlines between theoretical and poetic texts. This effacement of boundary lines has dire consequences for readers who demand that their modern expectations of theoretical clarity, precision and objectivity be attentively respected and satisfied.

No doubt there will always be an understandable sense of loss of self whenever the predictable automatization of communicative processes is eliminated. One says: «I am lost» or «You have lost me» whenever there is a deviation from the norms of popular or standard languages. I will state again that this feeling of loss occurs within the split that takes place between acts of mere recognition and authentic cognition in various forms of language. These feelings are considerably heightened when theoretical language transcends itself and enters other domains of language, because theoretical language is always essentially conceptual and remains more or less abstract in all its forms.

Whenever and however divested of its intellectualization devices and automatization functions, theoretical language no longer retains its definitional and practical characteristics. This divestment makes it possible for the theoretical language to move back to the principal mode of communicative language, that is, standard language. This regressive movement is evident in the journalistic style of articles on theoretical subjects, what the French consider as *haute vulgarisation*. Or the theoretical language may move forward by violating and distorting the communicative norms of the standard language, which Mukarovsky terms «foregrounding». Foregrounding the various components of standard language pushes it into the realm of poetic language. As Mukarovsky observes:

Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is, the deautomatization of an act; the more an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme. (19)

Thus deautomatization and foregrounding force the theoretical language to surpass its foundational unireferential principle. This transcendence realizes itself through a series of regressive-progressive linguistic operations. What was once a univocal text now aspires to become multivocal and plurisignificant. This transformation takes place through the agency of various rhetorical devices (mainly metaphor and metonymy), whose attendant economy delimits the stylistics of the literary text and postmodern theory, including scientific theory. Since the resulting semantic plurality is no longer restricted by unireferentiality, the poetic language lodges itself in what one may call a zone of semantic unpredictability and indeterminacy. This unbound semantic zone makes of the text, poetic or theoretical, an open-ended work – which may withdraw from referentiality and enter the special category of self-referentiality.

I reiterate that this simultaneous loss of what may be called «theoretical literacy» and its consequent profusion of meaning are often experienced by readers at some psychological level as diffuse but pervasive castration anxiety in the act of reading. Instead of the anticipated closures of the theoretical text the reader now faces the unending and unexpected disclosures of a literary work. This loss of coherence and closure causes the fear and loathing that the reading of some of Lacan's text provokes some of the time. Let us examine, for example, a passage from Lacan's «Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever»:

In my day we used to teach children that they must not add, for instance, microphones with dictionaries; but this is absolutely absurd, because we would not have addition if we were not able to add microphones with dictionaries or as Lewis Carroll says, cabbages with kings. The sameness is not in *things* but in the *mark* which makes it possible to add things with no consideration as to their differences. The mark has the effect of rubbing out the difference, and that is the key to what happens to the subject, the unconscious subject in the repetition; because you know that this subject is repeating something peculiarly significant, the subject is here, for instance, in this obscure thing that we call in some cases trauma, or exquisite pleasure. What happens? If the «thing» exists in the symbolic structure, if this unitary trait is decisive, the trait of the sameness is here. In order that the «thing» which is sought be here in you, it is necessary that the first trait be rubbed out because the trait itself is a modification. It is the taking away of all difference, and in this case, without the trait, the first «thing» is simply lost. The key to this insistence in repetition is that in its essence repetition as repetition of the symbolical sameness is impossible. In any case, the subject is the effect of this repetition in as much as it necessitates the «fading», the obliteration, of the first foundation of the subject, which is why the subject, by status, is always presented as a divided essence. The trait, I insist, is identical, but it assures the difference only of identity – not by effect of sameness or difference but by the difference of identity. This is easy to understand: as we say in French, *je vous numérote*, I give you each a number; and this assures the fact that you are numerically different but nothing more than that. (192)

By Lacanian standards, this is not an inordinately difficult passage, so one may consider it as a fair example for a brief discussion. By choosing it as my first example, I wish to avoid a selection that by its conspicuous difficulty might immediately obscure rather than shed light on the point I am trying to make. None of Lacan's tendency toward using puns, homonyms, mathemes, mathematical disquisitions and formulae, graphs, knots, circles, numbers, Klein bottles, moebius strips and the like, is present in it. I must add, however, that the paragraph immediately following the passage I have quoted bears all the features that generally characterize the Lacanian style. Above all, Lacan originally wrote it in English so it is untouched by the problematics of translation.

It is true that the passage is stripped of its original context, but that is always true of all brief quotations. In any case, the passage contains a measure of what Shklovsky attributes to poetry «as attenuated, *tortuous speech*», because it is «*formed speech*» (23). Among other things, Lacan is here rethinking Freudian formulations of repression, repetition-compulsion and the function of metaphor in condensation. We are, however, very far from Freudian theoretical prose-style, whose main goal is to make new and difficult ideas accessible to anyone who can read.

Lacan «defamiliarizes» his theoretical language, to use Shklovsky term, in order to *dramatize* his own rethinking of Freudian ideas. What is new in Lacanian theoretical style is its proclivity toward a mode of poetic or artistic articulation and its concomitant dispersal of signification. «A work is created “artistically”», Shklovsky writes, «so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception» (22). In the quoted passage, the «artistic» quality makes itself felt in lexical repetitions, syntactic dilations and semantic indirection.

I should think that no one, even the most ardent Lacanian, would argue that Lacan's theoretical style is not consciously intended to impede and therefore slow our perception of it and spontaneously open up a horizon of semantic indeterminacy. Lacan's tendency is to retain traces of the «real» and the «Imaginary» rather than entirely cede to the communicative demands of the big Other or of the «Symbolic» (signifiers or doxa).

Lacan's theoretical style reminds one of Martin Heidegger's and Friedrich Nietzsche's in philosophy or Stéphane Mallarmé's in poetry or James Joyce's in fiction. These men attempt to write in a kind of plurisignificant poetic language. It is an exigent enterprise, because it tends to overemphasize the part of the reader in the act of reading. In the case of Lacan, when this exigency is properly accepted and directly met, the question for every one of his present and future readers is: Will the complexities of Lacanian stylistics eventually intimate something of the unsayable or unutterable (the «real» in Lacanian vocabulary) as language so often does in literary works? Or, as Lacan's detractors claim, the opacity of Lacanian stylistics will simply prove to be mere mystifications by a remarkable *mystificateur* and consequently dismissed as such. Meanwhile, I would predict, that we shall persevere in reading Lacan, experience the castration anxiety that Gallop associates with it, and hope that we shall come out on the poetic side of the Lacanian theoretical style.

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Psychoanalysis and the use of semantics: Understanding the internal dialogue of an adult African American male client

MARTY SAPP (*)

INTRODUCTION

From a literary point of view, psychoanalysis and its derivations, such as psychodynamic and other analytic therapies, are based on psychic energy and unconscious conflicts; therefore, at a literary level, language has manifest meanings and latent meanings. Specifically, Freud stated that psychic energy existed within the psyche, a compartment that contained psychic energy. In addition, psychic energy can move throughout the entire body, such as the mouth, anus, genitals, and so on. This movement of energy refers to Freud's famous psychosexual stages of development. Also within a person's psyche are the psychic structures called the id, ego, and superego. Each has its own linguistic style. For example, the id's communication is amoral, and it uses symbols that are pleasure oriented. For example, the id expresses itself by childishly requesting to have its desires fulfilled, and it is illogical and largely unconscious.

The language of the ego is logic, order, reality testing, and it moderates the other personality structures by interacting between the linguistic communications of the id and superego. To appease the id, the ego realistically figures out methods of satisfying its desires. The communication style of the superego is largely judgmental; it involves the moral language that one uses to represent abstractly the ideal.

The superego strives for perfection, and it often expresses itself as parental and societal standards. Some of the specific language of the superego are «shoulds», «ought to's», «don'ts», and «musts». The superego is capable of using damaging language against the person's self, against others, and against the world.

For example, language such as, «If I cannot be perfect at everything I do, and if I cannot win the approval of everyone, I am a total failure» would illustrate damnation of the self. Hence, language is used to damn the self, others, and the world. Others can be damned with the following language: «I have to be treated fairly by everyone. When they don't, it is outrageous. I must be treated fairly.» Damnations of the world would be as follows: «The world must operate the way I demand. I want all of my desires granted instantly. If I do not get what I want, when I want it, life

(*) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Department of Educational Psychology, Enderis Hall, PO Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA.

is awful.» The interpretation of language is important from a psychoanalytic and psychodynamic standpoint. The way a client uses language correlates with the degree of his/her psychological state of mind. For example, once a client becomes aware of how language intensifies feelings and how language can exaggerate the significance of events, often he/she can learn to change his/her internal dialogue and hence change the degree of his/her psychological disturbance.

Outside of majority culture, a great deal is known about intrapsychic communication styles (Aberback, 1989; Chawla, 1994; Coles, 1988; Melnick, 1995; Simon, 1988; Starobinski, 1989). For example, Corey (1996) describes the many applications psychoanalysis has for the majority culture; however, little is known about the intrapsychic communication styles of African American adult males (Sapp, 1997). Specifically, a modern language computer search conducted on April 26, 1997, did not find a single article that discussed psychoanalysis, African American males, and literature. The conclusions one can draw from this search is that there is little known about the communication styles of African American males using a psychoanalytic literary communications analysis. The purpose of this paper is to present a brief transcript of a free association session during psychoanalysis and to provide an analysis in terms of the methods this African American male used to communicate. The following transcription highlights the critical differences and yet the importance of language within the African American culture.

The transcription is from an 18-year-old African American male who was experiencing intrapsychic conflict within himself. He had the following multiaxial diagnosis from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV): Axis I, 300.02, Generalized Anxiety Disorder; Axis II, 301.81, Narcissistic Personality Disorder; 301.7, Antisocial Personality Disorder; Axis III, None; Axis IV, Problems with Primary Support Group; Axis V, GAF 60 (current). His internal dialogue shows how, even using Black English, intrapsychic conflict manifests itself through the communication of his id, ego, and superego.

Ma peeps are really gettin on ma nerves. Ah hear voices in ma head telling me ah can't make it, can't be cool, can't be mella. Yo, ah just won't, and wont, and wont. But ah don't know wa ah wont so much. Most of wha ah wont, ah don't need. Ma famla, ma peeps, and ma homies voices tell wha ah should wont. Ah in a fight with good and bad, and ah don't know if ah is good or bad. Ma mama told ma, be good and hona the Lold. Ah just wish everythang waz perfect and ah could be happa. Ah know nothin will change. Life be just holdin ma down. Ah just a brotha tryin to git ova, tryin to understand ma self and the sistas. Ah realla got a jones fo this one sista. She be bad, a brick house. Ah thank of bonin ha and bustin ma nuts. Sometimes ah jackoff thankin about that bad sista. Ma mama say this is wrong and ah should be married and shouldn't bon and thank of bustin out. Ah thank ah can make it. Ah must be strong and use ma head.

The standard English interpretation of the transcription is as follows:

My friends are really getting on my nerves. I hear voices in my head telling me I can't make it, can't be cool, can't be mellow. You know, I just want, and want, and want. But I don't know why I want so much. Most of what I want, I don't need. My family, my friends, and my neighbors' voices tell what I should want. I am in a fight with good and bad, and I don't know if I am good or bad. My mother told me to be good and honor the Lord. I just wish everything was perfect and I could be happy. I know nothing will change. Life is just holding me down. I am just a brother [African American male] trying to get over, trying to understand myself and the sisters [girl friends]. I really have a strong sexual desire for this one sister [African American female]. She is bad [attractive], a brick house [very attractive]. I think of having sex with her and reaching an orgasm. Sometimes I masturbate when I am thinking about that bad [attractive] sister. My mother says this is wrong, and I should be married or should not have sex or think of having it. I think I can make it. I must be strong and use my head.

Within the client's unconscious are many repressed childhood issues, especially issues regarding the Oedipus complex. Because this client did not have an African American male figure to identify with during childhood, he is using the current client-therapist relationship as a means to develop an identity of an adult African American male. The client's covert language shows that he has unconscious sexual desires for his mother that are symbolically represented by mentally and physically engaging in sexual relations with several African American women. In addition, sexual release is used to allow the client to displace feelings of anger and aggression that have origins in the lack of mature bonding with both parents. In terms of psychosexual development, this client is clearly at the genital stage (Sapp, 1997).

From an object-relations viewpoint, this client fits the diagnosis of a personality disorder that has narcissistic and antisocial features. Object-relations theory describes the process this client must undergo to become a mature adult. Specifically, the objects are significant persons from the client's past, and in this case they are his mother and father. To be more precise, this client had difficulty during the differentiation and separation/individuation process of object relations. His narcissism is his inability to differentiate himself and to idealize others. This suggests that he also has borderline features, and he has failed to separate and become a mature adult; hence, his object borders are blurred.

The client's collective unconscious or nonpersonal unconscious is the most perplexing aspect of how he manipulates language. Carl Jung argued that the collective unconscious contains archetypes, mental representations of universal experiences expressed as images. I argue that Black English is an archetype within African American culture, and it is used to connect African Americans to a common history. What is critical about analyzing the collective unconscious is that it is not accessible to conscious experiences; however, the images that underlie language processes are clues to the collective unconscious (Sapp, 1997).

Another aspect of the client's collective unconscious is his reference to God. Here, God is an archetype with contextual experiences that are related to the evolutionary history of African Americans. God and other religious symbols are associated with African Americans' collective unconscious.

Because the client's shadow is unconscious, it is projected onto his mother, African American women, and other African American males. Just as the shadow is a combination of evil and creative parts, this client has exaggerated feelings of self-love and strong feelings of hate for other African American males. This is consistent with the high homicide rate for African American males between the ages of 18 and 24. The shadow produces psychic energy by the principle of opposites – conflicts between opposing forces. The love relationship the client has with himself and the hatred he has for other African American males illustrates this concept of opposites. To summarize, this client's shadow can be evil and good, weak and strong, monotonous and creative, and it has the desire to kill and the desire to create life; these are all illustrations of the concept of opposites. The most important aspect of this shadow is that it cannot be totally suppressed by the ego without the client losing creativity, spontaneity, and dying spiritually.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing transcription clearly showed how intrapsychic conflicts occur within a Black English context. Specifically, even within an African American context, language has superficial (manifest) and latent (deep) or unconscious meanings. Moreover, the preceding transcription clearly showed how the client experienced conflict that was expressed in the following quote: «I am in a fight with good and bad, and I don't know if I am good or bad.» Moreover, the client expressed sexual conflict, and he realized that the sexual values of his mother were at odds with his own. Furthermore, he has several irrational beliefs, such as confusing wants with biological needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.). Likewise, the client believed irrationally that life can be perfect and that if

his life were perfect, he would be happy. In addition, this client assumed that life should be orderly, fair, painless, and perfect. In contrast to assuming personal responsibility for things that can be changed, this client assumed irrationally that «Life is holding me down».

The goal of therapy is to show the client how his language affects his thoughts (internal dialogue), feelings, and actions. In addition, another goal of therapy is to get the client to see how he uses language to damn himself, others, and the world. Moreover, careful analysis of the client's language shows how unconscious meanings (latent content) that are embedded within Black English can lead to self-defeating thoughts, feelings, and actions. In conclusion, the careful analysis of the internal dialogue of this adult African American male client can lead to psychoanalytic treatment options. In conclusion, this article showed how psychoanalysis and the interpretation of language can lead to an understanding of the internal dialogue of an adult African American male client. Finally, this paper showed how sex and aggression are integral aspects of the life of an African American adult.

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From me to not-me and back: An examination of the self-transformative powers of writing

NANCY E. SHERROD (*)

There is no doubt that the artist can convert the experiences of his/her life into remarkable products of the imagination. Henry James observes in «The Art of Fiction»:

Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge-spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind, and when the mind is imaginative – much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius – it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of air into revelations. (10-11)

Experience transforms the self, and the artist transforms experience into art. If the artist can achieve such sweeping transformations as to convert «the very pulses of air into revelations», can the artist also expect a sweeping transformation of his life through the execution of his art?

It is tempting to think so. «This novel or series of poems, short stories, or essays will bring me material success, acclaim, and recognition; it will also make me wiser, truer, and more whole than I was before», the artist cannot help but think. This illusion is necessary, and perhaps no artistic work could come to fruition without it. In *The Newly Born Woman*, Hélène Cixous articulates her belief in art's transformative powers. For the woman writer,

Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide: her writing can also only go on and on, without ever inscribing or distinguishing contours.... She alone dares and wants to know from within where she is, the one excluded, has never ceased to hear what-comes-before-language reverberating. She lets the other tongue of a thousand tongues speak - the tongue, sound without barrier or death. She refuses life nothing. Her tongue doesn't hold back but holds forth, doesn't keep in but keeps on enabling. («Sorties» 88)

(*) Georgia Southern University, Writing and Linguistics, Statesboro, Georgia 30458, USA.

Cixous' vision is powerful, seductive, and potentially dangerous. She treats the early illusion of omnipotence, or magical control, a vital component of the creative process, as the be all and end all of creativity. Cixous seems to believe that the writer's illusion of his/her omnipotent transformational power actually delivers a complete and total transformation of the writer's self, immediately.

Historically, we know that the act of writing seldom produces such sweeping transformations of self. More often than not, writers lead notoriously unbalanced lives, and the act of writing seems to do little to ameliorate their sufferings. For every writer we might cite who seems to experience renewal, or rebirth, through writing, we can cite a writer who experiences depletion, or near death. For example, Gilbert Rose, in «The Creativity of Everyday Life», cites Yeats as a writer who felt that «he refashioned himself in the process of writing» (354), but he also cites Sylvia Plath as writer who felt suicidal after the writing of each poem. We all know how Plath's life ended and can easily surmise that the writing of poetry did not bring for her the reintegration of self, which seems to be the driving force of most art.¹ Like Plath, many writers experience the act of writing as perilous to the self. Flannery O'Connor, for example, acknowledges this peril and asserts that the act of writing requires great courage to overcome this fear, or near certainty, of the loss of self as one knows it. In *Mystery and Manners*, she observes:

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in instructing catechumens, wrote: «The dragon sits by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Beware lest he devour you. We go to the Father of Souls, but it is necessary to pass by the dragon.» No matter what form the dragon may take, it is of this mysterious passage past him or into his jaws, that stories of any depth will always be concerned to tell.... (35)

For O'Connor and many other writers (for example Annie Dillard in «Transfiguration»), writing entails nothing less than the risk of one's life. The reward for this great risk is a well-written story, but is such a reward truly worth such a great risk? Could any writer undertake this risk if he/she were not engaged in the illusion of glorious transformation of self, this illusion which Cixous articulates so well? I believe not. A well-written story is a pleasant accomplishment, but ultimately little more so than many other accomplishments such as a well-cooked meal or a well-tilled garden. It would seem that no sane person would undertake the act of serious writing if it did not promise a huge pay-off, i.e., a complete and total transformation of self. Does the act of writing then, not just the end of writing – a well-written story, poem, or essay – deliver the hoped for transformation of self? The answer is both yes and no.

O'Connor, a writer who had more reason than most writers to engage in the illusion of transformation, inadvertently acknowledges again and again in her fiction that writing does not bring about this hoped for transformation. Seven of her stories have writers, would-be writers, or artists as protagonists. Each of these writers/artists await some powerful transformation of his/her life, primarily through the act of writing. Two of these writers, Miss Willerton of «The Crop» and Calhoun of «The Partridge Festival», are exposed as fools who cannot distinguish between felt experience and abstraction. Two other writers, Julian of «Everything that Rises Must Converge» and Thomas of «The Comforts of Home», are revealed as ridiculously dependent on their mothers despite their claims to autonomy. Walter, in «Why do the Heathen rage?» is left sitting on the front porch forever awaiting his transformation. Asbury of «The Enduring Chill» has his life transformed into something far worse than it was before, a life of unmitigated, purgatorial cleansing. Only Parker in «Parker's Back», incidentally the last story O'Connor was to complete before she died, receives the long hoped-for transformational experience. He is granted a moment of glorious transformation – both religious and aesthetic – with the eyes of God providing the long sought approval:

¹ The artists's drive toward reintegration is the thesis of Gilbert Rose's *Trauma and Mastery in Life*.

Parker turned his head as if he expected someone behind him to give the answer. The sky had lightened slightly and there were two or three streaks of yellow floating above the horizon. Then as he stood there a tree of light burst over the skyline. (528)

Parker whispers his name, Obadiah, the name of a prophet, a name he had formerly rejected, «and all at once he felt the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts» (528). This moment of the complete and perfect knowing of himself is very short-lived, however. Parker's wife, clearly a hard-to-please mother substitute, cannot provide the positive mirroring response he so strongly craves: «Idolatri!» Sarah Ruth screamed. «Idolatri! Enflaming yourself with idols under every green tree!» (529). The story concludes with Parker, as weak as a baby, crying under a tree. O'Connor shows through Parker that the moment of transformation – whether experienced as aesthetic or religious – cannot last. One might argue that this disintegration of self is necessary for the emergence of a stronger, more integrated self, but O'Connor never shows this reintegration of her protagonists' lives.

Both historical and aesthetic evidence suggest that the illusion of the transformational power of writing often goes unrealized. Writing is subjectively experienced as powerfully transformative, yet the actual self of the artist seems little changed or even changed for the worse. Why is the writer's self not changed more through the act of writing? One answer is supplied by Christopher Bollas, a British object-relations theorist who has written definitively on the transformational search as an object relation. In *The Shadow of the Object*, Bollas observes:

This anticipation of being transformed by an object – itself an ego memory of the ontogenetic process – inspires the subject with a reverential attitude towards it, so that even though the transformation of the self will not take place on the scale it reached during early life, the adult subject tends to nominate such objects as sacred. (17)

It follows that neither writing nor any other means of experiencing the aesthetic moment can reach the original whole-being sense of transformation that the mother provided the infant through ordinary care such as diapering, feeding, holding, soothing, etc. Yet, as Bollas shows, the memory of this experience will compell the adult to forever seek it in whatever experiences produce a similar sense of blissful mergence with the object.

On a more complex psychological level, writing cannot effect such sweeping transformations of self because the self is a relatively stable structure. Heinz Kohut and his followers recognize two fundamental needs of human psychology: (1) the need to organize psychological experience into some type of cohesiveness or unity, and (2) the need to establish relationships between this psychological structure and elements in the environment which serve to «evoke, maintain, and strengthen the structural coherence, energetic vigor, and balanced harmony among the constituents of the self» (Wolf 184). This complex psychological structure, the self, strives to be cohesive, but it is by no means autonomous. Cohesiveness, marked by the subjective feeling of «having it all together», is only possible through an ongoing supply of selfobject experiences, or relationships between self and objects (which can include persons, objects, or experiences) in the environment. No one enjoys a continuous sense of well-being, or «having it all together» all of the time. Subjectively, we all vacillate between periods of relative cohesiveness and relative fragmentation (the feeling that we are falling apart). Regardless of our relative moods of cohesion and fragmentation, the self has a sense of continuity of being; that is, we perceive that we have a past, a present, and a future (Wolf 26-28).

Ernest Wolf, through his work with Kohut, identifies six ongoing selfobject needs: (1) mirroring needs, (2) idealizing needs, (3) alterego needs, (4) adversarial needs, (5) merger needs, and (6) efficacy needs (Wolf 55). I will use an example from personal experience to illustrate how art can meet these selfobject needs. Upon reading *The Color Purple* for the first time, I found myself more intensely mirrored by Alice Walker's work than by any other work of literature I had ever read. This mirroring was partly aided by my knowledge of her socio-economic background, which was

remarkably similar to my own. Her rise from the youngest child of a share-cropping farmer to a Pulitzer-prize winning novelist closely coincided with my own secret ambitions. Walker and her work were a part of one of my existing idealized, or admired and respected selfobjects, i.e., the literary community. My alter-ego needs were met by experiencing an alikeness to Walker. My adversarial needs, however, were somewhat frustrated by our difference in race. My race made me feel less assured of a continuous self-sustaining responsiveness from this source. My race also prevented me from experiencing a total at-one-ness, or merger with Walker's work, regardless of the mirroring and idealizing needs already met. Being a reader only of her work, my efficacy needs were easily met. On the most basic level, I could choose to read or not to read Alice Walker's work. On a more complex level, my interpretations/responses were predetermined, to a degree, by my existing self-structure.

Shortly after reading *The Color Purple*, I wrote the first short story I ever considered worth keeping. Although I did not go on to become a prolific writer, I have since written a number of things worth keeping – several stories, poems, and a novel. Clearly, Walker's influence, which was probably more in the nature of an alterego transference, had a lasting and productive impact upon my life. Without a doubt, my self has been transformed in the process as well, but this transformation of self has come about through the usual slow and painful work of self-discovery and self-re-creation. However magical and wonderful my temporary mergence in Walker's world may have seemed, the real work of recovering from my ancient narcissistic wounds belongs to me.

Similar to the fortuitous reading of the right book, the creative process itself can meet many selfobject needs, especially the needs of mirroring, idealizing, and efficacy. The early stages of creativity are typically marked by an expansive, exhibitionistic mood - a mood that is possible because the emerging art form evokes the positive mirroring that the artist needs. Inasmuch as the artist sees herself as belonging to an admired and respected selfobject, such as the literary community, her idealizing needs can be met. To the degree that the artist can achieve mastery in her work, a sense of efficacy can be evoked. Other needs such as alterego, adversarial, and merger needs are probably best met by other selfobjects in the artist's environment (a lover, a spouse, a mentor, or a network of empathetic readers). Kohut observes that creative people will often seek out «a person in the environment whom they see as all-powerful, a figure with whom they can temporarily blend» («Creativity, Charisma, and Group Psychology» 192). Kohut believes that this transference of creativity is needed to protect the person from the vicissitudes of creativity. He notes:

During creative periods, the self is at the mercy of powerful forces it cannot control, and its sense of enfeeblement is increased because it feels itself helplessly exposed to extreme moodswings which range from severe precreative depression to dangerous hypomanic overstimulation, the later occurring at the moment when the creative mind stands at the threshold of creative activity. (191)

Put quite simply, artists need a support system; artists need more than their art to achieve and to maintain psychological health. Kohut and Wolf stress the need for a matrix of selfobject experiences. Through a variety of selfobject experiences, one might enjoy having most of his/her selfobject needs met. Writing alone cannot meet all of these selfobject needs. The writer, like everyone else, must create an individual matrix, which will most likely include other people and a variety of life experiences, to serve to strengthen and to maintain his/her sense of self. The failure to achieve an effective matrix of selfobjects will foster unhealthy states of being. Unfortunately, writers, who seem to approach their art with a fetishistic attachment, often neglect this need to achieve a matrix.² And as Gilbert Rose points out, the artist's mode of relating to objects via the

² The fetishistic nature of the artist's attachment to his work is repeatedly alluded to in psychological literature. See Heinz Kohut's «Forms and Transformations of Narcissism» (114-15) and Julia Kristeva's «Revolution in Poetic Language» (115).

aesthetic medium does not work well with real people; people prove to be far less «malleable and acquiescent» than artistic selfobjects (*Trauma and Mastery in Life and Art* 127).

One might argue successfully that the writer occupies a privileged position in the pursuit of life-transforming experiences. The writer is, after all, most able to articulate his experiences and through articulation to find the means to organize experience into patterns or forms which please both himself and others. These patterns, however, are largely determined in infancy. In service of the continuity of self, the writer fits his experiences – both new and old – into patterns which he can recognize. Gilbert Rose, in *Trauma and Mastery in Life and Art*, discusses our need to find recognizable patterns:

... in the perception of patterns, other things being equal, a shape tends to be continued in its initial mode of operation. But the mind, continually striving for completeness, stability, and rest, tends to regularize what was irregular and complete what was incomplete.... It is possible that these principles governing the perception of forms are applicable to the ways in which we tend to rework the past. For example, the tendency toward regularity, symmetry, and completion in our perception of formal line drawings might well be analogous to our tendency to rework the past in terms of our need for narrative flow, plausibility, and certainty. In both areas we might be dealing with the aesthetic need for «good shape». (187-8)

As Rose illustrates, the emergence of a work of creative imagination will be indelibly marked by existing patterns in the writer's construction of self. However brave the writer's venture into the unfamiliar, or unknown, what he finds must be reconciled to what he already knows. The changes produced in the writer's self, like the reworking of the past for psychological patients, will be incremental at best. Incremental changes, however, may be good enough to lead the artist into a greater sense of self-integration. The compulsion to repeat past patterns continues, but the past patterns themselves are enlarged upon, creating both a greater understanding of the private self and a new reality. Rose says,

For the creative person, the inner processes achieve objectification in the form of fictional characters and objects of art. The creative work is a building up and melting down, again and again, a losing and refinding oneself by proxy, a rapid oscillation between imagination and knowledge of reality.... It continues until the work itself takes on a reality and autonomy of its own, whereupon the author also becomes free, or at least freer, to go on to something else. (209-10)

The writer moves from the me of past experiences to the not-me of his created object. With the proper decathexis of self from the created object, the writer is free to move on to new creative endeavors. The writer is limited by, but not utterly trapped in, the patterns of past perceptions. Mastery in art is more than just mastery of form; it is, as Rose concludes, a means for «externalizing and transcending [one's personal past], a means to disclose new aspects of reality itself» (210).

The promise of growth is present in writing even if this growth is not always fully realized.

To the degree that growth through mastery of some aspect of one's inner life is realized, greater psychological health is achieved. At the very least, the artist may discover that, regardless of her feelings of self disintegration at the beginning of an artistic endeavor, reintegration is both possible and likely. Rationally knowing that she will not be destroyed through the act of creation should bolster her courage to write again. She may also rationally know, but she will never believe it, that what begins as a glorious journey towards the complete and total transformation of self will not produce this longed-for result. This journey, however, need not end in total disillusion, despair, or defeat. The writer passes through the jaws of the dragon and emerges with a story worth telling. It is only through this journey that a story of depth can be written, and the writer is very likely to enjoy a creative appreciation of the trip. This «creative appreciation of life», Winnicott tells us, is «more than anything else [what] makes the individual feel that life is worth living» (65).

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The concept of imago in Carl Spitteler's novel *Imago* (*)

YVES THORET (**)

The new title Freud chose for his Psychoanalytic Review was *Imago*. He wanted to honour Carl Spitteler's novel, *Imago*, published in Switzerland in 1906, «describing perfectly the intrusions of the unconscious into the kingdom of the conscious» (Freud, 1975).

Jung had recalled to Freud the antique Roman tradition of exhibiting, in the house, the father's death mask. This impression was called in Latin *Imago*.

Jung defined it as a concept different from the «complex». According to Jung, an imago appears when «an impression, repressed by consciousness, models itself on a father (or a mother) figure, and as an autonomous figure, based on an earlier relationship of the subject himself with his parents».

We may now take into account the fact that, in the first definition of imago, Jung includes two types of representations:

- one, the most *personal* ones,
- two, impersonal, archaic and *collective* ones (Jung, 1950).

He refers himself to the tradition of the Gods of the house, called in Latin *Lares et imagines*, as well as to Carl Spitteler's novel. Before presenting this novel to you, I shall briefly recall some main points of the concept of imago in Jung's and Lacan's psychoanalytic theories.

1. CARL-GUSTAV JUNG

For Jung, the archetype is not the same as the imago. For him, the archetype is only the *collective* model of the dual aspect of imago. This duality is both collective and quite *personal*, for every individual (Jung, 1950, p. 100, note 5).

(*) With a precious help of Mrs. Joan M. Byles for the translation.

(**) University of Paris-X Nanterre, Department of Psychology, 53 Avenue Anatole France, 78300 Poissy, France.

The archetypes cannot be considered only as inherited but, for Jung, they are based on «*Urbilden*», originary images, organizers which are the basic conditions to elaborate psychic representations of any kind.

2. JACQUES LACAN

He describes the mirror-stage as the moment when the infant anticipates the functional unity of his body.

He describes three steps in the child's development:

- weaning complex,
- intrusion complex,
- and Œdipal complex.

In the second step, the intrusion complex, the child takes into account his brother's presence, with predominant affects of jealousy. The child is somehow captivated by his own reflected image in the mirror; he identifies himself with it, confuses himself with this image which provides his unity but, at the same time, alienates him (Lambote, 1993; Lacan, 1938).

For Lacan, this experience gives birth to the doubling-*imago*, as a *Gestalt*, which appears like an ideal model and it is impossible for the subject to separate himself from his own image.

This confusing interference is interpreted by Lacan as a «narcissistic intrusion», a necessary stage for the construction of the ego. For Lacan, the child perceives very early the general shape or figure of human beings, as members of mankind.

The subject is captivated and somehow captured by this general image, as well as by his own individual image. The child must now sharply distinguish his image from his doubling's image, and he experiences an acute invasion of aggressive affects.

Therefore, he builds up his ego, beyond the general model of mankind. The subject must differentiate himself from the images of the other, in a radical choice: «Me or the other» (Lacan, 1938).

I shall mention Freud's ideas about *imago*, later on.

3. CARL SPITTELER'S NOVEL «IMAGO»

In this book, the narrator, Victor, comes back to his native little town in Switzerland, near Basel (Spitteler, 1906).

He wants to act like «a judge», because he met a girl four years earlier in a spa, chatted with her and heard her singing a melody.

He did not declare in any way his strong love for her, but he felt quite angry at this woman named Theuda Neukomm, when he discovered that she was actually married and mother of a son.

As a severe judge, his main purpose is to meet again «the unfaithful» and to oblige her to feel ashamed and guilty.

Victor calls himself «the sublime fiancé of a marvelous imaginary woman called *Imago*».

He visits Theuda's home but she is absent and he confesses his torment to a friend of his, a thirty-four years widow, Mrs Martha Steinbach. This lady warns him, in a friendly way, not to be unfair with Theuda Neukomm (new come), now married to the Museum Director, Mr Wyss.

After Victor's visit, Martha Steinbach sends him a short letter with Theuda's portrait.

Back in his hotel room, Victor writes a long reply to Mrs Steinbach's letter. This text is the most famous part of this novel.

Victor wants to evoke for Mrs Steinbach his nostalgic love, «the most crucial time of his life», so that his most noble secret could materialize itself, outside of his own memory.

He admires his past love's portrait, recalls with emotion the marvelous time he shared with her, as if he could read a secret message below the Theuda's photograph, in the following words: «This is my supreme reward. My hopes remind themselves of you!»

Victor calls these love souvenirs «the Parousy times», this greek word meaning the Christ's second coming after resurrection. In greek, *Parousia* means presence or arrival.

Once again, Victor idealizes narcissistically this moment of his life, when he secretly chose to «sacrifice» his potential love, his happiness, for his own «ambition to be a great man».

Appears now in Victor's text, a character called «*the Severe Woman*» or «The Lady of his life». This strict and superegoic woman is, at the same time, the image of his great missed love.

Victor's heart, as a character of this novel, begins to express its own opinion; it despises the «severe woman» with the following terms:

«I am going to tell you who is your Severe Woman. She is the faded memory Muse, old aunt Allegory, quite insipid. She is, as well, the life-destroying God-mother, the Powerless patroness.»

Beyond this strict female parental figure, Victor's heart accuses Victor of being inferior: «You are not able to obey any Muse. What are you able to fulfil? Just nothing, not even to write well some words in a poem... You are nothing but a nullity. A nullity you were. A nullity you are, and a nullity you will ever be. Others may resign and so, they may be happy. You must resign as well.»

Victor refuses his heart's critical opinion about «the Severe Woman». He calls for her high protection and accepts *her direst cruelty*, as a gage of his loyalty:

«Listen to me. I offered you, without whispering, all my little dogs, all the puppies of my heart, so that you might slit their throat. To-day, before accepting the last sacrifice, I demand from you a sign, proving that you are not a misleading image.»

But the severe answer is: «I never give any gage nor sign. You must serve me with a blind faith, till the end. At the crossroads of your destiny, you must make the right choice. If you miss it, you will deserve my curse, my malediction.»

The author remembers another character of this legend, a sick-creature appearing as a lion, chasing the Creator out of his magnificent palace, as if in a dream.

This is the moment, while he is writing, when the image of his beloved Theuda appears in front of him, ignoring her body, agreeing to sacrifice her own happiness for him, and doing so, sealing a most noble alliance with Victor in front of the Severe Woman's throne. This love link is considered by Theuda, in Victor's fantasy, «much nobler than the vulgar union of sexes among the humans». Theuda addresses herself to the Severe Woman: «I offer you to wed beauty with greatness. I pledge to be your faith, love and comfort and you will be for me an image of pride and glory. *I shall be a symbol.*»

Victor adds these words to the letter:

«As we stood in front of the Severe Woman, I took off my bridal flower crown and she took my ring off my finger. And the Severe Woman blessed us with her black seal and, accepting my girl-friend as her daughter, she named her *Imago*.»

But, concludes Victor with anger, this marvelous fairy-tale is interrupted by a letter, a *wedding-card* of this same wonderful woman with a stranger. Victor describes this event like «a boar rushing through a tapestry». And Victor writes: «such disappointment could not fit with my day-dream. There was another woman, a stranger, named X, Mrs X, or better *Pseuda*, the false one».

During the same evening, Victor day-dreams that he is riding a horse for his daily ride, and Imago comes riding behind him. He invites her to come beside him and she says she has been taken ill, she has lost her marvelous voice and she is dying. Victor accepts this punishment of her betrayal of him and his letter ends with this resigned wish: «God bless your wedding!»

* * *

This novel is a wonderful romantic description of provincial life, as a swiss «Vanity Fair», or, for Spitteler, the author, «a romantic story among Swiss democrats».

Victor will remain six months in this town, being fully accepted among Theuda's friends and, at last, declaring his love for her. She will comfort him with compassion and chaste tenderness, like a loving sister.

After all these events, it is now possible for Victor to leave his native town and he takes secretly the train, early in the morning. In the train compartment, he meets a man whose legs were cut off and who tells him, with pride, that his legs were cut in the hospital and that they are now in the luggage rack, above his head. We might, maybe, interpret this as a metaphor of castration.

A desperate woman runs after the train. It may be Mrs Steinbach, with a bunch of flowers; it may also be Theuda Neukomm. We don't know exactly who she is, we just know that she is very pretty.

Once the train has left the station, Victor observes, galloping along beside the train, on a white horse, his beloved Imago, emerging as if she had been born again, wearing a joyful crown of flowers, a sign of «victory». She tells him:

«I went on waiting for you. I admired your faithfulness, in spite of all sorts of distress and every kind of pain. It acted like a successful cure for me. It was your tears that washed away your own follies.» (Spitteler, 1906)

And galloping, faster and faster, she leaves the train behind, and Victor in it, for ever.

4. INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL

4.1. *Author's biography*

How can we interpret this story?

We may refer to the author's biography.

His mother, much younger than his father, was very tender with him, as was his grand-mother.

He fell in love with a clergyman's daughter, called Anna. This girl's brother was Carl Spitteler's best friend.

Later on, Carl felt secretly in love with his aunt, a charming young widow, who had just returned from India. He called her *Eugenia*, his «good genius». But this woman was seduced by Carl's best friend, Anna's brother. This woman had a daughter called Ellen, and Carl fell in love with this girl, but did not declare his love to her. He exiled himself to Russia for seven years, because of a conflict with his father.

After his father's death, he came back, as in the novel, and Ellen was married, mother of a son, and more pretty than ever.

4.2. *Superimposition of characters, belonging to different books of the same author*

I would like to propose another type of interpretation of this text. When Carl Spitteler came back from Russia, he wrote an important epic story, which earned him the Nobel Prize, in 1919. This book was entitled «*Prometheus and Epimetheus*» (Spitteler, 1881).

In this story, we find mythical animals like dogs and lions (rather rare in Switzerland, at least lions...). The hero of the novel, Prometheus, agrees to sacrifice his animals, parents and young ones, as a sign of loyalty to the Severe Goddess called His Soul, ancestor of the Severe Woman.

In another tale for children (Spitteler, 1907), written one year after *Imago*, entitled *The little myso gynioses*, Spitteler describes «the foolish student» who sleeps in the forest, after having had a conflictual relationship with his father, rather like Spitteler.

This mechanism of *superimposition*, like a photographic double exposure, might be a good argument to understand the dynamics of these mythical references, which repeat themselves among successive works of Spitteler, as *Imagos* usually do.

4.3. *Transference-love and imagos*

In Sigmund Freud's article (dated 1912), *The Dynamics of Transference*, he defines *Imago* in the following terms:

«It must be understood that each individual, through the combined operation of *his innate dispositions*, and the influences brought to bear on him *during his early years*, acquires a specific method of his own for the conduct of his erotic life, that is, in the pre-conditions to falling in love which he lays down, in the instincts he satisfies and the aims he sets himself in the course of it.» (Freud, 1912, § 2)

In this fundamental text, Freud, unlike Jung and Lacan, does not limit the field of *imago* to an archaic fixed image, but he considers the work of *Imagos*, like «stereotype plates, constantly being reprinted anew in the course of the person's life, so far as external circumstances, and the nature of the love-objects accessible to him permit, and which is certainly not entirely insusceptible to change in the face of recent experiences» (Freud, 1912).

4.4. *Final interpretation: transference relationship of past into present*

The French psychoanalyst Pierre Fedida recently described the place where the analyst stands, as a specific *site*.

The analyst's site is based upon a certain type of relationship with *time*.

It works as in the Ancient Greek Language. A tense or principal part of a verb was called the *Aorist*, corresponding to the same epic stories, the mechanism defined by the Ancient Greek as *Epos*.

This part of a verb symbolizes the relationship linking language with time itself. In the Ancient Greek Language, the *Aorist* expresses how the speakers evoke their past experience, and mix it with the present situation of interlocution. Pierre Fedida quotes the French philosopher Jean-Paul, who wrote:

«The *Epos* is long and lasts long. It is wide, too. It can be compared to a marching army, or to a rolling river. The *Epos* which unfolds the past, may take advantage of its own slowness.» (Fédida, 1995)

This movement characterizes the unfolding movement of language, giving a sort of visual resonance to words.

The *Aorist* evokes the past, as an action continuing itself in the present time.

Fedida takes as an example the first meeting between a patient and his analyst, when the patient describes an event of his childhood. Thus, this use of Aorist gives to this event the possibility of reliving affects, drives and aims, of the patient's past.

This speech-act, reliving a past-memory, an old dream, a repressed archaic Imago, is called up by the analyst's listening presence.

Fedida interprets this moment as a mutation of the situation of *speech* itself, an event, a coming, and, we might say, like Carl Spitteler, a *Parousia*, an Imago appearance.

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Pour une pratique «matricielle» du texte: Marguerite Yourcenar et la psychanalyse

MIEKE TAAT (*)

Marguerite Yourcenar se trouve avoir entouré ses fictions d'un ensemble de préfaces, de post-faces, de notices et d'entretiens, bref, d'un paratexte, qui passe pour être animé d'une «lutte sourde ou ouverte contre la psychanalyse»¹. Lutte ouverte, pour autant que l'on rencontre, ça et là dans ce paratexte, des observations sceptiques et parfois bien explicitement polémiques au sujet des théories freudiennes de l'inconscient. Lutte sourde, pour autant que les témoignages que porte Yourcenar sur la genèse de ses grands romans historiques et de ses pièces mythologiques, ont pu apparaître aux yeux de ses critiques comme des «consignes de lecture», faits pour décourager toute lecture autre que la sienne propre, et marqués plus en particulier par «le mépris devant lequel [elle] tient la lecture psychanalytique»².

L'agacement contre-transférentiel auquel se sont livrés notamment les quelques critiques d'orientation psychanalytique qui jusqu'ici se sont penchés sur ce paratexte³, soulève cependant quelques questions. Avant d'étiqueter Yourcenar d'étrangère à la psychanalyse, avant de diagnostiquer dans ses écrits paratextuels une «résistance à la psychanalyse» des plus acharnées, ne vaut-il pas mieux démêler, tout d'abord, à quel genre de psychanalyse elle voue sa méfiance et son hostilité? Sinon, ne risque-t-on pas de confondre ce que Freud lui-même a pourtant pris soin de distinguer? Dans l'article d'encyclopédie intitulé «Psychanalyse» [1923], Freud dit bien que «psychanalyse» est tout d'abord le nom d'un «procédé d'investigation des processus psychiques qui autrement sont à peine accessibles». La psychanalyse, ainsi entendue comme *procédé d'investigation*, se profile essentiellement, vu le rôle qu'y jouent des expériences de l'écoute et de la lecture, comme une

(*) Faculteit der Letteren, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

¹ Josette Pacaly, «*Les Songes et les sorts*, Préface et Dossier», dans A.-Y. Julien dir. *Marguerite Yourcenar. Aux frontières du texte*, numéro spécial de la revue *Roman* 20-50, 1995, p. 34 et *passim*.

² J. Pacaly, *ibidem*, p. 30 et 42.

³ Agacement encore relativement tempéré dans les réflexions que Henk Hillenaar a été parmi les premiers à consacrer au problème de l'anti-freudisme de Yourcenar (cf. «L'Oeuvre d'une femme forte», dans H. Hillenaar dir. *Recherches sur l'oeuvre de Marguerite Yourcenar*, revue *C.R.I.N.*, n.º 8, 1983, pp. 17-19), et qui atteint son comble dans l'article déjà mentionné de Josette Pacaly.

pratique du texte, au sens expérimental du mot *pratique*. Et ce n'est qu'en dernier lieu seulement, comme Freud l'observe dans le même article, que le nom «psychanalyse» désigne les *concepts et doctrines théoriques* qui ont pu être élaborés dans l'après-coup de ces expériences et fusionner progressivement en une «*discipline scientifique*»⁴. Qu'est-ce à dire, sinon que la psychanalyse, à mesure qu'elle se cantonne dans les limites d'un stock de théories figées en «connaissances de l'inconscient», risque de devenir étrangère à elle-même? Etrangère, s'entend, à cette pratique du texte qu'est la psychanalyse du moment que nous nous tournons vers ce que Lacan appelle (par une belle formule que nous aurons encore l'occasion de méditer): «cette espèce d'ancre où un malade nous parle et où quelquefois nous lui parlons»⁵.

Du seul fait que Yourcenar se montre «plutôt hostile aux théories de Freud et de ses épigones»⁶, nous ne pouvons donc pas déduire d'emblée qu'elle soit ennemie de cette pratique de l'écoute qui constitue bien aux yeux de Lacan, comme l'a récemment rappelé Shoshana Felman, la «scène originaire» de la *lecture* psychanalytique⁷. C'est ce qui m'a amenée à relire de plus près ce que les écrits paratextuels de Yourcenar et les écrits techniques de Freud et de Lacan nous apprennent sur leurs pratiques du texte respectives. De cette relecture je ne retiendrai ici que l'essentiel, à savoir les *règles du jeu* que cet écrivain d'un côté et ces psychanalystes de l'autre nous présentent comme la condition *sine qua non* de l'expérience qui consiste à se mettre à l'écoute d'un tissu de mots dits ou écrits.

«TOUT LIRE» AVEC MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

Si Marguerite Yourcenar, dans les «Carnets de notes» accompagnant *Mémoires d'Hadrien* – roman historique qui a exigé un énorme travail de documentation – donne, comme première «règle du jeu» à respecter, celle qui l'engageait à «*tout apprendre*», à «*tout lire*», à «*s'informer de tout*» ce qui, de près ou de loin, se rapporte à cet empereur et à son monde⁸, ce n'est pas en fonction d'un vouloir *comprendre* au sens courant du terme. C'est plutôt le contraire. «Poursuivre à travers des milliers de fiches l'actualité des faits»⁹, c'est bien: induire en crise la possibilité même d'avoir prise sur son sujet. En s'obligeant à «*tout apprendre*» sur Hadrien, Yourcenar a vu le cliché rassurant du «grand restaurateur de la paix romaine» et celui, tout aussi familier, du «grand amateur d'art» se compliquer peu à peu, se désagréger dans un assemblage «d'éléments inexpliqués et contradictoires, absurdes même comme la réalité semble si souvent l'être»¹⁰. Autrement dit, «*tout lire*» suppose un lecteur s'appliquant, le plus honnêtement possible, à ne rien perdre de la lettre des textes qu'il s'aventure à lire, à ne rien annuler ni exclure des contradictions qui s'y inscrivent – quitte à voir peu à peu se déconstruire le signifié monologique auquel l'ordre du «sens commun» tend par définition à réduire la polylogie du signifiant.

Le jeu, à proprement parler *déconstructeur*, qui consiste à «*tout lire*» ne met pas seulement à la dérive les stéréotypes véhiculés par l'imaginaire collectif dont tout sujet lisant est plus ou moins imprégné. Il envoie également à leur perte les significations préconçues que nous tendons à projeter sur un texte, du moment que nous l'abordons en dépositaires d'un savoir-lire professionnel, spé-

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Résultats, idées, problèmes II*, Paris, PUF, 1985, p. 51.

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire I. Les écrits techniques de Freud*, Paris, éd. du Seuil, 1975, p. 21.

⁶ Michèle Sarde et Joseph Brami, «Préface» à M. Yourcenar, *Lettres à ses amies et quelques autres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 17.

⁷ Shoshana Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight*, Cambridge/London, Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 24.

⁸ Marguerite Yourcenar, dans *Oeuvres Romanesques*, Paris, Gallimard, «Pléiade», 1982, p. 528.

⁹ M. Yourcenar, *ibidem*.

¹⁰ M. Yourcenar, dans Patrick de Rosbo, *Entretiens radiophoniques avec Marguerite Yourcenar*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1972, p. 52.

cialisé. Nos convictions théoriques, quelles qu'elles soient, nous amènent par trop souvent à ne pas «tout» lire, et notamment à ne pas lire ce qui, du texte, interroge, déplace, déconstruit les présupposés théoriques que nous y apportons. D'où la méfiance que Yourcenar manifeste à l'égard des mythologues qui, au lieu de «voir ce qui se trouve» dans l'*Alceste* d'Euripide, s'affairent à «y mettre ce qui ne s'y trouve peut-être pas, ou ce qui n'y est qu'à l'état de résidus informes»¹¹. D'où encore, la distance qu'elle prend par rapport aux historiens qui, «parfois même sans le savoir», tendent à «mettre agressivement en avant une théorie prise pour une vérité, qui est elle-même passagère»¹². D'où également, la polémique, particulièrement insistante dans le paratexte des «*Songes et des Sorts*», contre les interprétations produites par des «freudistes» friands de la psychanalyse appliquée au pire sens du terme:

C'est un spectacle toujours curieux de voir l'esprit humain vider d'un objet, rêve ou fait, les trois-quarts de son contenu avant de s'installer pour l'étudier à la lueur fumeuse d'une théorie ou d'une hypothèse. (M. Yourcenar, «Dossier des *Songes et les Sorts*»)¹³

Ce qui se dégage de ce propos, ce n'est pas la préférence que Yourcenar accorderait à un quelconque système d'interprétation qui lui serait plus sympathique plutôt qu'à une herméneutique d'inspiration freudienne. C'est bien une méfiance critique à l'égard de toute «lecture» qui ne demande aux textes que la confirmation d'une théorie, ou plus généralement, d'un système de valeurs et de représentations préconçues. «Tout lire», c'est voir ce qui se trouve d'imprévu, d'inattendu dans la lettre d'un texte, afin que l'expérience de la lecture ne s'enlise pas dans une mortifère répétition du même. C'est voir ce qui se trouve de contradictoire, d'inextricablement polylogique dans ce qu'un amas de documents nous raconte sur Hadrien et son temps. C'est résister à la tentation de la totalisation monologique, pour que les *Mémoires d'Hadrien* s'écrivent au pluriel comme celles...

... d'un individu unique comme nous tous, fait comme nous tous d'éléments fortuits assemblés un peu au hasard, et qu'il s'agit de retrouver dans leur complexité. (M. Yourcenar, dans *Entretiens radiophoniques*)¹⁴

Il s'agit bien, pour Yourcenar, de retrouver une complexité, quitte à impliquer, dans l'assemblage diffus et fuyant d'éléments signifiants que lui livre l'expérience qui consiste à tâcher de «tout» lire, sa propre sécurité de sujet supposé savoir, sa propre unité de sujet supposant se connaître:

Tout nous échappe, et tous, et nous-mêmes. La vie de mon père m'est plus inconnue que celle d'Hadrien. Ma propre existence, si j'avais à l'écrire, serait reconstituée par moi du dehors, péniblement, comme celle d'un autre; j'aurais à m'adresser à des lettres, aux souvenirs d'autrui, pour fixer ces flottantes mémoires. Ce ne sont jamais que murs écroulés, pans d'ombre. (M. Yourcenar, «Carnets de notes de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*»)¹⁵

«DÉLIRE» AVEC MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

Il n'y a en effet de lecture qui vaille aux yeux de Yourcenar qu'une lecture respectueuse «des grandes frontières naturelles qui séparent, de personne à personne, de siècle à siècle, l'infinie variété des êtres». Mais respecter les frontières, c'est aussi les respecter comme zones de rencontres et d'échanges et, donc, ne pas attacher trop d'importance «aux simples divisions administratives,

¹¹ M. Yourcenar, *Théâtre II*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p. 85.

¹² M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux Ouverts. Entretiens avec Matthieu Galey*, Paris, Le Centurion, «Livres de Poche», 1980, pp. 60-61.

¹³ Dans M. Yourcenar, *Essais et Mémoires*, Paris, Gallimard, «Pléiade», 1991, p. 1606.

¹⁴ Voir P. de Rosbo, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁵ M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres Romanesques*, *op. cit.*, pp. 527-528.

aux bureaux de douane ou aux guérites des postes armés»¹⁶. La pratique de la lecture telle que la conçoit Yourcenar n'engage pas que des règles du jeu se rapportant à la nécessité de «*tout lire*». Elle engage en même temps des expériences de passage-à-l'Autre, qui comme telles ressortent de ce qu'elle appelle ses méthodes de «*délire*».

«Délire» (du latin *délirare*: sortir du sillon familial) se trouve défini, dans les «Carnets» de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, en termes d'une «participation constante et la plus clairvoyante possible», ou encore de «cette magie sympathique qui consiste à se déplacer en pensée à l'intérieur de quelqu'un»¹⁷. Et ce délire semble avoir pour première condition que l'on accepte d'«éliminer tout l'acquis», de «faire le vide en soi», afin d'accorder à ce qu'on lit une attention «extraordinairement difficile à acquérir»:

Une attention qui élimine les trois quarts, les neuf dixièmes de ce que l'on croit penser, tandis qu'en réalité on ne pense pas; on assemble des bouts d'idées qui sont déjà là. [...] Il s'agit d'une lente ascèse, on fait taire complètement sa propre pensée. Qu'est-ce que cet individu a à me dire, à m'apprendre? Et quand on l'entend bien, il ne nous quitte plus. Cette présence est presque matérielle. Il s'agit en somme d'une visitation. (M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*)¹⁸

L'allusion faite à des expériences intérieures de «visitation» est ici à prendre au sens que suggère la référence, dans les «Carnets de notes de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*», à des traités de lecture mystique comme les *Exercices* d'Ignace de Loyola, ou encore aux méthodes de visualisation contemplative pratiquées par des ascètes hindoues¹⁹. Dé-lire, pour Marguerite Yourcenar, c'est peu à peu dé-lier la lecture de «cet ordinateur qu'est le cerveau pour nous», c'est vouer au texte une réceptivité «viscérale» qui engage nos «facultés sensorielles et affectives» plutôt que notre «intellect ratiocinateur»²⁰. Il s'agit bien de dépasser l'«aveugle et malsaine foi dans les mots» que Yourcenar juge, avec Mishima, propre à l'intellectualisme occidental²¹. Ce qui suppose un lecteur prêt à jouer le jeu de la recreation imaginative de tout ce que la lettre du texte donne à entrevoir du point de vue de l'Autre et à entre-ressentir de la souffrance de l'Autre, dans l'intimité de la sphère subjective. Ces expériences intérieures de «visitation» constituent ce «point de contact», pour ainsi dire ombilical, qui seul permet de «rendre à ces documents figés que sont les documents historiques la souplesse et la chaleur des choses vivantes, et cette fluidité de la vie vécue»²².

Quand Yourcenar réfère à sa pratique du «délire», son écriture ne se trouve pas seulement imprégnée du vocabulaire des mystiques, mais également d'une métaphorique à connotation *matri-cielle*. Un passage comme celui-ci, par exemple, nous renvoie à l'image de la terre-mère:

Je crois que la plupart des gens se font des idées erronées sur l'érudition, sur la manière dont un écrivain, qui est par définition [...] dépendant de son imagination, de ses émotions, entre dans le monde de l'érudition. [...] Je ne me suis pas dit: «il faut écrire sur Hadrien et s'informer de ce qu'il pensait». Je crois qu'on n'y arrive jamais de cette manière-là. Je crois qu'il faut s'imprégner d'un sujet jusqu'à ce qu'il sorte de terre, comme une plante soigneusement arrosée. (M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*)²³

Et c'est bien une métaphore de gestation qui pointe dans les «Carnets» écrits en marge de *L'Oeuvre au noir*, où Yourcenar se présente comme un écrivain qui a dû longtemps et patiemment «porter en

¹⁶ Dans M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 521.

¹⁷ M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, pp. 526-527.

¹⁸ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 145 e 224.

¹⁹ Voir M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 528.

²⁰ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, pp. 300-301.

²¹ M. Yourcenar, *Mishima ou la vision du vide*, dans *Essais et Mémoires*, pp. 246-247.

²² M. Yourcenar, dans P. de Rosbo, *op. cit.* pp. 51-52.

²³ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, pp. 139-140.

soi» ses livres – de version avortée en version réécrite – pour les laisser «se nourrir», «se développer» et peu à peu prendre cette forme plus plus ou moins réussie qui «naît sans qu'on en soit conscient»²⁴.

La métaphore matricielle dans le paratexte yourcenarien nous mène bien loin de l'imagerie de fusion symbiotique assez couramment rattachée au phénomène de la maternité. Elle suggère plutôt un processus analogue à celui que Julia Kristeva évoque, à propos de «l'épreuve radicale de clivage du sujet» par où passe une femme enceinte, en termes d'un «dédoublement du corps, séparation et coexistence du moi et d'un autre...»²⁵.

On nourrit de sa substance le personnage qu'on crée: c'est un peu un phénomène de gestation. [...] Il ne s'ensuit pas qu'il soit nous ou que nous soyons lui. Les entités restent différentes. (M. Yourcenar, *Les yeux ouverts*)²⁶

Dans les «Carnets de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*», le processus qui consiste à nourrir de sa propre substance cet *Autre-que-moi* que l'on porte en soi en écrivant ou en lisant se trouve évoqué en des termes particulièrement suggestifs:

Matins à la Villa Adriana; innombrables soirs passés dans les petits cafés qui bordent l'Olympeion; va-et-vient incessant sur les mers grecques; routes d'Asie Mineure. Pour que je pusse utiliser ces souvenirs, qui sont miens, il a fallu qu'ils devinssent aussi éloignés de moi que le II^e siècle. (Yourcenar, «Carnets de notes de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*»)²⁷

Lent et pénible processus de séparation, de clivage, que celui qui se joue sur la scène de la lecture/écriture... Car, pour que «ces souvenirs qui sont miens», qui font «ma propre substance», se dé-lie de *moi* au profit de ce qui de *l'Autre* vient à se lire et à s'écrire, il me faut renoncer aux identifications narcissiques, idéalisatrices ou autrement simplificatrices, qui me permettent de m'auto-objectiver et de réduire l'Autre à n'être qu'un miroir au seul service de l'image que je me fais de «ma propre personne». Rien de plus menaçant pour l'unité et l'autonomie imaginaires du sujet que de renoncer à ce que Shoshana Felman appelle, dans *La Folie et la chose littéraire*, «la sécurité spéculaire de la structure de reconnaissance»²⁸. C'est bien cette sécurité-là que Yourcenar envoie à sa perte en impliquant dans les règles du jeu qui la guident dans sa pratique de la lecture la nécessité de «s'interdire les ombres portées»²⁹...

Ce qui compte dans ce que j'ai fait est cette quête quasi impersonnelle, ce passage du moi à ce qui importe davantage que moi... (M. Yourcenar, *Entretiens radiophoniques*)³⁰

Faire au moins un effort sérieux pour «tout lire» du texte que nous avons sous les yeux et nous en imprégner émotionnellement et imaginativement par les voies du «délire», c'est peut-être le seul moyen d'expulser notre *ego* hors scène de la lecture; ce *moi* dont les ombres portées nous cantonnent dans un monde sans *Autre*, dans ces «arides déserts personnels»³¹ où règnent les mirages de la complaisance narcissique.

²⁴ M. Yourcenar, «Carnets de notes de *l'Oeuvre au noir*», dans *LNRF*, n.° 452, 1990, p. 41 et *passim*.

²⁵ Julia Kristeva, «Le Temps des femmes», dans 33/34. *Cahiers de recherche de S.T.D. (Université Paris VII)*, n.° 5, 1979, p. 16.

²⁶ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 211.

²⁷ Dans M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 520.

²⁸ Shoshana Felman, *La Folie et la chose littéraire*, Paris, éd. du Seuil, 1978, p. 153.

²⁹ M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 528.

³⁰ Voir P. de Rosbo, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³¹ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 237.

Passer du moi à ce qui importe davantage que moi... Sur ce point, la pensée de Yourcenar présente des affinités frappantes avec celle des psychanalystes qui – de nos jours bien plus que par le passé – mettent en avant la nécessité de libérer la pratique analytique de l'emprise de l'ego. Je pense ici notamment à Lacan qui se trouve avoir observé, dès son premier *Séminaire* [1954], qu'une écoute poursuivie à partir de l'ego de l'analyste – ego qui, pour Lacan, n'est rien d'autre que «la somme des préjugés de l'analyste» – est «une interprétation dont le fondement et le mécanisme ne peuvent être distingués en rien de celui de la projection»³².

Quant à Freud... Il est vrai que le Freud des systématisations métapsychologiques comme le *Moi et le Ça* [1923] est plus optimiste à l'égard du moi qu'il juge destiné, du moins «dans son principe» et «quels que soient ses échecs effectifs», à «mettre le principe de réalité à la place du principe de plaisir» ou encore à représenter «ce qu'on peut nommer raison et bon sens». Optimisme tout *relatif* cependant, car dans le même écrit théorique Freud reconnaît par ailleurs avoir trouvé dans le moi «quelque chose qui est inconscient aussi, qui se comporte exactement comme le refoulé...»³³.

Rien d'étonnant donc à ce que Freud-*thérapeute*, méditant sa *pratique* d'analyste, avance déjà – comme Lacan le fera après lui et avec bien plus d'insistance – la nécessité de déjouer dans la mesure du possible, et par tous les moyens disponibles, la violence des interprétations auxquelles préside l'ego de l'analyste. En témoigne le prix qu'il attache, dans ses écrits techniques, à cette «*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*» qui constitue pour lui la première règle du jeu de sa pratique d'analyste: prêter une «écoute également attentive» à tout ce qui de l'Autre se donne à entendre.

L'on échappe [ainsi] au danger inséparable de toute attention voulue, celui de choisir parmi les matériaux fournis. C'est en effet ce qui arrive quand on fixe à dessein son attention; l'analyste grave en sa mémoire tel point qui le frappe, en élimine tel autre et ce choix est dicté par des expectatives ou des tendances. C'est justement ce qu'il faut éviter; en conformant son choix à son expectative, l'on court le risque de ne trouver que ce que l'on savait d'avance. En obéissant à ses propres inclinations, le praticien falsifie tout ce qui lui est offert. N'oublions jamais que la signification des choses entendues ne se révèle que plus tard. (S. Freud, *Conseils aux médecins* [1912])³⁴

Ecarter de la scène analytique la «masse idéationnelle» qui procure à l'analyste la conviction de s'y connaître en matière d'inconscient, s'accorder le temps et la patience de «tout écouter», et notamment tout ce qui échappe à l'emprise rassurante de la re-connaissance immédiate... Voilà ce qui semble bien constituer pour Freud la condition *sine qua non* de la psychanalyse en tant que pratique. Et rien de plus précaire que cette pratique, vu l'impact que peut exercer la «résistance à l'analyse»; résistance que Freud ne perçoit généralement que du côté de ce que lui dit l'analysant (ou de ses non-dits), mais que l'essai précieux qu'il a voué au «cas» *Dora* [1905] nous invite à chercher plutôt là où elle bloque l'écoute de l'analyste³⁵.

Dans l'article d'encyclopédie déjà mentionné, «Psychanalyse», Freud re-formule la règle de «l'écoute également attentive» de façon à faire ressortir davantage l'*intérieurité* du processus:

[le médecin] évite le plus possible de réfléchir et d'élaborer des attentes conscientes, ne veut, de ce qu'il a entendu, rien fixer en particulier dans sa mémoire et *capte de la sorte l'inconscient du patient avec son propre inconscient*. (S. Freud, «Psychanalyse» [1923])³⁶

³² J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire I*, p. 22, 31, 42. Voir également à ce sujet S. Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight*, p. 11.

³³ S. Freud, *Essais de Psychanalyse*, Paris, Payot, 1981, p. 237 et 228.

³⁴ S. Freud, *La Technique psychanalytique*, Paris, PUF, 1953, p. 62.

³⁵ Voir S. Freud, «Fragment d'une analyse d'hystérie», dans *Cinq psychanalyses*, Paris, PUF, 1970, pp. 1-91.

³⁶ S. Freud, *Résultats, idées, problèmes II*, p. 56 (c'est moi qui souligne).

Loin de mobiliser une intelligence opérant, comme on dit, «en toute conscience», la règle de la *gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit* conduit l'analyste à s'abandonner à un état de réceptivité subliminale, dont l'évocation porte, dans le passage que je viens de citer, l'empreinte d'une métaphorique matricielle analogue à celle qui sous-tend les propos que Yourcenar consacre à sa pratique de la lecture. Métaphorique bien moins explicite chez Freud que chez Yourcenar, il est vrai, mais dont nous ne saurions pourtant méconnaître l'impact, si nous nous tournons vers les *Conseils aux médecins* dans leur version originale, allemande:

In eine Formel gefasst: er [der Arzt] soll dem gebenden Unbewussten des Kranken sein eigenes Unbewusstes als empfangendes Organ zuwenden, er soll sich auf den Analysierten einstellen wie der Receiver des Telefons zum Teller eingestellt ist. (S. Freud, *Ratschläge für den Arzt* [1912])³⁷

Si j'ai préféré citer ce propos en allemand, et non dans la version tronquée qu'en proposent les traducteurs français, c'est pour préserver les deux métaphores, différentes et complémentaires, qui s'y inscrivent. L'inconscient de l'analyste s'y trouve en effet associé, tout d'abord, à un *organe réceptif*, ouvert au «gebenden Unbewussten des Kranken»; autrement dit, à une sphère *intrasubjective* accueillant comme un *don* ce qui de l'Autre se révèle sur la scène de l'écoute analytique. Et si Freud a recours, dans un second temps, à une autre métaphore qui, elle, se rapporte à la télécommunication, celle-ci, loin de neutraliser la première, met en avant que ce don révélateur d'inconscient ne saurait être reçu comme tel par l'analyste, que grâce à la médiation d'un tiers élément, à savoir: des paroles, du texte. Il faut bien un tissu de mots, un écran verbal, non seulement pour marquer l'irréductible séparation entre la subjectivité qui parle (ou écrit) et la subjectivité qui écoute (ou lit); mais aussi pour garantir, par là même, la possibilité d'un échange entre ces entités différentes. Cet écran verbal, cet indispensable tissu-texte, joue en effet un rôle analogue à l'écran sonore du téléphone connectant un émetteur et un récepteur par delà la distance qui les sépare.

Toujours est-il que Freud, en associant l'inconscient de l'analyste tout d'abord à un *organe réceptif*, avant de le comparer à un *appareil récepteur*, nous invite, en toute discrétion, à penser également au rôle médiateur que joue le placenta dans le processus de la gestation. Comme le formule Luce Irigaray dans son compte-rendu d'un entretien avec Hélène Rouch (biologiste s'intéressant aux processus de la vie intra-utérine), le placenta est un «tissu formé par l'embryon», qui garantit le maintien d'un «espace médian entre la mère et le fœtus», ce qui veut dire «qu'il n'y a jamais de fusion entre tissus maternels et tissus embryonnaires». Et il est en même temps un «régulateur d'échanges», grâce auquel s'opèrent des transformations et des redistributions de matériaux, «étrangement ordonnées et respectueuses de la vie de chacun»³⁸.

Les traducteurs à qui nous devons la version française des *Ratschläge* se montrent malheureusement peu sensibles au jeu suggestif de la double métaphore dans le texte allemand. Ils se sont cru autorisés à en extirper toute allusion à quelque «organe réceptif» que ce soit – quitte à nous en proposer une version considérablement amputée:

En résumé, l'inconscient de l'analyste doit se comporter à l'égard de l'inconscient émergent du malade comme le récepteur téléphonique à l'égard du volet d'appel. (S. Freud, «Conseils aux médecins» [1912])³⁹

Ce qui se trouve ainsi éliminé, c'est précisément l'allusion faite à la dimension subliminale, «matricielle» du processus de l'écoute analytique. Dimension qui paraît pourtant essentielle, pour le psychanalyste Freud aussi bien que pour l'écrivain Marguerite Yourcenar qui, de son côté aussi, se

³⁷ S. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke, VIII*, Londres, Imago, 1940-1952, p. 381 (c'est moi qui souligne).

³⁸ Luce Irigaray, «A propos de l'ordre maternel», dans *Je, tu, nous. Pour une culture de la différence*, Paris, Grasset, 1990, pp. 46-47.

³⁹ S. Freud, *La Technique psychanalytique*, p. 66.

tourne parfois vers la métaphore de la télécommunication en prenant autant de soin que Freud d'en préserver l'élément d'intériorité viscérale:

Tout effort pour arriver à une connaissance plus approfondie (et plus magique) du monde oblige à une constante attention à l'appareil récepteur qui est *Soi* [...Le Soi] en tant que corps, sensations, chaleur, pas le Soi en tant que *personne*... (M. Yourcenar, *Lettres à ses amis*)⁴⁰

«DÉLIRE» AVEC FREUD ET LACAN

L'effacement de la métaphore matricielle dans la version française des *Ratschläge*... me semble d'autant plus regrettable, qu'il risque de réduire à un simple procédé de *décodation* de messages (à une simple affaire d'*interprétation* de ce que la parole de l'analysant *exprime*) une pratique de l'écoute qui pour Freud – du moins pour Freud tel que Lacan nous le donne à relire – relève d'une expérience bien plus complexe, et essentiellement intérieure, de *révélation*:

Révélation, et non expression – l'inconscient n'est pas exprimé, si ce n'est par déformation, *Entstellung*, distorsion, transposition. [...] Toute l'oeuvre de Freud se déploie dans le sens de la révélation, et non pas de l'expression. La révélation est le ressort dernier de ce que nous cherchons dans l'expérience analytique. [...] Il s'agit de savoir comment, à un moment donné, pointe vers l'autre ce sentiment si mystérieux de la présence (J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire I*)⁴¹

Tout comme Yourcenar, Lacan se tourne vers le vocabulaire des mystiques, lorsqu'il s'essaye à évoquer ce qui se passe dans «cette espèce d'ancre» où se joue l'aventure de l'écoute analytique. Se mettre à l'écoute d'une parole ou d'un texte relève bien, pour lui, comme pour Yourcenar, d'une expérience à la fois dialogique (*entre*) et intérieure (*ancre*), et qui comme telle suppose de la part de l'analyste une intelligence plus intuitive (plus «organique» si je puis dire) que l'intellect théorique.

La «description phénoménologique» que Lacan fournit de l'expérience analytique, dans le deuxième chapitre de ses *Écrits*, en dit long à ce sujet. Elle nous présente l'analyste comme celui qui – «immobile mais non pas impassible» – «enregistre» patiemment, non pas des messages dont il aurait à interpréter d'emblée le sens, mais des «images» dont la parole de l'analysant lui communique peu à peu le «dessin», des images dont les «traits» se révèlent peu à peu, comme dans «un portrait de famille», voire comme dans une «*commedia del arte*»:

... image du père ou de la mère, de l'adulte tout-puissant, tendre ou terrible, bienfaisant ou punisseur, image du frère, enfant rival, reflet de soi ou compagnon. (J. Lacan, «Au-delà du "principe de réalité"» [1936])⁴²

Pour Lacan, la pratique analytique (en tant qu'écoute et en tant que lecture) relève essentiellement du registre de la contemplation et des révélations que celle-ci réserve à l'analyste. Non pas du registre, forcément secondaire, de l'interprétation qui – elle – n'entre en jeu que dans l'après-coup de l'expérience, pour y apporter une «élucidation intellectuelle»⁴³.

Lorsque ce même Lacan affirme que «toute l'oeuvre de Freud se déploie dans le sens de la révélation», c'est là une observation d'autant plus précieuse que Freud, lui, s'est généralement montré plutôt réticent à recourir au vocabulaire des mystiques pour parler ses expériences de l'é-

⁴⁰ M. Yourcenar, *Lettres à ses amis et quelques autres*, pp. 103-104.

⁴¹ J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire I*, p. 59.

⁴² Dans J. Lacan, *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 84 et 90.

⁴³ J. Lacan, *ibidem*, p. 85.

coute analytique. Le soin que Lacan a mis à écrire son essai «Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage», comme il dit, «sans y mettre, intentionnellement, le terme d'expression»⁴⁴; ce même soin, Freud semble en effet l'avoir apporté à s'interdire de plus en plus systématiquement le recours au terme de révélation (*Offenbahrung*). Tout se passe en effet comme si Freud, à mesure qu'il s'érigait en maître-analyste qui «dévoile», qui «dénude», qui «pénètre» l'inconscient, refusait de jouer le jeu bien moins phallique, bien plus matriciel, qui consiste à se laisser investir, tel un «organe réceptif», par ce qui de l'inconscient se révèle. En outre, la notion d'*Offenbahrung*, chargée de connotations mystico-religieuses, a dû déplaire à celui qui a tenu à couronner sa carrière par ces crédos de l'*Aufklärer* que sont *Avenir d'une illusion* [1927] et *Malaise dans la Civilisation* [1930].

Toujours est-il que l'idée que l'inconscient se révèle bien plus qu'il ne s'exprime, se trouve au centre des *Etudes sur l'hystérie* [1895], premier écrit d'un jeune Freud dont la pratique se trouve encore peu encombrée par ces «ombres portées» que sont les préjugés théoriques figés en vérités dogmatiques. Le Freud des *Etudes sur l'hystérie* sait encore apprécier la valeur heuristique des expériences de visualisation mentale auxquelles il incite ses analysants, et auxquelles il participe avec la sensibilité d'un visionnaire attentif aux expériences de magie sympathique, plutôt que de se profiler comme cet herméneute avide de «faire sens» qui se manifeste dès *L'Interprétation des rêves* [1900]. Je fais évidemment allusion au «procédé cathartique» auquel Freud dit avoir eu fréquemment recours dans sa pratique de psychothérapeute débutant et qu'il évoque en ces termes:

J'informe mon malade que je vais, dans l'instant qui suivra, exercer une pression sur son front et lui assure que, pendant tout le temps que durera cette pression, un souvenir surgira en lui sous la forme d'une image, ou bien qu'une idée se présentera à son esprit. Je lui enjoins de me faire part de cette image ou de cette idée quelles qu'elles puissent être. (Freud, «Psychothérapie de l'hystérie» [1895])⁴⁵

Si l'on accepte de ramener, avec Yourcenar, l'adjectif religieux à sa double source étymologique (*religare*: «relier» et *religere* «contempler»), rien de plus «religieux» que ce petit rituel qui relie, quelques secondes durant, la main de l'analyste et le front de l'analysant. Rituel qui suggère presque matériellement l'importance que prend dans le processus ce «facteur affectif» que Freud juge tout aussi indispensable que Yourcenar, et auquel il réserve le même mot: «sympathie»⁴⁶. Rituel dont Freud souligne en outre la fonction «cathartique» au sens essentiellement *scénique* de ce prédicat. «*Qu'avez-vous vu?*»... C'est bien la première question qu'il adresse à ses hystériques, au moment de retirer sa main de leur front, réservant à chaque fois une place secondaire à la question «qu'avez-vous pensé?»⁴⁷. Ce que Freud, en effet, espère voir surgir des paroles de ces «visuels» que sont les hystériques⁴⁸, ce sont des images. Des images, des scènes révélatrices d'inconscient. Dans les *Etudes sur l'hystérie* Freud n'est pas encore en quête de ces dites «pensées latentes» que l'explicateur logocentrique à qui nous devons *la Traumdeutung* se montrera bien empressé de mettre à nu, dans ces «rébus» auxquels les créations de l'imaginaire tendent à se réduire sous le regard d'un analyste fixé sur des pensées déguisées, oublieux du primat du visuel dans ce que des images donnent à «entendre».

A ses moments les moins dogmatiques, dans ses écrits les plus ouverts sur la psychanalyse en tant que pratique de l'inconscient, Freud se profile comme un lecteur convaincu que «l'essentiel...c'est la vision»; aussi convaincu que le seront après lui Jacques Lacan et l'écrivain à qui j'emprunte cette formule comtemplative, Marguerite Yourcenar⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire I*, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Dans S. Freud et J. Breuer, *Etudes sur l'hystérie*, Paris, PUF, 1985, pp. 217-218.

⁴⁶ S. Freud, *ibidem*, p. 229 et 246.

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *ibidem*, p. 86 et 115.

⁴⁸ S. Freud et J. Breuer, *Etudes sur l'hystérie*, op. cit., p. 226.

⁴⁹ M. Yourcenar, *Les Yeux ouverts*, p. 218.

VERS UNE ÉTHIQUE DE LA LECTURE

C'est bien d'une question de vie ou de mort, de vivre ou de mourir à la voix de l'Autre, que découle la pratique de la lecture telle que l'entend Marguerite Yourcenar. Il lui a bien fallu s'obliger à «tout lire», pour «apprendre à calculer exactement les distances entre l'empereur et moi», les différences qui entre sa propre personne et ces entités étrangères à elle-même qui composent son être. Et il lui a été tout aussi indispensable de recourir à ses «méthodes de délire», pour «essayer de combler, non seulement la distance me séparant d'Hadrien, mais surtout celle qui me séparait de moi-même»⁵⁰. Et c'est bien par là que se révèlent les intuitions psychanalytiques inscrites dans les règles du jeu qui fondent sa pratique de lectrice-écrivain et dans lesquelles nous venons de repérer des liens de parenté multiples et bien étroits avec celles que Freud aussi bien que Lacan présentent comme indispensables à leur pratique d'analyste.

A travers ma relecture de ces règles du jeu, j'ai essayé à mon tour de combler des distances. Non seulement la distance qui est généralement présumée séparer Yourcenar de la psychanalyse, mais aussi – et surtout – celle qui sépare la violence de nos interprétations d'une pratique de la lecture, respectueuse de différences et génératrice d'échanges matriciels, que Yourcenar et Freud et Lacan nous donnent à méditer comme étant, dans son essence, une éthique de la lecture.

⁵⁰ M. Yourcenar, *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 521 et 524.

The Picture of Dorian Gray: Artistic creation and the emergence of the subject

PIERRE MET (*)

The present paper is an attempt at interpreting *The Picture of Dorian Gray*¹, a novel published by Oscar Wilde in 1890. The question posed here in relation to Freudian theory is not therefore: is it true? but rather, does it makes sense? and if so what kind of «senses»? The text is a study of an imaginary portrait painted by Basil Hallward, an imaginary artist. Wilde, as a creator, stages a dialogue between an imaginary painting and language. The story begins with a Preface in which Wilde tries to hide the relationship existing between himself as a subject and his work.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things,
To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim. (DG, 21)

But the writer as subject comments his own story. What is unconscious should be kept silent he says. Organising the field of representation with a brush, a phallic symbol by the way, the artist² when he paints aims at giving an illusory equivalence of the object through a relation between eye and mind. In his novel, Wilde uses the portrait motif, in which the picture seems to compete with appearance³. It shows man's ability to transform an object into an image.

All art is once surface.
Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.
Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. (DG, 22)

The question is interesting, but nevertheless Wilde as subject speaks of himself. It is easy enough to understand that these images made up of words, of which the writer is the source, are a product of the artist's original fantasy. The novel examines, in fact, the object of its own activity. Unconsciously, Wilde tells us about his inner life, with the help of a symbolic representation which moves with the gaze.

(*) Université de Paris VII, Centre d'Anthropologie Littéraire, 10 rue Charles V, 75004 Paris, France.

¹ References to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are to the Penguin Classics Edition, 1985.

² Basil Hallward is the fashionable London artist who «painted» the portrait of Dorian Gray.

³ The portrait motif can also be found in E. A. Poe's «The Oval Portrait» 1842. Narrative are traditionnally constructed trough language although there are such non verbal expressions as art and music.

In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, and in front of it some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward. (...). (DG, 23)

This is a good metaphoric way of expressing the distance there is between us and the world.

I

The action takes place in the Victorian world, and Wilde invents a dialogue between Dorian Gray, a very handsome young man dreading total annihilation, and his picture. We have here a mental image of a beautiful hedonist (Dorian Gray) who has miraculously retained his youth while his portrait shows the effects of time and of his dissipated life. The writing of the novel can be interpreted as dictated by an unconscious desire to be «complete»; the portrait having a function of defence, the effects of age are literally projected onto the canvas and thus the subject is spared. The ego having lost its integrity is replaced by a two part structure of the model the model and the portrait. In fact the real representation of the subject is to be found in the book as a whole: model and painting form a unit. The book exists through a process by which parts are combined into a whole.⁴ The novel is constructed in two parts which are separated by chapter XI. We understand the inversion, it is not the portrait which is eternal but the model. At the beginning the portrait has the status of the thing that is missing: eternal beauty. As the story develops, the model will have this status. The metaphor has consisted in projecting outside the separation which is dreaded. The Author has managed to gain some distance from his inner fears. The thread of the narrative is frequently interrupted by Wilde's aesthetic preaching, this is a way of remaining blind to his strategy, the cult of beauty.

I choose my friends for their good looks, my acquaintances for their good characters, and my enemies for their good intellects. (DG, 30)

The author takes pleasure in representing a split world. Wilde divides the world of Dorian Gray between the upper classes (Lord Henry Wotton) and the lower classes (Dorian's connections in the East End, the home of the Vanes). On the canvas, the image finds its status by means of lines dividing the surface created by the painter. The subject borrows his identity from experiences of separation and imagines himself to be inside some object external to himself, the lost object indeed. The artist is able to produce a mental representation of the object when he fantasises eternal youth: the supreme pleasure in literature is to realise the non existent. The book that poisoned, or the perfect picture of Dorian Gray do not exist; they are a fancy of the author. Wilde creates an illusion of mastery over the object, an object to which Basil, the painter, remains ambivalently attached. Something that is not named is made manifest on the body.

«Harry» said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face «every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.» (DG, 27)

Wilde is becoming aware of some forbidden and unconscious impulse and from this point the narration follows another course: Dorian Gray becomes the subject of the novel rather than the portrait. In the myth Narcissus was in love with himself though attractive to both sexes. He repudiated all lovers in favour of his own image in the pool. Here the subject's preferred object is his own body. Indeed:

⁴ The motive of the tripartite personality:
Lord Henry: «What the world thinks me»;
Dorian: «What I would like to be»;
Basil: «What I think I am».

- Lord Henry offers to buy the portrait at any price;
- Dorian Gray kisses his portrait.

At the centre of the story, we discover a painting whose function is to phallicize the artist. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of self preservation perception. At this point, Wilde describes how the subject develops anxiety because remaining with Dorian Gray (the model) is believed to be necessary for the survival of the artist. And here the loss of such perception will naturally be a cause of anxiety.⁵ Hence the close relationship between the artist and his model.⁶ (Whether this is related to the memory of a father figure is another debate).

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«My life depends on him. Mind, Harry, I trust you.» He spoke very slowly, and the words seemed wrung out of him almost against his will. (37)

The notion of completeness often appears in Wilde's writing. Through the skill of the artist, Dorian Gray has become the object of the representation determined by the gaze which is outside: I am looked at, I am a picture.

When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognised himself for the first time. (48)

This constitutes the repetition of a relationship we have already come across. For Dorian Gray, the portrait is the most magical of mirrors. It has revealed his own body and his own soul to him. The painting is in fact a good example of what happens to us in front of the mirror.

II

We shall see that the «subject» realises himself through the writing of the novel: Wilde may have been aware of the necessity of loss, of a split, for the subject to be born. The characters are but signifiers and the separate components of Wilde's split personality. Dorian Gray as a character conceived as an ideal, as a perfect object. This idealisation supposing the construction of a perfect object needs a perfect person to exist: the artist, the creator, the father, but this can only be reached in imagination:

«How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June ...» (DG, 49)

For Freud, the division of the subject is a defensive safeguard against incestuous wishes. The Oedipus complex implies that all individuals have incestuous fantasies. Dorian Gray seems to be the victim of one fatal deviation. Again, we all know this, the repressed manifests itself in a veiled distorted way. In the novel, the sexual aim has primarily been altered and the subject takes a part of the body as an object of desire. The beginning of the story which is based on the splitting of the subject is a defence against recognising that love and hate are directed against the same object. Wilde projects his destructive impulses on to the bad object by whom he feels persecuted.

⁵ Basil Hallward's painting of him causes Dorian Gray to sacrifice his soul in order to retain his youthful beauty.

⁶ How often do you see him?: «Every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day – He is absolutely necessary to me.» (32)

«I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me.» (DG, 50)

This jealousy which is related to the possessiveness of the Other implies the existence of a sentiment of love. Basil loves the portrait in the same way as Lord Henry loves Dorian Gray. Dorian Gray is in love with himself and made to feel guilty by the novelist. This defensive attitude enables the subject to deny that he has lost the object. This investment of energy on the self means that the external world exists solely to satisfy its wishes and is a means to disavow castration anxiety. The knife itself is very significant. Wilde shows how a subject can be annihilated: Basil wants to destroy the portrait, his masterpiece, with a knife.

Yes, it was for the long palette-knife, with its thin blade of little steel. He had found it at last. He was going to rip up the canvas. (...)

«Don't Basil, don't!» he cried. It would be a murder!» (DG, 51)

In this scene Wilde's desire for castration by his father and his masochistic orientations are experienced. This attack on the interjected object can be interpreted as a compulsion to prove that one can possess a symbolic substitute for the phallus. For the creator, the knife becomes a penis-equivalent and painting refers to sensuous pleasure derived from anal sensations. This retreat into the anal scene expresses an attempt, on the part of the child to master the body and socialise its impulses. Analogy has something been said to have important role in homosexuality. An answer to castration anxiety is a fantasy of completeness in which we are at once the mother and the father. Here the psychological reasons of production of the text seem to have been a desire to avoid an omnipotent father who brandishes a knife in a threatening gesture. When Hallward takes up a palette knife to destroy his work, Dorian tears the knife from his hand crying out that it would be murder. He threatens to stop their relationship. The picture is preserved and promised to Dorian. But the relationship between Dorian and Hallward has altered. We shall see in the end that Lord Henry is to become Dorian's mentor.

«Don't go to the theatre tonight, Dorian,» said Hallward.

«Stop and dine with me.»

«I can't Basil.»

«Why,»

«Because I have promised Lord Henry Wotton to go with him.» (DG, 53)

Wilde returns to the theme of the victim in *Dorian Gray* where the youthful Dorian is drawn into his corrupted life style by the will of Lord Henry who lives vicariously through him. This change of affection into what will become hatred represents a serious threat to the life of the loved-object. In chapter XIII Dorian stabs Hallward to death in front of the portrait. The bent posture of the painter recalls, but inverted, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, which was just in that position, with his father standing above him, holding his knife.

He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again. (DG, 192)

Disobedience is the first step in the growth of a man. This symbolic murder of the father with the help of a knife defines the knife as something that establishes a splitting of the «being» and the emergence of the subject. At the end of the story Dorian Gray stabs his picture with the same knife. The hero only has his own castration to offer, to remain attached to the Other. By murdering the father with a knife he aggresses himself as a subject.

He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that meant. (DG, 263)

The sexual object has become valueless through its own guilt. This end can be interpreted as an homosexual experience of love combined with feeling of loss and helplessness. This compromise formation allows the emergence of an unacceptable impulse rendered unconscious accompanied by an attempt to maintain the repression. In this case it is difficult to make out who is the victim and who is the executioner. Wilde, jealous of the reproductive powers of the father, hopes to gain eternity and become like God.

If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! (DG, 49)

Here, the author finds pleasure in refusing castration and all the limits it imposes on life as well as sacrificing.

III

This central fantasy gives Dorian Gray the appearance of immortality. The subject apparently refuses to submit to a law of nature, to accept that life must come to an end. But the writing of the book and the painting of the picture can be interpreted as a process that repeats the life process from birth to death. This is the death instinct in us which amounts to put an end to time. The model posess in a frozen attitude, equivalent to the time of rest in a movement.

For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips, and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him. (DG, 42)

The story contains three deaths including a suicide and a murder. The main intention seems to be self destruction and the fact that Dorian declares that Basil Hallward is «what I think I am» gives significance to Basil murder. Aggression is expressed as a projection of the individual self destructive drive. The suicide of Sybil Vane (Dorian's wife to be) seems to be a reaction to frustration. In this example it seems possible to equate aggression with hate. The dominating tendency of mental life is the effort to reduce internal tension which finds expression in the pleasure principle. The murder of the father, resulting in death wishes toward the father, when the son rebels against his mastery, is done with the help of the knife which was used to create a representation of the son. The murder of the object by the subject is the consequence of Wilde's impulse to destroy the fruit of his work.

Throughout the story, Dorian Gray is presented in the role of a little dependent child who wants to restore lost parts himself. The artist seems to seek unity. At the beginning of the story Basil is about to complete his master-piece: a full length portrait. No mother interferes in this scene. The master (painter) is forced into the role of an omnipotent parental figure. The central idea which consists in a beautiful young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth depicts Dorian as a man who begged not to be so.

To get back my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or be respectable. Youth! There is nothing like it. (DG, 255)

The function Wilde gives to youth remains ambiguous, for this is something that is to be preserved and may also be something that has to be shown. The father, as the author of the law, and the murder of the father seems to be a distortion of homosexual feelings.

Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry's influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament. The love that he bore him – for it was really love – had nothing in it that was not mere admiration of beauty that is born of the senses, and that dies when the senses tire. (DG, 149)

The description of these ambiguous feelings directed towards a person of the same sex refers to homosexual feelings. Wilde adopts here a defensive and submissive attitude because taboo subjects are not for the public. Dorian Gray's sin have an indeterminate nature and are projected on someone: the portrait. The relationship with Dorian's action and the picture shows that it can no longer be maintained that beauty is truth and truth beauty. When Dorian Gray rejects Sybil Vane, and precipitates her suicide, the picture's expression changes.

→ (touch of cruelty in the mouth);

After Hallward murder the picture altered;

→ (a loathsome red dew (hand));

when he commits a good action (spare Hetty Merton):

→ there is no change (same look, hypocrite).

When Dorian dies the youth and beauty which have been preserved in him are transferred back to the portrait while he himself becomes withered. The physical beauty of Dorian Gray in the opening scene, the importance of Dorian for Basil's artistic inspiration constitute Dorian as the subject of desire. He comes into existence only because he is an object. In the story, a picture enters into a relation with scopical desire. Latent homosexual desire finds expression in an ideal friendship (Dorian/Lord Henry) and this love is connected with fear and submissiveness.

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The novel is organized in order to produce certain type of narrative progression. The child transforms a passive role into an active one. The text includes themes, motifs, ideas and perceptions that recur at intervals: a desire for self destruction. Something drove him to put himself in a position that would destroy his career, his fame, his family and himself. Wilde was fascinated by mysteries and the portrait is a partial revelation of the whole truth, because language is central to the construction of the self. It is possible to get to know the author's unconscious fantasies especially where certain motif recur. The text is the story of Wilde's desire and reinforces his passive feminine attitude towards his father and arouses fears of castration. During the phase of triangulation, Wilde probably identified not with the feared father, but with the mother. To be reconciled with his father and indirectly to gain possession of his mother he took over a feminine position. We know this thanks to Freud and Lacan. The physical removal of the portrait first from his creator, then from the presence of his owner matches the fact that the subject comes into existence through separation, after separation: the end of fusion. Symbolic castration is necessary and what we are left with is «jouissance» which is formed through an organization of signifiers, but realized in a body.

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On Hamlet's soliloquy

ROBERT SILHOL (*)

Let me start bluntly: as I wish to avoid saying anything too commonplace about Hamlet and his soliloquy on death – and Shakespeare's own question after all, «to be or not to be», is itself very commonplace –, I shall refrain from mentioning *The Bible* in my introduction, or the Greeks, or Montaigne, and simply begin with the two questions that have come to my mind while reading and re-reading *Hamlet*.

Here are the two queries: the first is about the place of the soliloquy in the play, and the second is about its semantic content. They may be deemed afterwards to be interesting clues towards a better understanding of *Hamlet*.

I

To begin with, the first question, then: if we analyse the first two acts of the play, if we look at the sequence of events represented up to the apparition of Hamlet's soliloquy in the text, what is striking, I find, is that it is difficult to understand why the prince's speech on death is delivered *at that particular moment in the play*. Indeed, whether we reason in terms of the «psychology» of the characters or of the general economy of Shakespeare's discourse, there is nothing to justify this discussion on self-murder placed *shortly after the opening of the third act*. Naturally, we all know that «there are no fewer than three substantive texts of Hamlet» (Hibbard, 67) and bear in mind G. R. Hibbard's excellent summary of scholarly research in his definitive textual introduction to the play (O.U.P., 1987): of «the text» of *Hamlet* we can only speak with prudence. However, since the prince's soliloquy appears at the same place in the Second Quarto, «generally recognized as the “good” quarto», and in the First Folio of 1623, it can be assumed we can trust the text here. For even in the First («bad») Quarto, which alters the sequence of events (the «To be, or not to be» soliloquy and the «Nunnery Scene» that follows are placed not in scene one, Act Three, but in scene two, Act Two), the respective places of the soliloquy and of the «Nunnery Scene» are identical to those in the other two versions. What will first be discussed here, therefore, is not principally Hamlet's temptation to kill himself, or the interest of Shakespeare's dissertation on self-murder, but simply the particular place which was chosen for such a speech.

A close examination of the action during the first two acts will show that this place cannot easily be justified.

(*) Université Paris 7, U.F.R. d'Etudes Anglophones, Institut d'Anglais Charles V, 10, rue Charles V, 75004 Paris, France. e-mail: silhol@paris7.jussieu.fr

Clearly, what predominates over the first act is the «memory» of the dead king, Hamlet's father. The play opens on the apparition of the dead king's ghost (scene one), and at court, in the following scene, the dead king also occupies the central place:

CLAUDIUS: Though yet Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green... (I,ii,1-2)

HORATIO: My Lord I think I saw him yesternight. (I,ii,188)

Finally, the two scenes, 4 and 5, which close Act One, again give the ghost one of the leading parts. We have now a son who not only has lost a father he says he cherished, but a son who has just learnt of his father's murder by his uncle. Quite naturally, mourning such a loss, he explicitly expresses his despair, and a discourse on suicide, at this particular moment in the play, would certainly not have seemed out of place.

...O curséd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right! (I,v,187-188)

Earlier on, in the scene at court, when Hamlet, among relatives obviously eager to forget the dead monarch («Though yet...»), is seen sincerely mourning his father, the word itself was pronounced. This was the prince's first soliloquy:

O, that this too too sallied¹ flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon «gainst self-slaughter...» (I,ii,129-132),

but no more, and we shall have to wait until the opening of the third act for a development of some length.

These are obvious examples, but several other passages throughout the play could also have led, quite logically, to a soliloquy on suicide. The long second scene of Act Two offers indeed several opportunities of this kind. See lines 211-212 for instance, when Hamlet answers Polonius who wishes to «take (his) leave»: «You cannot take from me anything that I will more willingly part withall – except my life, except my life, except my life.» A few moments later, to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, he will say he has «lost all mirth» and «forgone all custom of exercise» in a passage which is not unlike a clinical description of a depressive state. Later on, still, in his second soliloquy, after he has met the players, he openly regrets his passivity, guilty it seems of the meekness of his grief – «O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!» (II,ii,516) –, and at this point one may well wonder whether this is not going to add to his depression and despair:

What would he (the player) do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general air with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,²
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like a John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; (II,ii,526-536)

¹ Some editions have «solid».

² This is precisely what he refrains from doing himself.

But the soliloquy takes on a sudden turn, and the text shifts from sadness and regret to fortitude: «... it cannot be / But I am a pigeon-livered and lack gall» (II,ii,543-544), «About my brains» (555). Hamlet will trap the guilty king: «I'll have these players / Play something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle.» (562-563). The decision closes the second act, suicide is no longer on the prince's mind.

No doubt, all these «missed» opportunities – and the last instance was not even that, a change of mind, rather, which is perhaps even more significant – might simply be considered as good preparations leading to the soliloquy to come. The argument is convincing enough, but we should nevertheless note that it took Shakespeare over 400 lines, almost ten pages, to bring out his famous speech, and we wonder about such «delay». One thing seems established at least, «To be or not to be» could have been given well before Act Three.

And now we can turn to the actual place the soliloquy on self-murder occupies in the play. We have just seen it could have been placed before Act Three; we are now going to see it does appear at a most strange moment, and is even unconvincingly placed.

This is the beginning of Act Three, Hamlet's «distraction» has just been discussed by most of the characters on stage, and the King, assisted by Polonius, is planning to have Ophelia meet the Prince. He hopes Hamlet will betray himself and let them know what the cause of his «affliction» or «wildness» is.

Let us look at the details of the scene. The first thing we should note is that Hamlet has been sent for³:

KING: Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as't were by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia.
Her father and myself (lawful espials)
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We may of the encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If't be th'affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for. (III,I,28-36),

and the second remark we can also make is that the preceding scene showed him ready to act. No doubt, his attitude may have been purely theoretical – «About my brains» – and he may still be unable to carry out the action he is thinking of, but this can still be construed as the attitude of one who is hoping to come out of his depressive state. Indeed, the visit of the players has provided him with an opportunity to make certain of the King's guilt, and this may thus incite him to act.

The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (II,ii,570-571)

So here we are, waiting for Hamlet to come and encounter, as if by chance, Ophelia, and all of a sudden, just before she appears on the stage, Shakespeare makes him recite his soliloquy on life and death! Coming after the line about «the conscience of the King» and just before Hamlet's harsh treatment of Ophelia, we might rightly be surprised at this passage and ask: but where is the logic here? Why such a speech at such an unexpected moment?

The obvious psychoanalytical answer to this question is that since the scene cannot be said to have been the product of any dramatic necessity, another necessity must account for the production of the soliloquy, a necessity which I shall term «unconscious».

³ He has been sent for, that is, the context does not prepare us for a scene of self-int arrogation.

II

It is clear that I am no longer speaking of Hamlet as if he were a real person, but of *Hamlet-as-a-representation* (which, in the case of Shakespeare's character happens marvellously to coincide with an actual human being), not a person, then, but a representation which cannot be said to account for the production of the soliloquy, the production of the details of the character's speech, the literary or dramatic illusion notwithstanding. The logic I am looking for, the unconscious logic behind Hamlet's speech, is therefore not to be found simply in the character's represented behaviour but in the whole play read as the discourse of a «subject».

What is this «subject», unconscious by definition, saying? Three main themes stand out in the two acts which precede the soliloquy: the theme of the dead father, an interrogation about madness, and a reflexion on the notion of deceit or treachery.

We have already remarked that the dead father – *le père mort* – is obviously at the heart of the first act, whether we consider the ghost mentioned by Horatio and the sentinels on the very first page of the tragedy:

What, has this thing appeared again tonight? (I,i,21),

Claudius's summary of the general situation:

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death... (I,ii,1),

Hamlet's grief, whom the Queen first addresses with:

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailéd lids
Seek thy noble father in the dust. (I,ii,68-71),

or of course King Hamlet's ghost in scenes iv and v.

One scene only, the third, in this first act, does not mention the dead king; but it is a scene between Polonius, Leartes and Ophelia, a scene in fact between father and children, the triangular structure of which we can easily discern. It marks the starting point of that parallel plot which for a while accompanies the main plot and tells the same story in its own way (a father, a son, a woman).

This takes us to the second act (an act which has only two scenes), in which lunacy and deceit occupy a prevalent place. Polonius opens the first scene. He is asking Reynaldo to inform him on Leartes's behaviour abroad and, again, this secondary plot announces the two themes which are going to be developed throughout Act Two. Two words, indeed, or two ideas, recur in Polonius's speech: «inquire» and «forgeries», and both are repeated several times.

POLONIUS: You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour. (II,i,3-5)

...Look you, sir,
Inquire me first... (II,i,6-7)

Take you, as'twere some distant knowledge of him; (II,i,13)

...him you would sound, (II,i, 42)

So much for this theme: I interpret this wish to be informed as the expression of a more general inquiry. Beyond the question on Laertes's behaviour, an echo in fact of Claudius's question on Hamlet's strange demeanour, I find we can hear Shakespeare's interrogation on the nature of madness, or of depression, as I shall try to show. These lines are a good introduction to Ophelia's dismay, which is to follow in the same scene.

And because what characterizes madness is the impossibility (today we would say the difficulty) of accounting for it, a word, several words in fact, have been added to what is already a clinical picture to point out the impossibility/difficulty, precisely. Such is the poet's privilege; he may express more than he knows – which means we do not even have to speak of a miraculous intuition here –, but his words sometimes readily point to what, today, can be analyzed and understood.

Now to the «words» which conclude this first interrogation on lunacy: to Reynaldo, Polonius says: «...And there put on him / What *forgeries* you please.» (II,i,19-20), and: «Your bait of *falsehood* takes this carp of truth,» (II,i,63). In the next scene, to Claudius, he will say:

... I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.⁴ (II,ii,155-156)

and:

(pointing to his head and shoulder): Take this from this, if this be otherwise.
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid...

The «centre» then becomes the secret of the unconscious subject, and the allusion to decapitation might be seen to point to the various meanings of the symbolical notion of «castration».

Such is the contradictory and paradoxical nature of Freud's concept, the unconscious: «I would like to find out what my «unconscious» secret is, but at the same time I spend all my energy denying what I am about to discover. I ask questions, sometimes without even knowing it, but I don't listen to the answers or even do all I can to falsify them.» The «structure» is well known, let me repeat this: on one hand we have this obscure intuition that what is kept secret, silent, matters much more than what is actually said or shown – and we would like to find out what the secret is –, but on the other, we prefer to be kept in the dark, so that we content ourselves with questions which in the end are nothing but the expression of our anxieties and fears.⁵

If we look at the main themes developed in Act II, it is this dichotomy that we find. Throughout, the emphasis is laid on Hamlet's *transformation*, or depression, or lunacy, and on the meaning of the prince's behaviour, while on the other hand the theme of *deceit* is introduced (and we shall see that the arrival of the players at this precise moment, scene two, Act II, can also be interpreted as somewhat related to the quest for truth with the ambiguities the enterprise implies). The quotations, in any case, are easy to find, for each of the characters mentions Hamlet's transformation:

OPHELIA: Lord Hamlet with his doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,

⁴ The «centre» can obviously be read as an allusion to what is deeply buried - this is the theme of the secret - but I find it interesting to note that the lines which precede the passage above mention the head.

⁵ The last lines of Act One already introduced this theme of secrecy: «You'll be secret» Hamlet says to his companions after they have seen the ghost, and we remember that he went as far as asking them to swear: «Never make known what you have seen to-night.» (I,v,144) and also:

Never speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword. (152-153)

Swear by my sword
Never to speak of this that you have heard. (159)

On the theme of the secret, see also: R. Silhol, «Hamlet et son Autre», *L'Auteur à l'oeuvre*, Fontenay/St Cloud, ENS Editions, 1996.

And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been looséd out of hell. (II,i,78-83)

and:

He raised a sigh so piteous and profound. (II,i,94);

POLONIUS: That hath made him mad. (II,i,110),

and of course the well-known:

Your noble son is mad. (II,ii,92);

and also:

The KING: ...Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation... (II,ii,4-5),

THE QUEEN: My too much changed son... (II,ii,36).

Even Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are given the opportunity to comment on the prince's lunacy:

ROSENCRANTZ: He does confess he feels himself distracted,
But the cause 'a will by no means speak. (III,i, 5-6)

GUILDENSTERN: Now do we find him forward to be sounded,
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state. (III,i,6-10).

Finally, Hamlet himself describes what we shall call his mental collapse or his imitation of one:

I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory... (II,ii,285-288).

For the attentive spectator, of course, Hamlet's sudden change is apparently devoid of mystery; as early as Act One, scene 5, the prince himself has given us a «realistic» explanation for such a transformation:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come:
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself
(As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on),
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumbered thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, well, we know', or 'We could, an if we would',
Or 'If we list to speak', or 'There be, and if they might'
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me; (I,i,165-178)...

There is no doubt, then, that on the realistic «surface» of the drama Hamlet's transformation is a feigned one. As we are dealing with literature, however, the subtle distinction between a real

mental disorder and the imitation of one is of very little importance. In both cases, what we are given to see is a representation; between a person behaving *like* someone suffering from a severe mental depression and a person *described* as sick, there is no difference. What we have in both cases is only Shakespeare's version of madness.

The playwright's talent of observation notwithstanding, a play upon madness is still a play, the logic of which, as I have already marked, is eventually to be found not in a character but in the «subject» responsible for the creation of such a character. Again, what information about lunacy, madness or depression is to be found in *Hamlet* will have to be sought in the words that make the play, that is in Shakespeare's *écriture*.

And what the words in the play say now is that no one tells the truth. After the theme of the dead, or murdered, father, after the theme of madness, now the theme of deceit.

III

Obscurely sensing a menace in Hamlet's transformation, the King and Queen will have him secretly watched. We saw how, at the opening of Act Two, Polonius wished to be informed of his son's behaviour, and how he incited Reynaldo to be deceitful for this purpose. The same strategy will be used by Claudius: deceit, treason, the setting up of traps, those are the means devised to try and discover what the «real» nature of Hamlet's strange disposition is. And of course, we remember how Hamlet himself was the first to use such stratagems: not only did he pretend to be mad, but he also, at the end of Act Two, set a trap for the king.

I have already alluded to the dichotomy made of our wish to understand and of a secret desire not to know. The theme of «deceit», so prevalent in *Hamlet*, I find, will help us to analyse this dichotomy further and take us nearer to a fuller understanding of what is at stake in Hamlet's soliloquy on self-murder. I will shortly suggest an interpretation of this emphasis on deceit, but first we must go back to the sequence of (represented) events that lead to the soliloquy. You remember we had the apparition of the ghost (which we can liken to a nightmare or, better, to a symptom), and Ophelia's description of Hamlet's transformation, and I have just mentioned what happens in Act Two, scene 2: the king entreats Guildenstern and Rosencrantz to find out «whether aught to (them) unknown afflicts (Hamlet) thus.» (17), and the queen asks them to visit her «too much changed son» (36). Then comes Polonius who thinks he has the solution and who will find «where truth is hid» (156). He says he will «loose (his) daughter to (Hamlet)» (160), while with the king, hidden behind an «arras», they will secretly listen. But again, the action is delayed and in the scene that follows Shakespeare simply makes him converse with the prince and no conclusion can be drawn from the encounter: «Words, words, words.» (190). Words also to Guildenstern and Rosencrantz who come on stage next. Hamlet does tell them of his sorrows: «I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth... (285), but they will not be the wiser for it; there is much in the prince's explanation that remains obscure, that he has had «bad dreams», for instance, or that «A dream is but a shadow» (250). In the end, their only dramatic function seems to introduce the players (303).

The latter, of course, have a specific rôle in the plot, their presence is necessary, more or less at this place, since they are needed to stage the play within the play. But they are instrumental in another way also, and perhaps more central to *Hamlet* than it may seem at first. For indeed, with them, the theme of deceit, of treason, of deception, takes on a new dimension. What concludes the long scene two of this second act is a soliloquy, by Hamlet, on the skill of the actor which I also read as a discourse on truth and appearances:

O, what a rogue and peasant am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul to his own conceit
 That from her working all his visage wanned;
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing,
 For Hecuba!
 What's Hecuba to him or he to her,
 That he should weep for her? What would he do,
 Had he the motive and cue for passion
 That I have? (II,ii,516-529).

That such an interrogation should have been placed in a play is interesting. It is an interrogation on the «truth» of art, a question directed at the sincerity of the artist, actor or playwright.⁶

Sincerity, this calls to mind Hamlet's entrance scene, in Act One, when, at court, the Queen is asking him not to «seek (his) noble father in the dust.» (71):

QUEEN: Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,

 Do not for ever with vailéd lids
 Seek thy noble father in the dust.
 Thou know'st 'tis common - al that lives must die,
 Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET: I, madam, it is common.

QUEEN: If it be,
 Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET: Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'.
 (I,ii, 68-76)⁷

Speaking of his «true» feelings, Hamlet explicitly makes a distinction between what is «true», what «is», and what can be simulated, that is counterfeit.

... These indeed seem,
 For they are actions that a man can play,
 But I have that within which passes show –
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (83-86)

In his grief, then, the son of the dead king is sincere. He is no actor who pretends, there can be no confusion here.

⁶ And it can also be read as an interrogation on the nature of representation, that is to say language, but this is another debate.

⁷ And:

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,
 Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
 Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
 Together with all the forms, moods, shapes of grief,
 That can denote me truly. These indeed seem, (77-83).

No doubt, we must bear in mind that the first passage quoted above, which mentions Hecuba and Priam's death, appears in a different context. Hamlet *is shown* reasoning with himself; he is trying to make up his mind to act: such is the apparent psychological necessity of the scene. We have some difficulty, perhaps, in following the argument, but his question, prompted by Shakespeare, is nevertheless quite clear: because the art of the actor consists in imitating any human emotion, to what extremes would he not rise had he Hamlet's «true» motive for passion? The prince of course, is prohibited such demonstrations, he must remain silent, he «can say nothing».

Is this a way of saying that if «he» refrains from showing his grief there is a reason for it? But if there is a reason – and there is one: to keep secret what the ghost has revealed to him until he is revenged –, his silence should not distress him so, and he certainly should not feel guilty about it. One must admit Shakespeare's argument is not really convincing; which accounts perhaps for the complexity of the reasoning.

Can we, then, using the usual psychoanalytical method of inquiry, ask why such a sentence was produced? What does Hamlet's silence stand for? What is it he does not say?

We begin to suspect that these interrogations on the art of the actor are not the product of a particular context; both passages are inspired by the same intuition and deal with the same problem, and it is tempting to pursue the idea. It has two dimensions: one that is general, philosophical, say, the other that is personal, or psychological. Shakespeare is here trying to establish a distinction between what can be represented, staged – and this inevitably calls forth the idea of forgery – and what is, what must be genuine and cannot be counterfeit. The assumption, of course, is that there are feelings which are true, and others which are but imitations. We know today that such a distinction is not possible; the word shall never be the thing; language, which characterizes us as humans, does bridge the gap between a subject and the world, but does so in imagination only, hallucinatorily;

... This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A stallion⁸! Fie upon't! foh! (II,ii, 549-554)

If I wish to express my feelings with words (rather than through actions, or slips of the tongue, say), I must use language and submit to its laws, the first of which being that words, by definition, are never adequate, equal, to what they represent. Because of this, literature always «lies» to us, deceives us, but it is in this «lying» that some truth can be found.

What truths do we find in *Hamlet*, personal truths I mean, the truths of a subject who unconsciously expresses himself through the lines he produces?

I suggest that what inspired Shakespeare his interrogations about truth and language, about truth and the theatre, was an event which happened in his life and affected him personally, a death perhaps. It is not possible to know with certainty what event may have affected the playwright so strongly, but this is relatively unimportant here as we are not so much interested in the details of the dramatist's life as in the general, universal, meaning his «case» may represent.

And what characterizes this case, Hamlet's, or Shakespeare's, is the insistence on silence, what I called earlier on the «secret». We recall the end of Act One:

...let us go in together,
And still your fingers on your lips, I, pray. (I,v,185-186),

⁸ A stallion: a prostitute.

and we've just had: «Yet I... can say nothing;» (II,ii,533-536). A possible interpretation of this wish to remain silent could be that it amounts to an unconscious refusal to reveal what the death of a close relation may have meant for one, «wish» being improper, since we are dealing with «repressed material», something not consciously realized. This is rather vague, I know, but it helps us to read Hamlet's silences as the best protection – for the playwright, I mean, for the «subject» behind the words – against revealing one's unconscious desires whatever they may be. This, in any case, is quite congruent with Ernest Jones's reading of *Hamlet*⁹.

For beyond the fact that the son of the murdered king unconsciously interprets Claudius's deed as resembling his own oedipal wish, hence his hesitations, I think Shakespeare's tragedy also represents the relationship a subject has with his or her unconscious desire. Again, Hamlet/Shakespeare may have had specific reasons to feel «unpregnant with (his) cause» (II,ii,535), but we have no difficulty in recognizing in such procrastination the movement of an obsessional soul.

And so we have reached the opening of Act Three and the moment for Hamlet to recite his soliloquy on suicide.

We have already established that this soliloquy could have been placed before Act Three, established that there were other logical places for it in the play. We can now ask what justifies the actual place it occupies, shortly after the beginning of Act Three. This is of course an interrogation on the «meaning» of the soliloquy, the reason for it being there, a question on its «conditions of production». For it does appear at a most strange moment, and in fact seems to interrupt the action. Again, let us examine the sequence of (represented) events that lead to it.

Following the monarch's worried interrogation about Hamlet's «transformation», Ophelia's father declared:

... I will find
Where truth is hid... (II,ii,155-156)

and

... I'll loose my daughter to him. (160)

But it will take Shakespeare 400 lines, that is to say well over 15 minutes, to actually stage the planned encounter between Ophelia and Hamlet. Why such delay? The answer may come from the examination of the events that take place during these fifteen minutes. For if in this very long scene two the action stands still – procrastination? –, a lot nevertheless happens which deserves analysis.

Four «sub-scenes» can be distinguished: 1) I have already mentioned Polonius's own inconclusive meeting with Hamlet – in passing a superb illustration of what we now call *parole vide*¹⁰ – which the Lord Chamberlain can only conclude with a reminder of his stratagem: «I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.» (208-209) We are back where we started, repetition and nothing else. 2) Then comes Hamlet's conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to whom he gives a detailed account of his melancholy without disclosing anything new, and which is succeeded by the arrival of the players. 3) This development is more germane to the action, as we saw, but if their preparatory performance of the *Aeneid* is indeed a representation of the death of a king, it is in fact nothing more than a *repetition* and does not in the end help the plot to move forward. 4) Finally, Hamlet's second soliloquy closes the

⁹ *Hamlet and Oedipus*, New York, Norton, 1949.

¹⁰ Empty speech on the surface, no doubt, but not devoid of meaning if we care to listen to what may have been signified in the scene with the ear of the psychoanalyst. The reference to the «sun», often a symbol of the father's power, and to conception, can be interpreted as unconscious productions of an oedipal desire well in keeping with the general atmosphere in *Hamlet*. To Polonius, who is a father, Hamlet says he is a «fishmonger», and the meaning of «go-between», «seller of women», has been noted by many critics, but it is probable we are not on unconscious ground here.

second act and, after some deliberation still, a change seems to take place in the prince, for he says he is now prepared to act.

And yet, it is in a quite different mood that Hamlet will appear on stage next, for his soliloquy on death, precisely shortly after the opening of Act Three. The discrepancy is blatant and emphasizes, I find, the awkward place chosen for Hamlet's speech, coming as it does just after the decision to go into action.¹¹

Whatever the reason for such a discrepancy, for such a change of heart, we cannot help noticing the existence of one common element between the four sub-scenes just mentioned. In each case, we discover the wish to hide the truth we have already analyzed, a desire to remain silent. Whether to Polonius or to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, never does Hamlet reveal what his intentions are. And the arrival of the players is curiously introduced by a complex passage on good breeding and sincerity¹² which ends with the word «deceived».

We already know that secrecy is essential to the success of Hamlet's plan to trap the king, and also that in pretending to be mad he has more freedom to act. But does this suffice to justify the long debate on appearance and reality? Could there be another «meaning» behind such a conscious «surface»? We must find a way to explain satisfactorily Shakespeare/Hamlet's concern with deceit, and in particular the first part of the prince's second soliloquy on actors: «Is it not monstrous, that this player here, / But in a *fiction*, in a *dream* of passion, / Could force his soul to his own *conceit*?» (italic mine). The poet may not speak the truth – whatever that is –, but he certainly thinks his character does: «Now I am alone.» (515). Because no one, for once, is spying on him, it is reasonable to think that Hamlet, in this soliloquy, is telling the truth (as far as he knows it). What does he say? He says he is sorry – if not guilty – not to be able to bring himself to show enough affliction for his loss: «Yet I, / A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak, / Like a John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, / And can say nothing;» (534-535). Again, the problem of silence, which I «hear» as an echo of what has just been explained about the actor's performance: He can pretend, he can represent sorrow, pain, and yet feel «nothing».

On one hand, then, a silent Hamlet, and on the other the deceitful actor. But the subtle formula, almost an equation indeed, has more to reveal. The contrast is clear: whereas the player has *no sorrow* but *is able* to give a good likeness of sorrow, Hamlet, who *mourns* his father, remains unable to show what he actually feels. So that what is also pointed out here – far beyond the opposition mentioned – is a correspondence: plainly, the first one *feels but cannot say*, while the other *can say but does not feel*. What we are told is that truth and appearances are antagonistic, as if silence were the condition of truth. Either, like the actor, one «shows» and remains «untrue», or one is true and has to remain silent. The theme of deceit now appears central to the play, and all the more so as the words which set the problem forth are pronounced in a play. I take this to be an

About empty speech, we can only marvel at Shakespeare's extraordinary insight: «How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered.» (205-208) The commentary he prompts to Polonius is indeed very «freudian»: a delirious mind still tells the truth, in its own way, as does the slip of the tongue, for instance.

We can also note the interesting «be delivered of».

¹¹ One can always argue, of course, that to kill oneself is a manner of action, but one has to admit that the prevailing mood of Hamlet's soliloquy is rather one of hesitation.

¹² «Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. Come then, th'appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players (which, I tell you, must show fairly outward) should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome; but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived. (349-354)

interrogation by Shakespeare on his own sincerity: can feelings so easily represented on the stage be genuine?

If truth cannot be told, what is it that is said on the stage? This is one of the questions put to us by *Hamlet*, and it is a question on the nature of unconscious desire. It takes us one step nearer to the prince's soliloquy on death, and to the solution of the problem of its strange place in the tragedy.

IV

Such is the logic «behind» the words that a common theme seems to run through all the characters' speeches. We have just witnessed Hamlet's decision to act, and Act Three opens on a scene where everybody is ready to go into action. Claudius again presses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to obtain more information from the prince (III,i,26-27) and rejoices at the opportunity offered by the coming performance – such an event might relieve the tensions felt at court up to then – and we are told there was a «kind of joy» in Hamlet at the idea.

In more ways than one, and very ironically so, all the traps have been laid. Hamlet will find out the truth about his father's murder, and Claudius himself is about to overhear the conversation between Ophelia and his nephew.¹³

The maiden is on her way – «Ophelia, Polonius says, walk you here» (43) –, and Hamlet is making his entry – «I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, My Lord.» (55).

And yet they do not meet, not for the moment, and we have the soliloquy on self-murder instead. The action has been suspended, Ophelia will have to wait in the wings for a while. She will only come on stage at the end of the soliloquy:

Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! (88-89)

Can we explain this interruption of the action? And can we explain why, just after having shown Hamlet so ready to act, Shakespeare describes him full of hesitation again?

I would like to suggest that it is the planned meeting with Ophelia, its symbolical dimension, which causes the delay. Shakespeare seems to have needed some respite. I read Hamlet's encounter with Ophelia as a rehearsal of the violent scene which takes place between Hamlet and the queen three scenes later, Act Three, scene v, when the son tries with great passion to convince his mother to stay away from Claudius.

QUEEN: O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET: O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night. But go not to my uncle's bed; (III,iv,157-160)

It is because such oedipal violence was so difficult to express directly, to assume also, that it took Shakespeare no less than two scenes to stage it, the first foreshadowing the second in a less obvious oedipal fashion. This is in any case the only way I have of understanding the terrible scene between Hamlet and Ophelia: «Get thee to a nunnery, go (...) Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad.

¹³ We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If't be th'affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for. (III,i,34-37)

I say, we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.» (III,i,137-148)¹⁴

Two distinct scenes, then, to unleash oedipal jealousy and anger, and before staging the first one an interruption to gather one's breath. And this all the more so as the scene with Ophelia has a triangular structure: Hamlet's encounter with her – who was once his love object – being watched by two fathers.

No doubt, the soliloquy may have been consciously devised to emphasize Hamlet's procrastination – to go into action or not –, but besides this first function, I think we can consider it as a parenthesis in the progression of the oedipal tragedy.

This may account for the conventional nature of the soliloquy. Can we at this point suppose that Shakespeare/Hamlet did not have anything new to say about suicide: a question on being, first, which is the only worth while question, but this is far from original, then the obvious analogy with sleep, and the commonplace interrogation about nightmares, followed by the insistence on our «dread of *something* after death», and finally, with more originality this time, on our absence of knowledge about this «undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns»?

So much for the parenthesis, the screen as it were; for we are going to see that such «empty speech», when considered from another angle nevertheless holds some meaning of its own. I think Hamlet's soliloquy expresses something other than the prince's hesitation in front of suicide, the «surface» of his speech protecting and revealing at the same time another «truth» of the subject. Beyond the conventionality we have noticed, some original meaning can yet be heard. For more than a discourse on self-murder, Shakespeare's soliloquy reveals a son in mourning.

A brief semantic analysis will easily show this: once we leave the general (to live, to die, to dream... all this pointing to the impossibility of a solution) and look for the particular, the personal, we notice an accumulation of features which have a narcissistic ring to them. Except for the first alternative – to suffer or oppose –, which by the way is swiftly swept aside in a movement that implies one will go on suffering in silence, «heartache», «flesh», already – and perhaps even «coil», although scholars do not agree on this – have something physical, while «the whips and scorns», «the oppressor's wrong», «the proud man's contumely» (humiliating speech or behaviour), «the pangs of despised love», «the laws delays», «the insolence of office» and «the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes» describe aggressions on the self (the latter term taken in its general sense). Such a concatenation of narcissistic wounds prompts the interpretation that Hamlet reflects, among other things, Shakespeare's own feelings in front of a personal loss, prince Hamlet being the accurate portrait of a bereaved son.¹⁵

And since part of mourning – besides the narcissistic pain – is often an interrogation on the sincerity of one's filial feelings, this might help us to understand the emphasis on deceit in the play.

¹⁴ It is true that Hamlet may suspect he is being secretly watched by Claudius, which partly explains his anger, genuine or put on, but it seems more can be heard beyond this first psychological «layer» and the reference to marriages is interesting. Note also the repetition of «no more», once for Ophelia, another for the queen.

¹⁵ Which cannot make us forget the ambiguity of the oedipal child's feelings, an ambiguity also present in the divided image of the father figure in the tragedy where we find a portrait of the *ideal* father (but dead) together with one of the real father (Claudius).

This ambiguity can be analyzed in the scene where Hamlet admonishes the queen and treats her as he has treated Ophelia earlier on. The scene superbly paints the son's jealous anger and oedipal violence, but what we have next is the figure of the (dead) father:

HAMLET: (to the Ghost) What would your gracious figure?

GHOST: Do not forget: this visitation

Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose. (III,iv, 104-112)

A first interpretation is correct in seeing in the theme of deceit a reference to treason, a reproach which, in *Hamlet*, is directed towards the mother of the oedipal son, *and also* secretly addressed to the person who has left us, here, the father. But a complementary interpretation is possible and concerns the playwrights's secret guilt at having written a play on the death of his father (or son?). Thus all the passages on the sincerity of actors take on an added meaning. All this, in any case, being part of «the work of mourning», *Trauerarbeit*.

This points to the oedipal structure of the play, but it also reveals the presence of the «Other» «in» the prince. The first act has shown how the son's destiny was shaped by an Other desire, and here again the ghost reminds the prince of his «duty», which I read as desire of the Other.

About mourning and suicide, we can also say that mourning entails a depressive state and not unfrequently *thoughts* of self murder.

Uncanny recursion in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

DAVID L. POLLARD (*)

Like psychoanalysis Shakespeare's «most potent» art turns essentially on replay. For instance, taken altogether, with the possible exception of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's plays draw on plots and narrative lines fashioned by previous writers. That makes them, of course, «nachträglich» (belated), connected inevitably in some symbiotic resemblance with the originals; and, in a sense that Nietzsche would recognize, this makes them offspring of the benign Eris, that is, contentious, possible replacements, for we know that the Renaissance literary world was very competitive. Moreover, within the plays themselves, to take an obvious example of repetition acted out, we observe certain of Shakespeare's fathers rehearsing their life's history to their children – this, with an eye to preserving and transmitting the authoritative version. Thus Henry IV instructs his truant son on how he rose to the crown and supplanted his predecessor; to his namesake Hamlet senior tells the lurid particulars of his own murder; and Prospero is not altogether successful in holding his daughter's attention as he recounts their joint past in Milan. In this way Shakespeare's vision is «conservative» in that it depicts the hunger of characters to safeguard past history, and indeed in some cases the deep personal need to remember, repeat, and try to work that history through in a remarkably Freudian fashion. Therefore, while Francis Ferguson argued long ago that *Macbeth* presents the imitation of an action which he describes as impetuous desire outrunning «the pauser, reason»,¹ in what follows I wish to make a somewhat different suggestion that with this play it is repetition itself that functions both as formal strategy and theme.

Any alert reader discerns, at least to some extent, that *Macbeth* is replete with echoes, parallelisms, and eerily familiar reduplications. For instance, when Macbeth enters (I. 3) saying, «So foul and fair a day I have not seen»,² we suspect rightly that a preternaturally contaminated echo caused

(*) Nazareth College, 4245 East Avenue, Rochester, N. Y. 14610, USA.

¹ Francis Ferguson, «Macbeth as the Imitation of an Action», (1949) reprinted in *Approaches to Shakespeare*, edited by Norman Rabkin (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 124.

² William Shakespeare, «Macbeth», reprinted in *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), p. 2567. All subsequent quotations from *Macbeth* are taken from this edition.

by the witches is in effect (I. 1): «Fair is foul and foul is fair.» And we notice the striking irony when at the outset Macbeth is startled to be greeted with the title of the very rebel just defeated in battle. Will he, the question becomes, now assume as well the latter's identity and project of revolt? At any rate, the possibility that such might be the case sets up audience expectation that *Macbeth* may be a play tightly populated with many «doubles».

Let me bring in Freud at this point. Generally speaking, Freud's thinking tends to be binary; yet, as Jonathan Culler's synopsis makes clear, its polarizations contain overlapping and interactive components:

Freud begins with a series of hierarchical oppositions: normal/pathological, sanity/insanity, real/imaginary, experience/dream, conscious/unconscious, life/death. In each case, the first term has been conceived as prior, a plenitude of which the second is a negation or complication. Situated on the margin of the first term, the second term designates an undesirable, dispensable deviation. Freud's investigations deconstruct these oppositions by identifying what is at stake in our desire to repress the second term and showing that in fact each first term can be seen as a special case of the fundamentals designated by the second term, which in this process is transformed. Understanding of the marginal deviant term becomes a condition of understanding the supposed prior term.³

We can see this process at work, for instance, in the doubling of God/Satan in Western religious thought. In «A Neurosis of Demonical Possession» (1923), Freud traces the psychological origins of religion back to a «splitting» («Spaltung») of the father-imago into «doubles»: God and the Devil are but transcendentalized, ambivalent copies of the same patriarchal figure. Freud makes his point thus: «If the benevolent and righteous God is a father-substitute, it is not to be wondered at that the hostile attitude, which leads to hate, fear and accusations against him, comes to expression in the figure of Satan... [Moreover] the fact that the figure of the primal father was that of a being with unlimited potentialities of evil, bearing much more resemblance to the Devil than to God, must have left an indelible stamp on all religions.»⁴ Accordingly, in the dyad, taking God to be the prior term, «benevolent» and «righteous», Satan becomes the «marginal deviant term» (in Culler's phrase) which encodes an expression of complicating and undesirable «potentialities of evil» already implicit in the first term. This naturally washes back into our understanding of that first term, thereby transforming its meaning, and disturbingly blurring the supposed opposition. This entire analysis, I think, can be applied analogously to much in Shakespearean characterology, and helps us at once to locate the dark theology at work in *Macbeth*, with its opposition of the witches against the vaguely defined, unseen «powers above», and their less than reassuring human representatives.

In his landmark work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud explores with breakaway daring his thoughts on the meaning for the life of the psyche of unexpected and particularly undesired repetition and recursion. The essay, «The Uncanny», is demonstrably a pendant to this book, for in both Freud is addressing the phenomena of behavioral reenactments which form anomalous challenges to the overriding pleasure principle. These reenactments may involve, or be occasioned by, the surprising and unwanted reappearances of persons, places, objects or events. The involuntariness of the recursion tends to induce in the subject a sensation of helplessness, in that he may feel himself in the grips of what Freud calls the «Wiederholungszwang»: the compulsion to repeat. And, as Freud asserts, «whatever reminds us of this inner repetition-compulsion is perceived as uncanny».⁵ Freud cites with approval the philosopher Schelling's statement:

³ Jonathan Culler, cited in Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 138.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, «A Neurosis of Demonical Possession», (1923), *Studies in Parapsychology*, edited by Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 105.

⁵ Freud, «The Uncanny», (1919), *Studies in Parapsychology*, p. 44.

«"Unheimliche" [uncanny] is the name for everything that ought to have remained... hidden and secret and has become visible.»⁶ In short, in psychoanalytic terms, the uncanny is unsettling because it bears an eerie resemblance to the return of the repressed: it is the «Wiederholung» of what one thought he had «surmounted» and left behind. Thus, in the example already given, the emergence of the Satan-figure out of the figure of God, retrieving primal fears and thereby reshaping response to the prior Being, must have been experienced by early man as uncanny. Freud analyzes E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale, «The Sandman», in which the hero alarmingly encounters again and again a figure who appears to be the diabolical «double» of his own father, from whose threat he perceives himself unable to escape. And famously, Freud tells of his own attempts, while vacationing in an Italian city, to flee from the red light district by various exits only to end up repeatedly in the same place.

One can demonstrate by incidents in the first act of *Macbeth* the presence of a heavy dramatic irony that amounts to Freud's uncanny. When Macbeth is hailed by the witches as the future king of Scotland, Banquo notices a visible change in his companion: «Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear/Things that do sound so fair?» (I. 3. 49-50) Shortly thereafter, Macbeth reveals in soliloquy that the prophecy has actually reactivated a «horrid image» of previously contemplated royal murder which his super ego has compelled him up to now to suppress. Thus what should have remained hidden has momentarily «become visible». Then there is perhaps the most ironic stage direction in all of Shakespeare. After ordering the execution of the traitorous thane of Cawdor, the saintly but naïve Duncan exclaims dejectedly: «There's no art/To find the mind's construction in the face. He was a gentleman on whom I built/An absolute trust.» (I. 4. 11-14) Treachery appears to have been survived and surmounted. However, the immediate stage direction reads: «Enter *Macbeth*» – the spooky appearance of a new thane of Cawdor, only this avatar is potentially even more threatening to the king. Then, after Lady Macbeth reads the letter in which her husband discloses the witches' prophecies and she has declared to herself the intention to spur him on to the nearest way to the crown, she greets an arriving servant: «What is your tidings?» «SERVANT: The king comes here tonight!» Unguardedly Lady Macbeth blurts out: «Thou'rt mad to say it.» It would seem that Lady Macbeth jumps to the conclusion that her hidden wish has been fulfilled and that Macbeth is already king. But repressing this response, she recovers her composure: «Is not thy master with him...?» (I. 5. 28-30) Finally, when he breaks forth abruptly from the banquet honoring Duncan, Macbeth begins his meditation: «If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly.» (I. 3. 1-2) We hear the triple repetition of «done». But also we may hear what Macbeth perhaps does not, namely the echo of what Jesus said to Judas at the Last Supper. According to the gospel of John: «And after the sop Satan entered him [Judas]. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.» (John, xiii. 27) In contemplating the murder of his sovereign, Macbeth's words call attention to the momentousness of his choice and uncannily align him with sacred history's most damnable betrayer. By these means, as a consequence, the play suggests that the highly honored Macbeths will become in reality Scotland's scariest «marginal deviant term».

Since it is my intention to stress how the organization of *Macbeth* hangs on patterned repetitions of three and two, I wish to quote the opening scene of Shakespeare's play for its symptomatic value:

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING. ENTER THREE WITCHES

FIRST WITCH When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH When the hurly-burly's done,

When the battle's lost and won.

⁶ Freud, «The Uncanny», p. 27.

THIRD WITCH That will be ere the set of sun.
 FIRST WITCH Where the place?
 SECOND WITCH Upon the heath.
 THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.
 FIRST WITCH I come, Grimalkin.
 SECOND WITCH Paddock calls.
 THIRD WITCH Anon.
 ALL Fair is foul and foul is fair,
 Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Here I take note of how the first stage direction indicates two features of the stormy weather, while the witches appear of course as a group of three. The dialogue itself unfolds with each of the three witches speaking in turn and, altogether, in triplicate (three squared forming nine exchanges), followed by a concluding rhymed couplet. Three weather options are mentioned («thunder, lightning, or in rain»); the conjunction «when» is used three times: and there are three proper names invoked: Grimalkin, Paddock, and Macbeth. As the first two are devils in the guise of witches' familiars, a disturbing connection between the demonic world and the title character is immediately hinted at. Moreover, we hear the ambiguously contrastive pairings «lost and won», and «fair» and «foul», and even the echoic jingling of «hurly-burly». As we learn shortly, the witches appear to be women who nevertheless have beards, which strangely could have been real, since in the Jacobean theater these parts were played by men. Hence we begin by beholding a vision of anamorphic confusion between the two sexes, blended to make an unnerving third.

In Act I, Scene 3, in their incantation just before the entrance of Macbeth the witches create their spell:

The weird sisters hand in hand,
 Posters of the sea and land,
 Thus do go about, about,
 Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
 And thrice again to make up nine.
 Peace! The charm's wound up. (I.3. 30-35)

With these words the witches put, as it were, a hex on the play's entire mimesis: its main characters, and their actions and words. We are given seriatim three Scottish kings: the aged Duncan; Macbeth in the prime of manhood; and Duncan's son and rightful heir, the «boy» Malcolm. Looked at another way, we get two saintly kings: the «meek» Duncan and «gracious England» (Edward the Confessor) with his healing touch; and by way of homiletic contrast these drive home the villainy of «devilish» Macbeth.

There are, furthermore, three embodiments of the feminine. The three witches, demonically malevolent, with their familiars demanding suckle, are starkly differentiated from the dutiful and maternal Lady Macduff with her babes. Lady Macbeth stands in the middle, an astonishing amalgam of these two extremes of womanhood – one who says she has given suck, and yet oddly has no children. In addition, the major action of the drama is comprised of three murders which bear certain resemblances to each other. Duncan is killed, yet Malcolm (with brother Donalbain) manages his escape. Next Macbeth plots the slaying of Banquo with two anonymous murderers. Mysteriously these two are joined by a third when father Banquo is fatally attacked on the highway. Nevertheless, in the dark son Fleance gets away. And when Lady Macduff is surprised and slaughtered, it happens that her husband has already fled to England. All three of the surviving figures, Malcolm, Fleance, and Macduff, are destined to assume essential roles in the ultimate destruction of Macbeth and his dynastic dream. After the first and most momentous murder, the unearthly silence of the night is interrupted by a violent knocking at the gate (II. 3). Aroused from

his sleep the porter greets the knocking with sarcastic mockery: «knock, knock, knock.» The porter playfully imagines that he is at the gates of hell and that those seeking entry are three unredeemed sinners: a farmer, an equivocator, and an English tailor. The identity of each figure sheds oblique light on Macbeth and his spiritual condition. And finally, driven by a desire for more knowledge of a future that he is desperate to control, Macbeth returns to the witches. Here he receives the seemingly «sweet bodements» of three apparitions: the armed head, the bloody child, and the child crowned, with a tree in his hand.

In Shakespeare's play repetition in triplicate extends to many cases of words, epithets, and phrases. For example, after the royal murder, Macbeth tries to explain to his wife the voice he heard in Duncan's chamber. It echoes the repressed conscience of this most reluctant of assassins with the warning: «'Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more.'» (II. 2. 40-41) Henceforth the usurper is tormented with insomnia, coming even to envy the dead Duncan («After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.»). Macbeth later tells Lady Macbeth how murder will out, so to speak: «magpies and choughs and rooks [have] brought forth the secret'st man of blood.» When Macbeth returns to the witches, he addresses them, «How now, you secret, black and midnight hags, /What is't you do?» And by act five we see the desperate Macbeth, reduced to exhaustion by repeated attempts to «feel the future in the instant», aware that he has utterly scrambled history's natural sequence:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time... (V. 5. 18-20)

Lady Macbeth as well expresses herself in verbal patterns of three. Two examples will suffice. After receiving the letter which informs her of the witches' prophecy, to fortify her resolve, Lady Macbeth invokes preternatural aid from the same sources identified with the witches: «Come, you spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts... Come... you murd'ring ministers... Come, thick night...» (I. 5. 38-48) Uncannily she gets her wish. Thus the last time we see her, we behold her sleepwalking, now diabolically possessed and witch-like, remembering, repeating nightmarishly, though hardly working through the experiences attendant on Duncan's murder: «Out, damned spot; out, I say. One, two... Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?... To bed, to bed, to bed.» (V. 1. 30 and 58)

It has been said that *Macbeth* demonstrates «the passion of Shakespeare for the antithetical»⁷ It does. On the other hand, many of the play's antitheses turn out to be only apparent, and, on nearer view, often collapse, blur, or dissolve into versions of the same person or event. After defeating the enemies of the state, the thane of Cawdor and the merciless Macdonald, Macbeth evolves, of course, into their exact replica. In the end he must face a second pair of adversaries, this time young Siward and Macduff. And there is Macbeth's ultimate fate. Of dismemberment Freud observes: «Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist... all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them...»⁸ We get precisely this effect, when history repeats itself and the decapitation of Macdonald is visually restated in the last scene. The bare stage direction reads: «Enter MACDUFF with Macbeth's head.» Furthermore, while he is coupled with Macbeth as captains to king Duncan, the one prudent and hesitant, the other driven and rash, Banquo realizes his place in the recursive design of the play in his being linked with Macduff. Banquo embodies the virtues of patriotism and loyal service, as does Macduff. Both oppose evil despite their fearful «naked frailties». Banquo is prominent in the first half of the play until his elimination; held in reserve, as it were, Macduff achieves his authoritative presence only in the

⁷ John Jay Chapman, «The Juxtaposition of Opposites in *Macbeth*», *Readings on the Tragedies of William Shakespeare* (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1996), p. 149.

⁸ Freud, «The Uncanny», pp. 49-50.

second half when he returns to wreak vengeance on the murderer of his family. The destinies of both, moreover, are tied to the issue of propagation and childhood. Though not royal himself, Banquo is strangely prophesied to be the father of kings; Macduff fulfils one of the witches' prophecies by announcing himself to be the bloody babe untimely ripped from his mother's womb. Finally both make startling reappearances; Banquo's ghost, seen only by Macbeth, keeps his word to be in attendance and grotesquely takes his seat at the evening's banquet: «Thou canst not say I did it... Hence, horrible shadow/Unreal mockery, hence,» shudders Macbeth at this uncanny return of the repressed. And to the shock of Macbeth, wronged Macduff is one of those untried soldiers who steps out from the moving grove of Birnham Wood.

The moving grove itself is meant to conceal another double, two nations now coming to bear a resemblance to each other through the engagement in a joint venture. *Macbeth* was first performed as an entertainment for James VI of Scotland, now James I of England, with an audience composed of mixed Scottish and English courtiers. Shakespeare appears to be suggesting to this audience that the tragic reign of Macbeth had one salutary and prophetic result. It occasioned the anglicization of medieval Scotland. In the witches' masque-like pageant, Macbeth is vexed by the vision of a future that terminates in a line of kings carrying «twofold balls and treble sceptres», emblems of a united kingdom. Thus the «leafy screens» of Birnham wood, while meant by Malcolm for a military stratagem, furnish a stage tableau of undifferentiated unity in that they hide an army of combined Scottish and English troops making common cause against the tyrant. When the victorious Malcolm assumes his royal patrimony, therefore, his first decree is to complete the process of anglicization: «Thanes and kinsmen,/ Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland/ In such an honor named.» (V. 11. 28-30) With this gesture the audience sees Scotland in effect under erasure as it dissolves uncannily into England.

Dr. Johnson pointed out that *Macbeth* has «no nice discriminations of character, the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions...»⁹ Indeed the play is crowded with many anonymous figures and many others of whom we know but little. In his previous tragedies Shakespeare had challenged his protagonists with capable and dangerous «mighty opposite[s]», such as Claudius and Iago. Here the dramatist's concern is to portray the survival of a kingdom from the depredations of an enemy with-in. Therefore it serves his purpose to mute the tones of personality in order to suggest that here the worthy foe is an entire country, Scotland, represented by less than heroic humanity. As a result we get only two riveting characters, Macbeth and his wife. In strict Jeckel-and-Hyde fashion, Macbeth is his own double. His reputation as «Bellona's bridegroom», «brave» and «valiant», but «filled with the milk of human kindness», precedes him. But a shadow self emerges almost at once and Macbeth metamorphoses, first hesitantly and then precipitously, into his own «mighty opposite». However, that is only the entrance to the play's corridor of crazy mirrors. To continue, the historical Lady Macbeth bore a separate name – it was Gruach – but Shakespeare has reason to suppress that piece of her identity. A. C. Bradley, in his epoch-making book, maintained that the royal couple form a study in «egoisme-a-deux», with Lady Macbeth characterized as ambitious, but only on behalf of her husband.¹⁰ Along these lines, Freud's statement bears full quotation. Freud agrees with Ludwig Jekels:

[who] believes that Shakespeare oftens splits a character up into two personages, which taken separately, are not completely understandable and do not become so until they are brought together once more into a unity.

[In the case of the Macbeths] it would be pointless to regard her as an independent character and seek the motives for her change, without considering the Macbeth who

⁹ Dr. Samuel Johnson, «Macbeth», *William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth*, edited by Sylvan Barnet (New York: New American Library, 1963). p. 165.

¹⁰ A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) (reprinted: New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 278.

completes her... I should... like to point out something which strikingly confirms this view: the the germs of fear which break out in Macbeth on the night of the murder do not develop further in him but in her.¹¹

In other words, Macbeth and his «dearest partner of greatness» may also be read as doubles, whose actions serve to bring out in each other that which should be surmounted or at least kept hidden. Each is the other's marginal deviant term. Much has been written of late, most tellingly by Coppelia Kahn and Janet Adelman, about the question of gender conflation and confusion in *Macbeth*. I wish only to propose that Shakespeare's characters are in fact not two, but one, forming a composite study in an elided identity, whose inner conflicts and responses are for the sake of dramatization divided along gender lines. And I would adduce, as evidence of this shared psychic oneness, their mutual experience of hallucination. Freud makes the following claim:

...an uncanny effect is often easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes...¹²

In this connection, Freud does not mention, but indeed could, the apparition of Macbeth's «dagger of the mind» which projects into the air desires best kept in the depths of the soul. This psychic event adumbrates the wildly revealing utterances of sleepwalking Lady Macbeth, now locked in the past, that retrieve and replay buried memories and emotions: «Hell is murky.» «This disease is beyond my practice», mutters the physician who is as astonished as we are by this most uncanny spectacle.

Macbeth abounds in references to the number two, and contains many verbal and grammatical parallelisms which serve to reinforce, albeit largely subliminally, the illusion of doubleness. For instance, Macdonald's army is exotic – «from the Western Isles/ of kerns and gallowglasses is [it] supplied». (I. 2. 12-13) In the witches' first prophecy, Macbeth hears omens for hope: «Two truths are told/As happy prologues to the swelling act/ Of the imperial theme...» (I. 3. 126-28) This leads Macbeth perforce to want to hide «his deep and black desires». And Lady Macbeth joins her husband in duplicity with her offer of hospitality to Duncan: «All our service/ In every point twice done, and then done double» (I. 6. 14-15) would be insufficient homage, she says. That night the two chamberlains are drugged to facilitate the treachery, that in turn results for Macbeth in the end of sleep, «great nature's second course». And for Scotland a time of misery. «Bleed, bleed, poor country», laments Macduff, «O Scotland, Scotland...» (IV. 3. 32 and 101) And so it goes throughout the play, until Birnham Wood deviates unnaturally to its second venue at Dunsinane, and the second set of witches' prophecies is fulfilled in the reductively literal outcomes that so infuriate Macbeth. In the background, overseeing and possibly instigating the action in mysterious fashion are the incantations of the witches, mixing combinations of two and three:

Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble...
Round, around, around, about, about,
All ill come running in, all good keep out.
(IV. 1. 35-35. 49-50)

To conclude: I have made my analysis of *Macbeth* deliberately schematic because I wanted to highlight the austere repetitive nature of its articulation and to hint at its somber thematic

¹¹ Freud, «Some Character-types met with in Psychoanalytic Work», (1916), reprinted in *Sigmund Freud: Art and Literature*, edited by Albert Dickson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 307.

¹² Freud, «The Uncanny», p. 50.

concerns. Freud tells us that «[o]rder is itself a kind of compulsion to repeat»¹³, and Shakespeare's play seems to me in the grips of a manic drive, to restore what Malcolm calls «measure, time, and place». (V. 11. 39) To suggest movement towards that condition, Shakespeare has recourse to shifting strategies of mimesis. The first half of the play dramatizes the excitement of war and its politically and psychologically riveting aftermath. The second half, to a large extent, gives way to a less breathtaking, more narrative style (one thinks of the lengthy English court scene) that culminates in a battle in which «little is to do». In other words, the energies of *Macbeth* are entropic, and tend to run down even as do those of the title character. Macbeth grows weary; and in part due to all the repetition in the play, we too grow weary of both him and his world. In addition, the compulsion to repeat, speculates Freud, expresses an unconscious longing for the stasis of extinction; and we can read Macbeth's course of action as finally only lighting a fool his particular way to «dusty death». As early as act one, scene two, Shakespeare makes «Macbeth» rhyme with «death». And yet that may not be the final word. Interestingly in his 1971 film, Roman Polanski was on to something perhaps implicit, though not presented, in this play. To Shakespeare's ending, which seems to achieve resolution and completeness, Polanski appends the return of Donalbain, the forgotten brother of the new king. We get a glimpse of the determined Donalbain on his way to consult with the witches. «It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood», (III. 4. 121) is the future Macbeth had dimly envisioned for Scotland. Polanski's point is obvious: history's players may change, but the recursive patterns in their behavior do not. But then, from the gruesome murder of Henry VI to the bizarre demise of Hamlet senior, the plays show Shakespeare's own compulsion to bring onto the stage again and again anamorphic reenactments of the same political trauma. Polanski's metaphysics, therefore, may be a bit darker than that of his mighty source, but not, I think, by much.

¹³ Freud, «Civilization and its Discontents», (1930), *The Freud Reader*, edited by Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 739.

Strategic foundationalism and the discourse of difference

TAMISE VAN PELT ()*

There was no doubt about it. In the 80s it was wrong to essentialize, wrong to look for any quality that might inhere somehow IN a group or category, wrong to search out the generic and put a name to it, wrong to make a claim about a group – It was Orientalist to speak of «the Chinese mind» – It was naïve to write about «Women’s Experience». The 80s was a decade of diffusion and anti-essentialism was its watchword. What anti-essentialism did for ontology, anti-foundationalism did for epistemology. Nothing could be known in advance. No standards of excellence could be formulated. There was no greatness in great works of art. Greatness was an accident of history; value was contingent. Hawthorne knew the right people, published in the right places.

In practice, the anti-essentialist impulse, carried to an extreme, turned out to be politically debilitating. Coalition building was difficult when each and every individual was taken as a distinct instance. As a result, feminist writers like de Lauretis, Spivak, and Fuss recanted, saying that while essentialism was still by and large an unacceptable intellectual practice, one could be «strategically essential» in the service of a politics of identity. Where «the black experience» once existed, «people of color» were born.

No such strategizing has rescued foundationalism from the dustbin of theoretical history, however, and historical specificity still rules as the tactic of choice for analysts interested in combatting History with a capital H. While I don’t want to argue here for a return to foundationalism as an intellectual practice, I do want to echo for foundationalism Fuss’s argument regarding essentialism: foundationalism, like essentialism, won’t go away just because we want it to.

Since theorists have embraced Lacanian analysis as an ally in the anti-essentialist cause, and since Fuss devotes a lengthy discussion to Lacan as an exemplar of the social constructionist position so closely allied with the move toward social and historical specificity, I will use a Lacanian analysis of the historically specific ur-apartheid years in the newly founded South Africa to illustrate the many ways in which foundational assumptions cling to history’s observers. Specificity alone, it seems, does not undo foundational assumptions – in this case foundational assumptions about racial difference – but rather gives foundational racism a local habitation.

(*) Idaho State University, Department of English, Campus Box 8056, Pocatello, ID 83209-8056, USA.

In the late 1920s, South African authorities forbade the entry of Blacks into certain skilled professions, legally bisecting the possibilities for economic and social development into strictly racial categories and laying the groundwork for apartheid. At that same time, articles and advertisements in that most venerable of publications, the *National Geographic*, touted the South African nation as one of the most «modern and progressive» sections of the world where the American tourist could play «delightful golf» and travel on «superb motor roads», could enjoy «all the comforts and conveniences of modern civilization». Such a tourist was invited to witness the «wild war dances» and «weird age-old tribal customs» of the «dignified Zulu chief and his retinue of dusky wives». Such a tourist could even see the «superstitious mummery of the witch doctor» whose image exoticized a 1929 travel advertisement (Native 662).

From 1920-1930, the marketing of South African difference for voyeuristic pleasure and tourist consumption was supported by a discourse of difference, a discourse whose foundation was a series of differences sutured to a master binary of white and black. *National Geographic* articulated this discourse of difference throughout the decade when the laws effecting the real separation of white from black were passed. The foundational discourse of difference in the symbolic was reinforced by a cultural imaginary of white entitlement so that the cultural work of exploitation could be done. The disjunction between foundational epistemic difference and cultural phenomena that Lacan characterizes as the disjunction between the symbolic and imaginary registers shows how two seemingly contradictory positions on oppression – the everywhere of exploitative exoticization and the nowhere of real exclusion – in fact work together. The hypervisible Africanism of «stalwart warriors» in «fantastic headdress» necessarily coexists with the invisibility of brutal economic foreclosure. Consequently, the tourist of the 1920s who identified South Africa as «land of charm, contrast, mystery», inevitably became an accidental colonist, ally of the dawning of apartheid. Even the armchair tourist who merely «read» the *National Geographic* photographs explicitly constructing black/white racial difference consumed a discourse of colonialist difference that celebrated white superiority.

In a stereotypically racist full page picture, a smiling black man dressed in overalls holds a large slice of watermelon. As part of a *National Geographic* pictorial alleging to reveal «emotions around the world», the picture calls itself «AN AFRICAN AFFINITY». The picture's caption, a pseudo-quotation, says «The only trouble about watermelon is that it gets in one's ears» (Graves, Plate XIII 297). This ironically American image deploys the common colonialist construction of blacks as essentially childlike, unintelligent, and incompetent. Together, image and caption seem to stand alone as an independent statement, a pseudo-celebration of Africanism in-and-for-itself. However, the image does not appear alone; instead, it forms half of a symbolic difference since it faces its signifying opposite, an image of two white men, their faces and hair dusted with white snow, buried to their shoulders behind a white snow barricade. The picture's title, «SNOW BIRDS», reinforces its whiteness, though no reinforcement seems necessary. The picture's caption takes great pains to detail the virility and superiority of its subjects: «These Yosemite National Park Rangers, who almost alone are privileged to enjoy the wintry beauties of this great preserve, must have their fun, and this time it is posing for the photographer after a battle in the snow. Their faces register the full enjoyment of extreme good health» (Graves, Plate XII 296).

Similar assimilations of blackness as the ground for the white pictorial world of the *National Geographic* suggest that blackness – though putting in an appearance – does not and can not exist. The white imaginary, that is to say... the white ontology of being and not being... defines only the white and the not-white and invites a mirroring consumption of essential whiteness by other whiteness. What Lacan argues for Woman in another context, and what Fanon argues for blackness in *Black Skin, White Masks* apply equally to the non-existence of Blackness here in the *Geographic's* representations.

Though blackness does not figure, blackness does signify. Consequently, the photograph of the African affinity in opposition to the snow birds participates in the *foundational* difference upon which the whole edifice of colonial structure rests; *The National Geographic* – both in words and in images – strategically disseminates this foundational white/black difference throughout the decade in which South Africa legislates it and the *Geographic's* readers consume it.

When white and black share the frame, the signifying oppositions come clear, and early on in the 20s, it is the British who produce the images the Americans later take up and deploy. In one typical depiction of colonialism's racial foundations, the Royal Navy's Frank Magee poses with his expedition's mascot, an African «pickaninny», literalizing the colonialist stereotype of black as child. Magee's 1922 article, «Transporting a Navy through the Jungles of Africa in War Time», does assimilate the Africans who aided in his defeat of the Germans on Lake Tanganyika to his military imaginary, attributing to them both courage and loyalty. His primary agenda is clearly to celebrate the victory of engineering and modern transport over the jungle land itself however. Consequently, in Magee's narrative, force and technology signify in precisely those modern terms applied to the historical moment when the conquest of Africa by weaponry gives way to the conquest of Africa by automobile. Indeed, the modern motor road's allure for the tourist depends on the sense of driving as conquest created by such articles as «Through the Deserts and Jungles of Africa by Motor» (June 1926) and «The Conquest of the Sahara by the Automobile» (January 1924).

So powerful is white identification with technology that the auto or the airplane can stand in for the white man himself, and so powerfully established is the signifying difference of black from white that white can be deleted from the frame altogether. What remains is the foundational visual trope of white superiority – depicted in a picture like the one entitled «WHEN THEIR FIRST AEROPLANE WAS SIGHTED». The caption repeats what the image portrays: «Spell-bound, gazing upward with arms extended, eyes bulging, and mouth agape, panic-stricken natives first believed the aeroplane a new kind of bird monster swooping from the sky to destroy them. But when their fear was overcome, they clustered around the machine and referred to the pilot as “the Great White Chief from Heaven”». The caption's insistence on white technical superiority and black awe in the face of it reiterates a continual theme in the discourse of difference throughout the 1920s.

Since symbolic differences alone can not insure the white dominance they deploy via foundational contrast, writers throughout the 1920s court the white imagination, encouraging reader identification with the courage of Africa's explorers. Thus, adventurer Felix Shay is portrayed fully clothed and standing on a riverbank watching his retinue of unclad «savages» bathe in a pond. Shay's article «Cairo to Cape Town, Overland, An Adventurous Journey of 135 Days, Made by an American Man and His Wife, Through the Length of the African Continent» constitutes the whole text of *The National Geographic Magazine* for February 1925. Shay, like the Geographic's British writers, repeats the trope of the childlike African (158; 213; 215) adding a stereotype of black laziness fit for a Reagan-era campaign against welfare cheats: «No one yet has devised a plan for making the native Africans work. They seem to wish for nothing that is not free and under their hands. They wear practically no clothing, live in grass and mud huts, and find amusement in having children...» (141-2; see also 182).

Since blacks all look alike to Shay, «it is no easy task to pick four slightly ones from a group of nearly naked savages» (211). But the idea of the «savage» ironically undercuts itself in Shay's constructions of «savage gentlemen» (226) or «savage morale» (226), or «these savage boys were gentle, kindly, and invariably in excellent humor» (215). Here, the reversability inherent in the symbolic order threatens to upset Shay's discourse of white civility, revealing why foundational differences must be strategically reiterated and why the imaginary reinforcement of the discourse of difference is crucial.

Black «savagery» provides the imagination with a dark ground against which white civility figures itself, and the not-black man inhabits a not-Africa. Shay praises a British major who gives «a splendid example of how the Britisher uphold civilization in the jungle» via his «linen and silver and fine glassware, well-cooked food, and excellent service» such that «one might have been dining in London» (233). In not-Africa, the white man must enact the white experience, must «show the natives how the white man lives when he is at home» (237). Little wonder, then, that «the native chiefs... invariably... wore some white man's cast-off garment» (223) or that the chiefs of the native villages through which the Shays trekked «wanted to shake hands with a white man» even though «Shaking hands is distinctly a white man's custom» (219). These forms of white drag constitute the ONLY ontological option when whiteness dominates the imaginary of face to face encounter.

Readers of the *Geographic* desirous of following in the footsteps of the adventurous Shays had the encouragement of the South Africa Travel Bureau whose ad deploys the same white master/black servant foundational difference depicted by Mrs. Porter Shay's conveyance. The picture of Porter Shay sitting jauntily astride the shoulders of one bearer while propped up on either side by two others is daringly entitled «How Mrs. Shay crosses a crocodile-infested stream». Mrs. Shay's husband defends this marriage of difference with entitlement by orientaling any association of service with slavery. Thus, he writes that the Arabs «used the continent as a reservoir from which to draw slaves» (132), that «The Arab, hunting slaves, was cruel and heartless, separat[ing] families», that «the Arabs had well-marked slave trails through this country for a thousand years before the white European adventurers arrived» (230), and, in fact that «these flagrant [Arab] slave raids brought Livingstone to Ujiji... and Stanley ultimately to find Livingstone» (233). Service seems a small debt to pay to the White adventurer who has rescued Africa from the cruel Arab slavers.

The discourse of difference reaches a crescendo in Melville Chater's «Under the South African Union», which constitutes the whole of the April 1931 edition of the *Geographic*. The issue, though claiming to outline Chater's tour of the many [states] of the new South African Union, continually depicts white consumption of difference as entitlement. Chater draws on all of the foundational differences articulated throughout the previous decade: white/black; technical/natural; civilized/savage; hard working/lazy; intelligent/dull; and master/servant. The black bearers who conveyed the courageous river-fording Mrs. Porter Shay here metamorphose into the Zulu rickshaw boy, his civilized for-hire savagery symbolically fixed by the 1922 Apprenticeship Act [enabling whites to exclude Africans from skilled jobs (19)], the 1924 “civilized labour” policy [preventing black wages from undercutting white] and by the legislation collectively known as the Masters and Servants Laws (Lipton 20). If these ur-apartheid laws insured the exotic rickshaw boy's availability, Chater's journalistic mirrorings place his white readers in the rickshaw-rider's seat – alongside a colorful row of parasol-carrying flappers.

Though suggesting the likeness of what readers do not know to that with which they are familiar is standard journalistic practice, Chater's imaginary mirrorings slip from innocuous geographic parallels to outright racism without discernible change of tone. Thus Chater courts white American reader identification, writing that «Kimberley-town itself is as simple and homelike a place as you'd find in the suburban area of some American city» (424) and that Free Staters say that Kansas resembles their province (444). Moving on to historical comparisons, he includes a picture whose caption suggests that South Africa's «FIRST SETTLERS WERE BLOOD BROTHERS OF MANHATTAN'S FOUNDERS» (395). Chater boasts that «although boer means “farmer”, that word hardly describes the virile hunters and cowboys who went forth to what, in a sense, corresponded with America's “winning of the West”». Tapping a distinctly American imaginary, Chater urges: «Picture the long line of covered wagons rolling across the veld. It is a companion piece to that of the American pioneers' trek, a decade later, over the Oregon Trail» (434). Chater also constructs Dick King, «The intrepid messenger who saved the country» during its pitched battles for racial supremacy, as being «to South African children what Paul Revere is to American youngsters» (468). In yet another mirroring, Chater translates South Africa's legal residential separation of the races into a Plessy V. Ferguson-esque foundational distinction where separate is more than equal since «... for the Bantu tribes... there was reserved one of South Africa's loveliest corners, when those various native areas were consolidated under Cape Colony's government» (412).

Of all the *Geographic* writers on Africa during the decade, Chater's immersion in his imaginary mirrorings – his slippage from geographer to historian to white racist – best illustrates why the American «tourist» becomes the accidental colonist; why as a third party, the reader brings no third perspective to disrupt South Africa's discourse of difference; why, in the foundational mathematics of oppression, two plus one equals two.

An Oedipal addition would threaten the foundational binary, would turn the binary into a combinatory from which a multiplicity of alternative social positions could be constructed. Since the third is not a possibility, the maximum threat to the discourse of difference underwriting white entitle-

ment comes from white failure. When Chater's foray over the veldt discovers a «forlorn scene» of «dismal shacks, where some frowzy men and women and a plethora of dull-faced children lounged in the sunshine» he rescues his foundations: «Yet they were whites, or, rather, “poor white,” representing a South African aspect of that retrogressive type which is found in many lands.» When this relativising of whiteness seems inadequate to explain «so formidable a number as 120,000 to 150,000» poor whites, Chater explicitly reveals the worm in the bud of white privilege. White deterioration has sprung from the gifts of «5,000-acre tracts apiece [which] permitted later comers to squat and hunt. That too-easeful existence, based on slave help and game aplenty» has led to degeneration (440-1). At this moment when white oppression rather than white superiority threatens to emerge, Chater brings back foundational blackness. In a stunning constructivist move, Chater solves the problem of white inferiority by blackening poor whites. In a concluding conversation with one poor white squatter, Chater asks «what did you do when you came to the Kalahari?» and the squatter who «seemed to swallow half his words and cud-chew the rest...[replies] “I-m-m-m-oh, I just swam it” (441)» Chater revises: «he seemed about to ask, like the American “black-face” comedian, “Er, whah bring that up?”» (441), strategically aligning the white squatter with a Bantu bead stringer Chater had asked to «make the beads talk American? Something, say, like, “Ah love muh baby lots’ he’s my bank-roll babe; got de weeps, Ah have; Ah love him so-o-o!”» (418). Blackness – constructed by whites for white entertainment – rescues the foundation.

This necessary blackening of white inferiority accompanies the denial of examples of black skill which evade the legal barriers holding black skill under erasure. Chater thus diminishes Big Black Johannes, a snake handler of some reknown, by writing that «As many as 2,000 reptilian residents at a time have been chaperoned in the park by big, black, snakeskin-bedecked Johannes, who will toy with 11-foot pythons or extract puff-adder venom while you wait». Yet Chater concludes: «I imagine that the only time Johannes really hated snakes was when, having marvelously escaped death by a puff-adder's fangs, he was fined ten shillings for his carelessness in being bitten» (410).

Here, Chater, inadvertently reveals the legal basis for the racial difference whose foundations he has so persistently asserted. It is a legal structure with which Chater is fully complicit, and the evidence of Chater's complicity is delivered by his own hand. In the South African government's 1929 travel advertisement and again in Chater's ostensibly objective 1931 South African travelogue, one photographic image recurs. The pictures constitute two photos from a sequence in which a witch doctor treats his less than enthusiastic patient. Together the images make clear the complicity of travel ad with travelogue – exposing the politics founding difference and framing the mirroring lures to white identification. In the end, if Chater's report on the moment of South African emergence has a contemporary theoretical moral, that moral may just be that historical specificity in and of itself is no necessary antidote to foundationalism.

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Claude Cahun: How to change the real

NANCY BLAKE (*)

Perhaps the first surprise awaiting us upon discovery of the work of Claude Cahun is that one of the few women to participate wholly in the surrealist movement, producing poetry, prose, and visual art in the form of *objets trouvés*, *collage*, *montage* and most importantly photography, should have remained unknown until very recently.¹ A further surprise awaits some viewers upon discovering a vision that is neither feminist nor anti-feminist. Claude Cahun's work demonstrates something that is worth retaining as a possible axiom: the principal struggle of a woman is the battle against femininity, the figure of the Other as woman, and not with man or with the ideals that masculine representations supposedly impose. The war of the sexes is not a war, and is not fought between men and women but between a woman and womanhood.

Before confronting the question of femininity as it is posed by the work of Claude Cahun, we should pause for a moment to consider the oblivion into which her existence has fallen. The research of Francois Leperlier seems to indicate that the obscurity which surrounds her production was the result of the artist's own efforts. Claude Cahun did not only aim at ambiguity regarding her gender and identity, at times she seems to have pursued invisibility. «Lost in the invisible, all of you – the non-believers – you will transpierce my breast, without wounding yourselves, without even knowing it.» («Insensé», *Le Plateau*, 1929.)

Because of time constraints, I will not explore the quotation as it deserves, suffice it to note the violence of the image of the transpiercing of the breast, coupled with the indifferenciation of active and passive, agent and victim: «you will transpierce my breast, without wounding yourselves...». Born in France, educated in England, Claude Cahun maintained a bilingual existence throughout life. Jewish and homosexual, she was active in the Surrealist movement, admiring and championing its Pope André Breton, a homophobe often accused of severe *Maschisme*.

(*) University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Program in Comparative Literature, 2070 Foreign Languages Building, 707 South Mathews Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801, USA.

¹ Among the handful of women whose names appear as signatures on the numerous surrealist tracts between 1925 and 1940, including Renée Gauthier, Simone Kahn, Gala Éluard, Lise Deharme, Nancy Cunard, Meret Oppenheim, Collette Peignot, Valentine Hugo, Nush Éluard, Dora Maar, Lee Miller, Jacqueline Lamba, Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, Claude Cahun is perhaps the most consistently surrealist in her convictions.

Beginning by introducing the artistic production of Claude Cahun as structured around a vacillating identity, we will perhaps not be surprised by the prevalence of selfportrait in her oeuvre. (Figures 1-4)

FIGURE 1
Claude Cahun, autoportrait, c. 1929

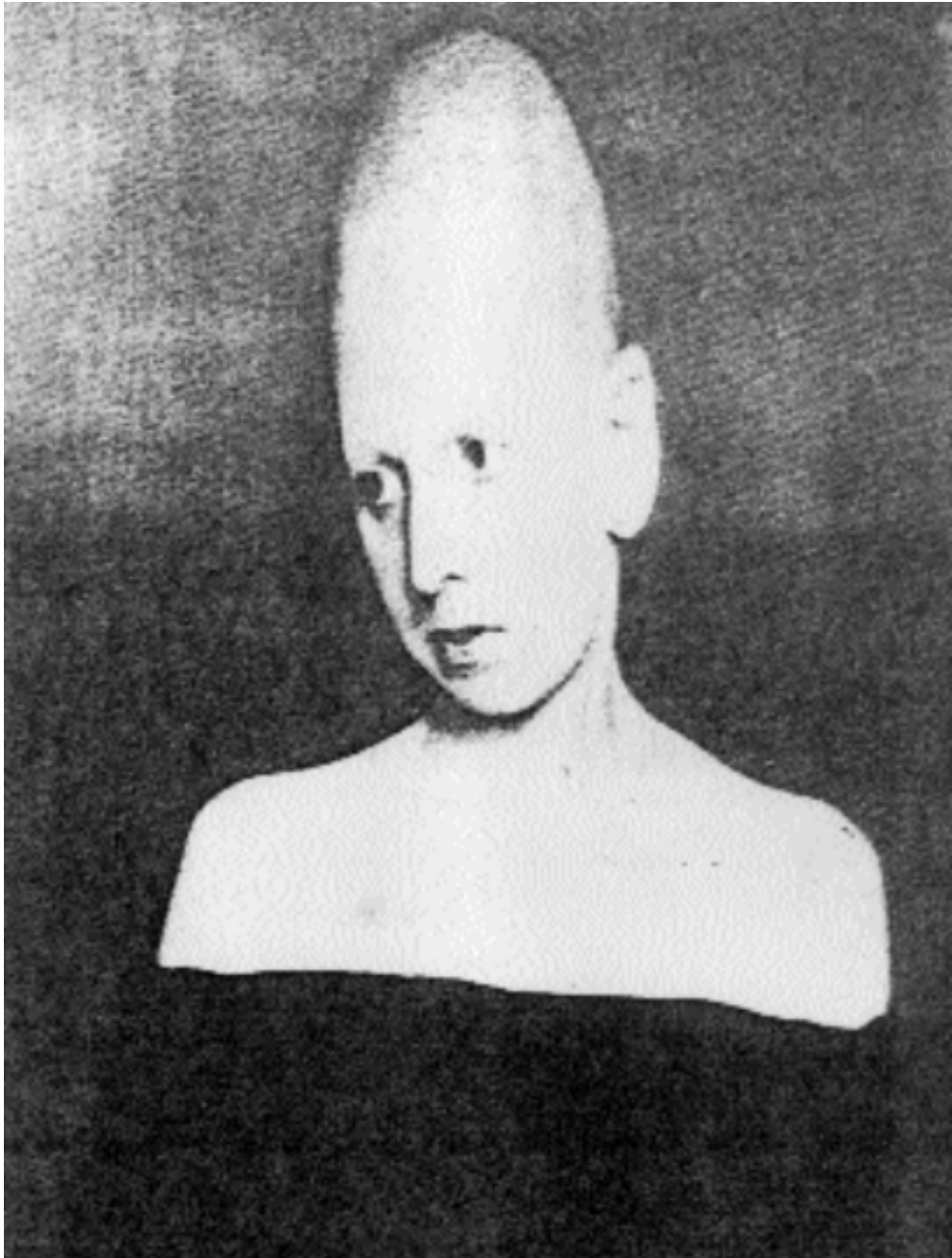


FIGURE 2



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 4
Claude Cahun, autoportrait, c. 1932



The genre of self-portrait often introduces the problematics of narcissism and Claude Cahun's work is no exception. Before proceeding further however, I invite you to reflect that narcissism, feminine or not, is not a given, not a simple matter since it consists in a separation of impulses and drives in the self. It has long been the fashion to picture woman as «hysterical», absent to herself. Lacan has written and been critiqued for his quip, «La Femme n'existe pas». However many things do not exist, in mathematics, many important demonstrations are only possible if one supposes the existence of ideal, «unreal» figures. Every woman supposes the Woman, in order to come into being by exhausting this hypothetical image.

If one uses only the surrealist writings of Claude Cahun, one can easily deduce an almost phobic rejection of the family, and especially of the mother. Born in 1894 in the city of Nantes, where André Breton had the revelation of the surrealist mentality while walking the streets in the company of Jacques Vaché, Lucy Schwob, alias Claude Cahun always displayed a vehement rejection of her origins: «Realism. The mother was so unappetizing that the infant was served an aperitif before being offered the breast.» *Aveux non avenues*. Francois Leperlier recently discovered, while searching through the family archives, that Lucy Schwob's mother had been hospitalized for psychiatric troubles. The clearly ambivalent attitude towards the body and towards gender manifest in the artist's production would seem to derive from a rejection of the mother, and was certainly translated into a series of symptoms characteristic of anorexia: important morphological variations, phobia, hypernarcissism, amenorrhea and gynecological problems leading to a hysterectomy.

In Claude Cahun's writing the reference to a miserable childhood, and its psychological consequences, is frequent: «There was a child rebel who no longer believed in sleep. He had begun by doubting in the existence of God, of free will, then of the material world, and finally no longer believed in his own existence. God got foggy and disappeared from the sky.... Things lost their form, lost stability, solidity, reality. And the child began to confuse himself with their vagueness, began to indifferently himself.» («Carnival en chambre», in *La Ligne de coeur* 4e cahier March, 1926.)

However childhood is also the origin of an encounter, that of a sister who would be a life-long companion. Suzanne Malherbe, was the daughter of the woman Lucy Schwob's father married after divorcing her mother. Malherbe, a graphic artist, took the pseudonym of Marcel (masculine spelling) Moore. Here sisterhood takes on a fuller meaning, though both artists have adopted masculine pseudonyms. Intimate since childhood, Claude Cahun and Moore, as she always signs her work, were apparently lovers until the death of the former in 1954.

One of the most revealing sentences ever written by Claude Cahun, photographer, may explain her choice of a means of expression. «Le reflet pris au piège, la proie s'évade.» (Its reflection trapped, the prey escapes.) A further clue can be found in the choice of a pseudonym. Cahun in French is Cain. The artist as creator of herself evokes the first murder of the Bible, that of a brother. Looking at it closely, this is a strange story which reveals the capricious side of the Old Testament God, or at least an aspect that illustrates the fact that His ways are impenetrable. Here one would be tempted to explore the relations of Claude Cahun to the Law of the Father, however we will not pause to do that, but continue to pursue the implications of the pseudonym. From the point of view of the unconscious, for one supposes that the choice of a pen-name involves unconscious impulses, what is the signification of this story of two brothers bringing their sacrifices, in which, without the least explanation, one is accepted and the other rejected, causing the rejected sibling to turn on his brother and commit murder? is it the horror of the brother, the double and rival which prompts violence?

Cain is the elder brother. It was Eve, his mother, who named him saying «I have acquired, (in the sense of purchased) a man with God». In Hebrew she uses the verb *caïné*. The characters in the Bible, on the occasion of the naming of offspring, like to explain in a phrase the reason for the choice of a name, the desire for which this name speaks. Sometimes the father names the child, sometimes both parents, here, as is frequent, it is the mother and her naming is marked by a note of

possession. I bought a man. Then, the text continues, she also brought forth his brother Abel. This time she produces, not a son, or a man, but a brother.

If it is correct to perceive something special in the relationship of Cain to his mother, one might be tempted, especially if one is in the habit of Lacanian terminology, to say that Cain is her phallus. But it is worse than that. When Eve says «I bought a man with God», this ‘with’ is rich in an ambiguity which disrupts the text. For the first verse of the chapter tells us very clearly: «Adam knew his wife and she conceived a son...» The text does not deny the role of sexuality, however when Eve names Cain, it is only in relation to God that she designates him. This offspring is the sign and the evidence of dealings with the Other, this object, sign of desire, she names it an acquisition, indicating that she has paid, once and for all, and that he is all hers: the term she uses normally refers to livestock or goods in one's legal possession of which the enjoyment is unquestioned.

Cain, then, presents his offering to the Eternal who does not accept it, while Abel is welcome. What is it that Cain kills in this brother? Whatever it is, Cain knows that after that anyone and everyone will want to kill him. What an idea he has of himself.

In fact, I believe, that Lucy Schwob, alias Claude Cahun unconsciously interpreted the story from *Genesis* as a struggle underway between the woman and the Other, in which Cain is only an instrument. He kills his brother, his double, as a refusal of the mother's reproductive power.

Here the speculation on the choice of a name, leads us back to the announced themes of narcissism and anorexia. In the very first psychoanalytic texts of Jacques Lacan we find the basis for what would become the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. These are the complexes of which the most archaic is the «weaning» complex. According to Lacan's theory, weaning leaves a mark on the psyche which bears witness to the interruption of a biological relationship, the mother-child dyad, and at the same time provides an imago for an experience which is even prior to weaning, the trauma of birth, traumatic especially in the case of the premature nature of the human infant. According to Lacan, and others, the premature nature of the infant is the reason for a lack of feeling at home in the world that no amount of maternal love can alleviate. This prematurity distinguishes man from animal and explains the development of human language as theorized by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The refusal of weaning is the foundation of an imago of the maternal breast which can come to dominate an existence. In this case the subject lives a perpetual dissatisfaction and nostalgia for something he or she cannot name. If this imago is not sublimated, it can be deadly. This is the «appetite for death», so hauntingly evoked in the works of Marguerite Duras, manifesting itself in non violent suicides, like anorexia nervosa, drug abuse or gastric disorders. «In his abandon of himself to death, the subject is searching for the lost image of the mother», writes Lacan.

In the case of Claude Cahun, it is possible, given the evidence of her admiration and concern for André Breton, that the nostalgia for an inaccessible ideal assumed the image of a mystical parental couple, represented in this photo of Breton and Jacqueline Lamba. Cahun's photography is marked by images of the double self: (Figure 5) yet in the case of the couple the portraits have become, not double, but multiple. After her Parisian surrealist period, Lucy Schwob left the city and retired with Moore to the Island of Jersey, she produced this photo (Figure 6) during a visit of Jacqueline Lamba and her daughter Aube Breton. It is perhaps the ultimate statement of the inaccessible ideal of femininity, eyes closed, absent presence.

FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6



Psicoanálisis y feminismo: ¿un «maridaje» de conveniencia?

DULCE RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ (*)

Feminist uses of psychoanalysis that encourage the liberation of the poetic and welcome the traces of the unconscious within their own discourses help us to illuminate «that vast chamber of unsaid meaning, the language of our difference».

(Burke, 1990: 114)

La confluencia del psicoanálisis y el feminismo pudiera resultar, cuando menos, una combinación contradictoria si tenemos en cuenta la (o)posición de las feministas con respecto al patriarcado y al sospechoso pensamiento androcéntrico de Freud.

Sin embargo, el encuentro y posterior entendimiento entre psicoanálisis y feminismo parecía inevitable. Este fue inicialmente planeado por un grupo radical de mujeres en Francia asociadas bajo el nombre de ‘Psychoanalyse et Politique’, – más tarde ‘psyque et po’ – un grupo que cristalizó después de la revuelta de estudiantes de mayo del 68. Este encuentro, con el tiempo, fue la fuente de un nuevo enfoque en la crítica literaria que había sido profundamente influenciada por la lucha política del momento y por la revisión de las teorías freudianas, ya que éstas resultaban de una importancia vital para el estudio y posterior análisis de la opresión de la mujer. Y aquí hacemos especial hincapié en la mujer escritora ya que ésta ha padecido una doble represión, social y textual, evitando en sus escritos entrar en la esfera de lo personal, y si lo hacía era con reticencias a ser explícita en lo que se refiere a sentimientos más profundos, silenciando áreas importantes de su vida y relaciones fundamentales como las de madre-hija. Pensamos que dichas relaciones ofrecerían un paradigma válido para la aplicación del psicoanálisis a los textos literarios, ya que, a través del psicoanálisis se puede bucear en ellas, analizando las dinámicas materno-filiales y desentrañando

(*) Universidad de La Laguna, Departamento de Filología Moderna, 38071 La Laguna, Campus de Guajara, Tenerife, Islas Canarias, España.

en los textos cuál es su vinculación y mutua dependencia. En el presente trabajo, pues, se intentará ver cómo psicoanálisis y feminismo forman un tándem fructífero en el análisis de las relaciones madre-hija.

Inicialmente, las feministas americanas atacaban a Freud con una actitud más bien hostil en comparación con sus colegas de Francia. Ambas posiciones estaban distanciadas, y es en la tarea de aproximar ambas partes que la feminista británica Juliet Mitchell puso de manifiesto su habilidad al tratar de tender puentes «importing the feminist interest in Freud, in an effort to combat the American opposition to psychoanalysis», y al superar estas diferencias, continúa la crítica Jane Gallop, la combinación de ambos «would make feminism stronger, richer, wiser [and] better» (1982: 1,4). Sin embargo, su tarea no fue fácil y mucho menos aceptada por todas.

Una vez que las diferencias entre ambos grupos se fueron suavizando, las feministas trataron de retar directamente el discurso patriarcal con su falocentrismo, a la vez que ofrecían métodos alternativos y un discurso que daba a la crítica literaria una nueva perspectiva. Así, las feministas no sólo se esforzaban por conseguir una igualdad que conllevara su autonomía, sino que también estaban interesadas en «the right to different paradigms, theoretical tools, and possibly even reconceptualization of the entire system of knowledges and acceptable theoretical methods» (Grosz, 1992: 361).

El antagonismo hacia el psicoanálisis había comenzado décadas atrás; sin embargo fue en los setenta cuando las feministas americanas reaccionaron fuertemente contra el pensamiento psicoanalítico considerándolo misógino, a la vez que era acusado de estar contaminado por la influencia del medio patriarcal de donde surgía. A pesar de ello, en lugar de mantener sus diferencias, las feministas, hacia finales de esa década, tuvieron que reconocer la importancia del psicoanálisis, ya que éste muestra una notable lucidez en lo que se refiere a la mujer, el inconsciente, el deseo y el lenguaje. Así, el estudio de Mitchell *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) vino a ser un precursor en la tarea de liberar a las feministas de posiciones ancladas, generando un análisis que, hasta cierto punto, fue convincente – aunque también tiene detractoras¹ – en el proceso de acercar ambas teorías, lo que supuso eventualmente la incorporación del psicoanálisis dentro del pensamiento feminista. Mitchell mantiene que Freud es valioso para el feminismo precisamente debido a su capacidad para dilucidar los cimientos inconscientes del patriarcado. En efecto, ella afirma en la Introducción a su estudio:

The greater part of the feminist movement has identified Freud as the enemy. It is held that psychoanalysis claims women are inferior and that they can achieve true femininity only as wives and mothers. Psychoanalysis is seen as a justification for the status-quo, bourgeois and patriarchal, and Freud in his own person exemplifies these qualities. [...] [nonetheless] a rejection of psychoanalysis and of Freud's works is fatal for feminism. However it may have been used, psychoanalysis is not a recommendation *for* a patriarchal society, but an analysis *of* one. If we are interested in understanding and challenging the oppression of women, we cannot afford to neglect it. (1990: xv)

Mitchell no sólo intenta acercar posiciones sino que también defiende la conveniencia de no descartar el psicoanálisis cuando se intenta profundizar en el estudio de la mujer. Igualmente, otras críticas, como es el caso de Nancy Chodorow, abogan por la importancia del psicoanálisis para las feministas, ya que es una práctica que se interesa por lo que haya de conflictivo en la historia pasada del individuo, pues a través de dicha práctica – y más concretamente en el caso de la niña – se puede conocer bastante «about the pre-Oedipal girl's relation to her mother and early development;

¹ Gallop (*The Daughter's Seduction*, 1982), y Chodorow, entre otras, son bastante críticas con el análisis de Mitchell.

about her desire for autonomy and for something that can symbolize that autonomy; about male supremacy in the culture and in her family» (1989: 173). Asimismo, Chodorow también es consciente de los fallos y limitaciones de una teoría que «tends toward normatively generated, essentialist, and absolutist views of gender and sexuality, and it does not incorporate or allow for the incorporation of a critical stance. Psychoanalytic feminism challenges psychoanalysis in all these arenas» (1989: 195), lo que viene a probar la fuerza generativa que el feminismo puede representar para el psicoanálisis.

Jane Flax, en un ensayo bastante clarificador acerca de las contribuciones del psicoanálisis al feminismo y viceversa dice:

Since gender identity develops originally and most deeply through preverbal and nonrational experience, an understanding of the unconscious process is crucial for feminist theory.

Differentiation is a central issue for women because of the special character of the mother-daughter relationship. [...] [I have] found object-relation theory to be the most useful and suggestive form of psychoanalytic theory because it analyzes humans as they develop in and through social relations, and stresses the centrality of the preoedipal experience. [...] [because of this] feminism compels us to investigate the most primitive roots of human being and of society. In this investigation the concerns and insights of feminism and psychoanalysis meet, engage, and mutually enrich each other. (1990: 22-23)

Por otro lado, en el informe acerca de las contribuciones del feminismo al psicoanálisis, Flax desenmascara los fallos y deficiencias de las teorías de Freud en lo que se refiere mayormente a su explicación inadecuada del período pre-edípico, cuando el influjo de la madre es importante en la vida de los hijos – una experiencia que es reprimida en nuestra cultura²; de hecho, el papel de la madre en ese período no es analizado en profundidad. Parece que la negación de esta experiencia temprana en la vida del niño es fundamental para el patriarcado, de ahí la importancia de mantener esta omisión. Flax, siguiendo los pasos de Chodorow, dice: «male identity is created out of a rejection of the mother. [...] The female represents all that is not civilized and not rational. In turn, this denial becomes a justification for relegating women to the private sphere and devaluing what women are allowed to do and be» (1990: 30-31). Al resumir estas contribuciones mutuas, Flax sostiene que no se puede continuar haciendo revisiones de la sociedad a la manera tradicional, ignorando lo reprimido, no sólo en el individuo sino también en la memoria colectiva (esa represión que a menudo aflora en los sueños y los textos), ya que esa área silenciada de la experiencia humana debe formar parte de nuestro discurso, o «there will be no one left to speak at all» (1990: 38). De lo dicho anteriormente se deduce que el psicoanálisis puede ser ayudado por el feminismo en la tarea de incorporar a su dinámica los recursos que la teoría feminista ha logrado a lo largo de su andadura. Garner, Kahane y Sprengnether, en la Introducción a la colección de ensayos *The (M)other Tongue* lo expresan con claridad:

If feminism has learned from psychoanalysis to respect the ways in which the individual unconscious responds to the social order and hence the deep-rooted resistance to change, psychoanalysis may learn from feminism to move with a more open-minded awareness into areas in which it has traditionally shown the least sensitivity. It is particularly in the area of the female subject that psychoanalysis, fulfilling Freud's prophecy concerning the insight of the poets into the unconscious, may enrich its understanding of women from women themselves, writers and interpreters. (1985: 25)

² En efecto, el psicoanálisis padece, él mismo, de las mismas represiones descubiertas por Freud en el individuo. Según Flax: «Much of the repressed material in psychoanalysis concerns the mother's power in the infant's real and fantasy life (and the infant's in the adult's) and the fear of female sexuality and the (potencial) autonomy of women» (1990: 18).

La tarea fundamental del psicoanálisis es explicar el desarrollo de la sexualidad humana y las operaciones del inconsciente; de igual manera estos dos principios resultan importantes para el feminismo. El psicoanálisis de Freud explica la vinculación con nuestro pasado, nuestra primera infancia, un tiempo de desvalimiento y dependencia, un vínculo que ahora está reprimido e inconsciente; el individuo transforma o reprime sus experiencias, y la meta del psicoanálisis es hacer el inconsciente consciente (Chodorow, 1989: 171).

Así pues, el propósito del psicoanálisis ha sido analizar la mente humana, desvelando sus deseos ocultos a la vez que descubre las conexiones con la conciencia real. La crítica feminista Judith K. Gardiner, entre otros, afirma que este planteamiento respecto a la mente funciona de igual manera en los textos (1985: 114). De ahí que estos deseos ocultos que están comprimidos en el inconsciente, además de revelarse en los sueños, lapsus linguae y chistes, también surjan en el arte, y por tanto en los trabajos literarios, «but by contrast with dreams», afirma Gardiner, «their artful and conscious defences can delight many people besides their authors» (1985: 116). Por consiguiente, el reino del inconsciente, con sus lagunas, omisiones y silencios, es de una gran importancia para la crítica feminista, ya que ésta considera que todo lo reprimido, subvertido o silenciado debe ser desvelado, y más especialmente en el caso de la mujer que ha sufrido, como decíamos al principio, de una doble represión; de hecho, el esfuerzo feminista de sacar a la luz el mundo privado femenino equivale a rescatar a la mujer de una cultura que le ha prohibido hablar claro y que le ha negado ser dueña de su discurso. Así, en el proceso de revelar ese mundo secreto de la mujer, el feminismo puede ser ayudado por el psicoanálisis, especialmente después de que el filósofo francés Jacques Lacan ha colocado a Freud dentro del marco de la lingüística. En efecto, lo que hace importante a Lacan para la crítica literaria feminista es su traducción de las teorías freudianas en teorías de lenguaje, postulando que el inconsciente está estructurado como un lenguaje.

Según Pam Morris, «writing is rarely under the full conscious control of the writer, and often contains a subtext of what cannot or dare not be said, of which the writer may not be aware of» (1993: 16), por lo que un enfoque psicoanalítico-feminista puede ser bastante fructífero en el proceso de desentrañar este subtexto en la producción literaria femenina. Morris al dar una relación de las ventajas e inconvenientes de fusionar psicoanálisis y feminismo, cree que hay buenas razones para este «compromiso» ya que la combinación de ambas teorías «has produced some powerful and original ways of thinking about language and the construction of a feminine identity. [...] [F]eminists working within this framework focus their attention on the intense pre-Oedipal attachment of the child to its mother instead of concentrating, as Freud and Lacan do, on the Oedipal relationship with the prohibiting father» (1993: 113).

En esta alianza de conveniencia, las feministas han mantenido una postura crítica respecto aquellos conceptos freudianos que parecen haber sido más influenciados por el patriarcado. En efecto, parece que la crítica y la revisión de las teorías de Freud han sido una constante en el feminismo. En opinión de Chodorow «this critique and revision have often been rich and provocative» (1989: 73). Según Jane Gallop, el creciente desarrollo de la crítica feminista, que surgió y tomó consistencia como un rechazo al New Criticism y su consecuente formalismo, hizo viable, indirectamente, la crítica psicoanalítica, debido, en parte, al efecto del post-estructuralismo francés, mayormente a través de escritoras como Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous y Julia Kristeva, feministas sumamente intelectuales que tienen en cuenta las teorías de Freud. Por otro lado, el análisis que Chodorow hace de los patrones de «mothering» ha supuesto un gran impacto, ya que el punto de partida es la relación pre-edípica. En palabras de Gallop:

This particular mix of mother-centered psychoanalysis and American social scientific feminism has proven especially suggestive for feminist literary critics. [...] [Thus] psychoanalytic feminist criticism provides the vehicle which allows two heretofore unlikely couples to meet. In this vehicle, we not only find feminism joining hands with psychoanalysis but, behind that more obvious couple in what constitutes a theoretical double date, we might possibly glimpse the coming together of post-structuralist and American social science, a pair that has rarely been known to speak. (1987: 316)

Según Jerry Flieger, al analizar los puntos de conexión entre psicoanálisis, feminismo y literatura, se deben tener en cuenta varios elementos. Por una parte existe un interés fundamental en la subjetividad humana y su relación con el acto de escribir, siendo el inconsciente un elemento importante en este proceso: el inconsciente es lo que subyace en la psique humana y es, por tanto, responsable del texto literario. Por otro lado está la preocupación con el lenguaje, ya que es el medio a través del que la cultura patriarcal se expresa, a la vez que es herramienta indispensable para la literatura; finalmente, la importancia de la actividad humana – en este caso la literatura – considerada como síntoma, representación, obra de arte, dentro del patriarcado (1989: 190). Dentro de este panorama existen diferentes posturas entre la crítica: la personificada por Mitchell, que, a pesar de haber sido clarificadora en su momento, se la ha criticado por conceder «too much to the overvenerated founding fathers, dealing in alibis designed to let Dad off the hook of his own “phallic conceit”» (Flieger, 1989: 190). Por otro lado, está la postura mantenida por las hijas «rebeldes» de Francia, que intentan rescatar lo pre-edípico, lo maternal, el Imaginario/semiótico; estas mujeres están interesadas en la búsqueda del «parler femme», de la lengua materna, que no es exactamente la sancionada por el patriarcado, la adquirida como consecuencia de la pérdida del cuerpo de la madre, y por tanto basada en una carencia. No es ésta la lengua que buscan, sino una lengua saturada de libertad, apertura, flexibilidad, fragmentación, una lengua de sonidos, balbuceos, cimentada en lo que Kristeva ha llamado lo «semiótico» – el tiempo de la feliz fusión entre la madre y la criatura – que pudiera ser el origen de la poesía femenina, lo que Coppélia Kahn ha etiquetado como el «maternal subtext». Y Flieger aún dilucida otra postura en este «affaire» psico-feminista, que es la de la «prodigal daughter [...] who acknowledges her heritage [but] goes beyond the fold of restrictive paternal law» (1989: 191). Ser pródigo en el sentido de extravagancia, derroche, abundancia, afirma Flieger, significa «to alter the law, to enlarge its boundaries and recast its meaning. [...] Thus the Law to which the prodigal daughter accedes is an altered law. [...] The prodigal daughter of today insists on the cultural nature of Freud’s and Lacan’s discoveries, even when the fathers themselves are blind to it» (1989: 191-92). Parece que esta «prodigalidad» esbozada por Flieger contendría el elemento seminal para los futuros logros de la crítica psicoanalítico-feminista.

En cualquier caso, independientemente de las mencionadas posturas, creemos que Chodorow es bastante realista cuando se pronuncia respecto al psicoanálisis y sus posibilidades: «Until we have another theory which can tell us about the unconscious mental processes, conflict, and relations of gender, sexuality, and self, we had best take psychoanalysis for what it does include and can tell us rather than dismissing out of hand» (1989: 4). De hecho, puesto que la figura materna – aunque en un segundo plano³ – es tan central al psicoanálisis, parece oportuna no sólo la confluencia de esta teoría con la crítica feminista, que celebra la figura de la madre, sino también la aplicación de este marco teórico al estudio de las relaciones madre-hija en los textos literarios. Así lo confirma la teórica Marienne Hirsh, quien afirma que la teoría psicoanalítico-feminista es un marco de lo más indicado para situar el estudio de las mencionadas relaciones. En su opinión:

[A]ny approach to the subject of the mother-daughter relationships in literature would have to include a psychoanalytic perspective which would illuminate the psychic complexity of the construction of the literary plots. [...] Freudian psychoanalysis and its feminist revisions provided, I believe, the most promising theoretical framework for the study of mothers and daughters. (1989: 18-19)

Finalmente Hirsch, en su amplio análisis de numerosos libros cuyo tema se centra en las relaciones madre-hija, intenta probar que «... the story of mother-daughter relationships has been written even if it has not been read, that it constitutes the hidden subtext of many texts. [...] The

³ Debemos recordar que el drama de Edipo no refiere la historia de la madre sino la del hijo, mientras que la Ley del Padre es omnipresente.

question now becomes the analysis of its intricacies and complexities, and especially of its influence on literary forms and structures» (1989: 204, 214). Sin duda, esta labor *palimpséslica* ha sido llevada a cabo por críticas feministas que están realmente comprometidas en la labor de sacar a la luz toda la experiencia femenina, sin importar lo disfrazada, velada o borrosa que estuviese; críticas feministas dispuestas a excavar «those dim Minoan regions [of] maternal subtext in patriarchal culture» (Kahn, 1982: 32).

Para concluir, nos parece interesante la opinión de Ann Rosalind Jones cuando ya en 1981 decía: «psychoanalytic theory is not feminist dogma» (1981: 254), lo cual nos hace pensar que el psicoanálisis no sea la panacea que resuelva todos los dilemas, sino una herramienta conveniente que la crítica feminista ha utilizado para analizar textos cuyo tema es la mujer inmersa en una sociedad patriarcal que la condiciona.

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«The Yellow Wallpaper»: The return of the repressed

MARIA DOLORES MARTINEZ REVENTOS (*)

Feminist interpretations of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's «The Yellow Wallpaper» have tended to see the story as an updated fictional treatment of Mary Wollstonecraft's theme in her novel *The Wrongs of Woman: or Maria*: «Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?» (Jacobus, 1986: 233). For example, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar link the use of a double to the imagery of enclosure in Gilman's story as «complementary signs of female victimization». The woman is confined within an uncomfortable social self as well as within an uncomfortable space, and the double in the wallpaper represents the angry self hidden behind angelic submission (1984: 443-444). Similarly, Annette Kolodny argues that the wallpaper pattern symbolizes «her own untenable and unacceptable reality. To escape that reality she attempts the destruction of the paper which seemingly encodes it: the pattern of bars entrapping the creeping woman» (1989: 54).

According to Gilbert, Gubar and Kolodny, then, the madness of the woman, of her self-alienation in her double, paralleled by her imprisonment (in the secluded house/behind the wallpaper-bars) is the result of the patriarchal social oppression of women. Yet, as Jacobus points out, this kind of exclusively social approach to madness cannot account for other elements present in Gilman's text. The assumption of what Jacqueline Rose calls «an unproblematic and one-to-one causality between psychic life and social reality» does away with language and the unconscious (quoted by Jacobus, 1986: 233). The critical interpretive productivity of this social feminist reading is very limited; it leaves unexplained the «uncanny» or the creepiness of the story.

For Freud, the uncanny represents the return of the familiar as strange, because it has been repressed, and as alien, because split off from consciousness. He wrote: «The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.» The *unheimlich* (uncanny) is what was once *heimlich*, familiar. The prefix «un» is «the token of repression» (quoted by Wright, 1984: 144-146). In Gilman's story the uncanny appears in the creeping double in the wallpaper, the ghostly double which, as Gilbert and Gubar note in their only fleeting reference to the unconscious in the text, embodies «the return of the repressed» (1984: 444). The familiar figure that returns as an uncanny double in the wallpaper can be interpreted as the woman's own repressed or split off self.

(*) Universidad de Murcia, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Plaza de la Universidad, 30071 Murcia, España.

The wallpaper double is repeatedly described as a creeping figure: «a woman stooping down and creeping about», «she is always creeping» (22); or else as a crawling figure: (she) «crawls around fast», «As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl...» (30). The image of a person creeping and/or crawling suggests humility, abjection, servilism, the cringing appeal of dependency. If we believe that, as Freud argued, the language of hysteria consists of «taking a verbal expression literally», and therefore «the hysteric is not taking liberties with words, but is simply reviving once more the sensations to which the verbal expression owes its justification» (quoted by Jacobus, 1986: 238), then the «creeping», «crawling» double can be interpreted as enacting literally the unconscious of the woman: the self that needs to depend, to cringe on to someone. The uncanny double in the wallpaper is the repressed unbearably needy, hungry self of the narcissistically wounded person.

«The Yellow Wallpaper» is a story of a post-partum breakdown. This fact, which has not received sufficient critical attention, is crucial to explain the psychic contents of the text.

Psychoanalyst Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni analyses how, during pregnancy, a woman may go through a narcissistic crisis, regressing to the grandiose narcissism of early childhood, experiencing herself as the creator. After delivery, the delusion comes down, triggering at best some slight depression and at worst postnatal psychosis. There may be a refusal of the child mixed with murderous wishes (1987: 25-26). The protagonist of «The Yellow Wallpaper» does reject the child: «Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous» (14), and her murderous wishes are expressed in the language of hysteria, through the sensations caused by the yellow smell.

Mary Jacobus notices the importance of the «yellow smell», as one of the uncanny elements in the text. But its significance and relevance I interpret as lying, not in the woman's sexuality (the «odor di femina» suggested by the critic) but in her postnatal breakdown. The yellow smell, like the pattern in the yellow wallpaper, makes her feel unbearably anxious, «nervous», as does the presence of her baby. The yellow smell is «a sickly smell», at first «very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met»; later, with damp weather, it becomes awful, the smell of «old foul, bad yellow things» (29). What the woman is describing rather accurately is the acidic odour («yellow» is definitely the colour that best describes it) of babies' excrements, a subtle odour that can endure, specially in damp weather, even the most thorough cleanliness, at least in the mother's imagination. It is such a pervasive smell that even «happy» mothers can have olfactory hallucinations of it. If postnatally depressed, the smell must indeed become unbearable, since it has acquired a metonymic value: it stands for the baby as an object that threatens the mother's identity. As the postnatal breakdown develops into psychosis, the woman's rejection of the (baby's) smell becomes so strong that she wants to burn the house to get rid of it: «I thought seriously of burning the house – to reach the smell» (29), which can easily be translated as an expression of the unconscious murderous impulses towards the baby not uncommon in postnatal psychosis.

A woman abandoned or rejected by her mother during childhood may have a great difficulty in accepting maternity - «the refusal of the mother... reproduces refusal» (Steedman, 1986: 96). Although the pregnancy itself, Lemoine-Luccioni argues, can be experienced as a beautiful «day dream» where she merges with her own mother, recovering her lost mother, after delivery she may be «sucked into the abyss left gaping by the ancient loss of her mother», for, specially in the case of unloved daughters, she is left with a new representation, in her baby, of «her hungry self, gaping for love» (1987: 38-39), which is felt as an «untenable and unacceptable» psychic reality.

It can thus be interpreted that the «untenable and unacceptable reality» that the yellow wallpaper symbolizes, is not only the social reality of women at the end of the nineteenth century, as Kolodny asserts, but also the repressed self abjectly gaping for love that her own baby has conjured up from the past.

It has often been pointed out, even by the author herself, that «The Yellow Wallpaper» is autobiographical. Therefore it may be productive as an interpretive strategy to read the story in the context of Gilman's own life.

A central aspect of Gilman's life-experience seems to have been her painful relation to her mother, who constantly refused her mirroring – approval and affection. She refused her daughter even the slightest physical caress (Lane, 1983: 204). And, like many other narcissistically deprived daughters, her reaction was to try and be good, which developed into a fantasy of self-perfection (Hedges, 1985: 43).

Just before meeting her first husband, at age twenty one, Gilman felt an enormous sense of power, the power of being able to achieve anything she wanted. But when she married Charles Walter Stetson, she found herself in a state of conflict previously unknown to her. Her strength of character failed, she declared in her autobiography, and a grey fog, increasingly thicker and darker, occupied her mind. After giving birth to a baby girl, she completely broke down (Spacks, 239). «The Yellow Wallpaper» is a fictionalized account of this postnatal breakdown in 1887 and of the treatment she underwent at the hands of the Philadelphia «nervous specialist» Weir Mitchell. After the disaster of her attempt at cure with Dr. Mitchell, she left her husband and, soon after, her daughter.

Gilman, who hated psychoanalytical ideas (Spacks, 1985: 236), only posited the (unexplained) failure of her marriage as the cause for her breakdown. Patricia M. Spacks, not disregarding the importance of the «external pressures» in the aetiology of Gilman's breakdown (best represented by Dr. Mitchell's prescription of a good dose of feminine domesticity, away from intellectual or artistic pursuits, destructive to women's health), focuses on her underlying and unacknowledged «internal pressures», her endless blindness to her repressed narcissistic needs (1985: 241-243).

In her essay «Phobias After Marriage: Women's Declaration of Dependence», psychoanalyst Alexandra Symonds analyses the recurrent problem of «the small but significant» number of young women who, apparently independent and self-sufficient (for «they had to grow up in a hurry»), change radically after getting married, developing phobias or other signs of «constriction of self» (1978: 288). Gilman seems to have belonged to this small but significant number of women who had a childhood and adolescence of self-sufficiency, independence and rigid self-control, having been forced to repress their normal needs of dependency, which self-psychologists include in what they call «narcissistic needs». Marriage could represent, at a preconscious or subconscious level, their chance to be dependent without hating themselves for what they interpret as their weakness. But marriage will turn out to be, instead, the source of phobias or repulsions and fears (Symonds, 1978: 301). Phobic feelings of fear and repulsion are also identified by Lemoine-Luccioni as signs of the narcissistic crisis to which new mothers – like newly-wed women – can be subjected (1987: 43)

The most common phobic fear is that of «being closed in, trapped, helpless» (Symonds, 1978: 301). The fear of being trapped, imprisoned is the prevailing one in «The Yellow Wallpaper». The psychologist Otto Kernberg argues that the depression derived from narcissistic deprivation can take the form of feelings of persecution or defeat by external forces, of fears related to destructive fantasies, a consequence of projecting one's own narcissistic rage onto a world perceived as full of dangerous, threatening objects (quoted by Lasch, 1978: 39). As the double of the writer, the nameless protagonist of «The Yellow Wallpaper» is projecting her narcissistic rage onto the threatening, imprisoning world of the wallpaper.

We could conclude from Gilman's fictionalised account of her depression that the narcissistic crisis that marriage starts, by allowing her to expect, at least subconsciously, the satisfaction of her repressed narcissistic needs, is aggravated by the birth of her baby, on whom she finds a reflection of her own needy self. A repressed self that carries feelings of exclusion, depression and even despair, which the excruciatingly demanding baby will conjure up from the past in a disturbingly uncanny way, as if it were her double. Like the woman in the wallpaper pattern is the threatening and abjectly creeping double of the protagonist suffering from a postnatal breakdown.

Most feminist accounts of Gilman's postnatal depression and of the purportedly autobiographical «The Yellow Wallpaper» based on it, explain this breakdown as a result of her feeling of being

trapped in the role of wife within conventional marriage. Thus mental illness is seen as a way of resistance and rebellious reaction to victimization by imprisoning social structures. Indeed it is easy and plausible to interpret «The Yellow Wallpaper» as the literary effect of Gilman's real social consciousness of the marital situation of women at the end of the nineteenth century, and as a warning tale of Dr. Mitchell's disastrous rest cure. But it is also plausible to interpret this tale of madness as an effect of Gilman's own unconscious psychic conflict, rooted in her narcissistic wound. Ann Lane notes that this story is the only one of Gilman's without a happy ending, where the character does not break out of conventional moulds to shape her own life (1983: 208). Perhaps what explains the exceptional unhappy ending of this story is that this is the only story where the stakes are not, or not only, individual, conscious will against social circumstances, but unconscious pressures that, rooted in the past, make the present explode in uncontrollable ways. In fact, Ann Lane points out that Gilman only «plumbed her emotions» deeply in «The Yellow Wallpaper» and in the self-exploring letters to her second husband. In one of these letters she confessed «her nagging feelings of excessive dependence» (1983: 208).

So the two differing interpretations, the psychological and the social, are not mutually exclusive, not even at the level of symbolization. For example, the image of imprisonment recurrent in the text can be read as an expression of women's social condition, but also as the projection of her own narcissistic rage or aggression and as the phobic expression of Gilman's psychic fear – awakened by marriage and motherhood – of her own repressed narcissistic needs, of the weakness, the dependency, the loss of self-control that uncannily return to trap her in a monstrously abject self-image: behind the wallpaper bars she projects her own double, whose creeping and crawling manifestations speak in the literal language of hysteria of a self that needs to cringe unashamedly on to someone, to be helpless and reassured in its helplessness.

The two interpretations of «The Yellow Wallpaper», the social and the psychological, are not only possible as two parallel stories, but as two interlinking, overlapping stories. For, perhaps without intending it, in this tale, Gilman's only self-exploratory fictional writing, her only fictional concession to her narcissistic need of personal self-expression, she gave fictional shape to a possible psychic effect not only of her own individual narcissistic injury, but of many other women's narcissistic wound in Western culture. For, as Carolyn Steedman's notes, individual stories of female injured narcissism usually mirror a wider, social exclusion (1986: 95).

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«I stayed alive for you»: The psychology of race and gender in black women's slave novels

CHERYL JOHNSON (*)

The first part of this essay's title, «I Stayed Alive for You» is taken from Toni Morrison's *Sula*. Although *Sula* is not a slave novel (which I define as a work of fiction whose subject is slavery but is not a slave narrative) the words in that scene, spoken by two black women, Eva Peace and her daughter, Hannah, resonate slavery's effect on black women's kinship relations as well as on the psychological constructions of race and gender. Without any provocation or warning, Hannah questions her mother's love with the words: «Mamma, did you ever love us?» (67). Eva's response «No, I don't reckon I did. Not the way you thinking» (67) critiques what she thinks her daughter means by love. Ignoring her mother's obvious irritation, Hannah continues her interrogation: «I know you fed us and all. I was talking 'bout something else. Like. Like. Playing with us. Did you ever, you know, play with us?» (68). With these words, Eva gets evil – essentially fussing at her daughter's inability or unwillingness to understand the symbiotic relationship between maternal love and responsibility. Eva responds: «Play? Wasn't nobody playing in 1895. 1895 was a killer, girl. Things was bad. Niggers was dying like flies» (68). Eva continues her litany of hard times – no food, no money, but three sick, starving children – until, frustrated, she emits a statement designed to silence and shame her daughter: «I stayed alive for you can't you get that through your thick head or what is that between your ears, heifer?» (69).

Eva's pain and indignation are evident here, but the way she ends her statement, naming her daughter «heifer», has always intrigued me. I rarely hear this word used today, but when I was growing up, it was one of those nasty, foul, denigrating words directed at a black woman, usually by another black woman. Eva's use of this word reveals more than pain and indignation; it displays rage – pure rage. Not just rage that Hannah would question Eva's love because motherhood for her does not or could not involve playing with her children, but that this black-girl-daughter resists understanding that for black women staying alive under racist and sexist circumstances is not just an act of survival but a willful, courageous, and yes, loving act. Staying alive is, without question, basic, but for Eva, it is her most precious gift to her children – the best she has to offer. Her use of «heifer», then, chastises Hannah for ignoring the obvious: black women operate out of culturally-specific codes, signs, and references understood by those within her culture and community as necessary or forced responses and adaptations to the racism and sexism initiated and fortified by slavery.

(*) Miami University, Department of English, Oxford, Ohio 45056, USA.

This paper is the beginning of my inquiry into the ways in which some contemporary black women writers are reconstructing the mentality of black women under slavery. Like these writers, I am trying to discern the psychological effects of slavery, in particular, its tenacious role in the construction of black women's self-perception as they played out various roles as slave mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives in binary opposition to white women. Like Eva Peace in *Sula*, black slave women who chose to stay alive did so under absurd, trying, inhumane conditions made legal by slavery. If the «cult of true womanhood» established the standard for white women, what were the standards for black women; how were they to understand their racial/gendered roles within the confines of slavery and what were the psychological effects of their forced understanding? And what is slavery's legacy for the slave woman's daughter, granddaughter, great granddaughter, and so on? This last issue interrogates slavery's continuing psychological baggage, that is, how some of the psychological effects of slavery have been passed on to future generations and continue to shape black women's relationships with both blacks and whites and constructing their perception of racial/gendered roles in this culture. Black women «pass on» their understandings of womanhood to other black women, and these representations of what these women could/should be in this society both establish and restrict the range of possibilities for black women's self-actualization, despite this post Civil War, post Civil Rights, post black power era. Slavery, then, is over, but that fact does not mark the end of its influence on our national consciousness. In fact, re-examinations of it are necessary to further our understanding of race and gender difference in Eurocentric societies.

Some of these re-examinations, however, will be difficult. As Hortense Spillers reminds us in «Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book», «Under [slavery], we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific» (457). Aside from breeding purposes, that black women could produce another form of labor or capital, gender, Spillers argues, did not matter to the slavers and slaveholders. Captured African men and women became captive black bodies, three-fifths human, whose «flesh» could not escape what Spillers says is, «the brush of discourse or the reflexes of iconography» (457). But gender did matter to the captive black woman whose unprotected flesh made her as vulnerable as black men to the lash and the lynching tree but, unlike men, to the sexual violation of her body. Historians such as Deborah Gray White in *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (1985) are reconstructing the lives of black women during slavery. We know that they worked, many alongside of black men in the fields or as maids, servants, cooks, or nannies in the homes of the slaveholders. Many of these women were victims of forced miscegenation; they did not own their bodies or their sexuality, and neither law nor custom protected them, as girls or women, from the sexual desire of their owners of any other white man. According to Catherine Clinton in «Rape, Memory, and African American women», «If a rapist was suspected of the sexual assault of a slave woman, he was charged with assault and battery» and, in the case of conviction, damages were paid to her owners as would be the case in any other «property damage». The law... withheld from a slave woman the rights of personhood and concomitant protection of the state» (207, Fabre & O'Meally). Slave women also did not have the rights to their children who could be taken from them at any moment and sold, never to be seen again. If the child was not sold and remained a part of his or her family, the mother's interactions and control of the child were tempered or overruled by the wishes and desires of their owner. Even personal aspects – where they lived, how they lived, what they ate, how they dressed, when and how and whom they worshiped – were determined by the often capricious extent of the slaveholders' compassion or whim. But these accounts cannot and do not describe the interior lives of these black women. And, even as literary critics and historians re-examine black women's slave narratives for first-hand accounts of their lives, they must consider not only questions of authenticity but also the effects of these narratives' discursive properties which constrained even as they liberated the slave's voice.

Complementing the work of historians and extending the tradition of the slave narrative, some black women literary artists are representing slavery's impact on the mentality of black women

slaves. Novels such as Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966) Gayl Jones' *Corregidora*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose*, and Octavia Butler's *Kindred* all bear witness to the ways in which black women realized and/or perceived their womanhood under slavery. This rest of this paper is divided into two sections. The first examines the role of masking and trickerism in *Dessa Rose* and *Kindred*. I argue that duplicity in interactions with whites allowed black women some power in their lives. But this strategy was used not simply in order to gain some advantages in their personal lives such as improving the desperate quality of their homes, food, or clothing. In far too many instances, masking and trickery saved someone's life, deterred punishment, stopped a child from being sold, or allowed an escaping slave time to get out. For the slave, honesty simply signified foolishness, because it would have her participate in her own exploitation and enslavement. Dishonesty or duplicity disrupted this system, even when these attempts were unsuccessful, because, among other things, it dispelled sentimental notions of intimacy and familiarity between the slave and slaveholders.

In the last section, I will look at «passing on» narratives in *Beloved* and *Corregidora*. These narratives are discourses on slavery passed on from mother to daughter which interrogate the effects of slavery on the daughters and granddaughters of slave women. Specifically, what does the daughter learn about mothering from her slave mother, who was denied the right to her child, who rarely, then, could bond with her children, whose milk often went to children not her own, or whose dreams for her children went no further than her own tortured reality? Or what could the slave mother tell her daughter about her body, her sexuality, her desire when the mother has only known unprotected flesh, susceptible to either touch or rupture by any male, black or white? (Another example of this issue is displayed in the relationship between Janie and her grandmother in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In this instance, the grandmother, a former slave, wants protection and security for her granddaughter, but at the expense of her own sexuality.) All four novels tell tales of perseverance and pain, and they alert us to the audaciousness of these women who stayed alive despite violations to their minds and bodies. But as we work, step by agonizing step, to dismantle sexism and racism – which sometimes feels like a boulder heavier than the one Sisyphus toils with, these novels also make me worry about the tenaciousness of slavery's hegemonic hold on perceptions of race and gender in western cultures. In other words, how do these black women authors know what they know?

MASKING AND TRICKERISM IN *DESSA ROSE* AND *KINDRED*

W. E. B. DuBois' concept of double consciousness represents not only two ways of seeing, but also two ways of performing. Blacks are aware of the racial inscriptions marked on their bodies, but they also react to these inscriptions, whether in deference or resistance to them. Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem «We Wear the Mask» complements DuBois' concept:

We wear the mask that grins and lies
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes.
We smile, but O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.

According to Dubois and Dunbar, duplicity is behavior imposed on blacks; the result is masking or trickster performances such as simultaneous grins and lies, smiles and cries. Williams' *Dessa Rose* reveals the power of these performances to save a slave's life, but such may also

sustain the lack of trust between blacks and whites. Briefly, the novel tells the story of a black woman who is condemned to die for her participation in a slave uprising. Because she is pregnant, her execution is postponed until the birth of her child, who, according to law, belongs to the mother's slaveholder. While she waits for her child's birth and her pending death, she is interviewed by a white author, Adam Nehemiah, for his book on slave uprisings. She escapes partly because his perception of her as a darky, a genderless reference to blacks, deters his ability to actually hear and understand Dessa's words. Convinced of her savagery «This was the fiend, the devil woman who had attacked white men and roused other niggers to rebellion» (13), he simply cannot hear her reasons for participating in the uprising. She was enraged by the senseless killing of her husband, but, in Nehemiah's mind, her husband is simply another buck, and Dessa, as a black woman, is incapable of love or righteous rage. Nehemiah imposes a mask on Dessa, constructing her into the demon woman he feels she, essentially-speaking, is. Thus, when she uses this mask to disguise her escape plans, she becomes a trickster - using Nehemiah's own twisted definitions of her to lure him into some sense of comfort in the veracity of his imposed definitions. Upon learning of her escape, he states: «But the slut will not escape me. Sly bitch, smile at me, pretend -. She won't escape me» (72).

In this section of the novel, Dessa uses duplicity to save her life. However, she is assisted by Nehemiah's failure to see or hear her because he is completely oblivious to her humanity, her intelligence, and her passion. Psychologically, this duplicity gives Dessa power – some control and volition in her life. By masking her feelings and intentions and manipulating Nehemiah's perceptions of her as a savage, primitive animal, she tricks Nehemiah into creating circumstances which facilitate her escape. Accomplishing this freedom, however, has forced her to position herself outside of values such as honesty because adherence or commitment to such values can mean the difference between life or death. This example, of course, is quite traumatic; there are other instances in which slaves masked their feelings, either to gain advantage by telling whites what blacks understood the whites wanted to hear, or in order to disguise their true feelings or intentions.

Later in the novel, we see another consequence of masking. Dessa joins other escaped slaves on a plantation owned by a white woman, Miz Rufel, who provides refuge for the slaves because she needs them to work for her. Although she does not own them, the blacks defer to her as if she were their owner, because she is a white woman. Concomitantly, they do not trust her. The masking performances by Dessa and the other blacks reveal an unwillingness to cross the borders established by the mask; thus, the possibilities for understanding, or in this novel, sisterhood between black and white women are frustrated by distrust and, in some instances, rage. During slavery, then, masking and tricksterism were necessary strategies and ways of thinking for the achievement of power, but it also established the standard for interactions between blacks and whites.

Kindred, by Octavia Butler gives another representation of masking, but with a significant twist. In this novel, Dana, a black woman, is transported from 1976 California to antebellum Maryland on numerous occasions to save her ancestor, a white plantation owner, Rufus Weylin. At first, Dana's visits via time travel are brief; later, however, although time does not change in the future, her stays in the past are longer. In one such stay, although she has come of age outside of slavery and even Jim Crow, Dana reverts to the masking and trickster behavior that the slaves use. But she does not learn this behavior from the others; she knows enough about the ways in which blacks were expected to act during slavery, and she incorporates this knowledge into her own language repertoire.

As she becomes more and more a part of the plantation life, Dana makes a disturbing discovery: that she has gradually adapted to her life as a slave, and the masking and trickery come easily to her, after a fashion. These behaviors facilitate her survival because although Rufus knows that he is a distant relative of Dana who has traveled through time and space to save him, he imposes a master/slave relationship between them. As his slave, she is expected to obey him, and any refusal on her part makes her vulnerable to punishment. She learns this lesson very well when she is subjected to a brutal, public beating after resisting his demands. She learned masking

behavior in order to avoid such reactions. But masking and trickery also helps her to manipulate her role and status on the plantation so that she could, for instance, teach reading and writing to slave children, or trick her way into gaining other advantages such as food or better clothing for her and other slaves. What is both startling and devastating in this novel is its revelation that although Dana is a free woman, she could be «whipped» into submission to slave status, and that she understood what was required of all blacks in their relationships with whites: how to defer, how to mask feelings, and how to trick whites into believing that the mask is authentic. *Dessa Rose* and *Kindred* reveal blacks' knowledge and use of masking behavior as a means to confront and/or displace racism since they lacked any legal protection.

PASSING-ON NARRATIVES IN *BELOVED* AND *CORREGIDORA*

In the last chapter of her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Beloved*, Toni Morrison uses a variegated refrain: «It was not a story to pass on» (336) or «This is not a story to pass on» (337). The word «pass» is rich in its intricacy, especially in the context of the novel. On one hand, its use in the sentence refers to mobility - that this story should not be retold. It is, after all, a horror story, a ghost tale. But it is also a family skeleton, a taboo subject, an awful legacy. Why give this story to the descendants to labor over, to whisper about? As Toni Morrison writes: «Remembering seemed unwise» (337). Another reading of «pass» however, gives a contrasting perspective. This is not a story to omit, to overlook, as in a game when someone «passes», that is, skips a chance to play. In this instance, the story of the horrors of slavery must not be a «pass» – a skip, an omission in history. This story of a mother's love that is so desperately precious that she attempts to slit the throats of her children in order to save them from slavery, must be told, must be remembered, if we are to understand the ways in which slavery «mutilated» motherhood for black women. In the story, Sethe succeeds in killing only one of her children, her crawling-already baby girl. Sethe's guilt at first only separates her and her family from the rest of her community; later, however, this guilt turns deadly as it takes the form of the girl's ghost. Sethe slowly goes mad, imagining her Beloved daughter, her most precious gift. The reader wrestles with feelings of horror and compassion for Sethe. This mother did not want her children to be treated as cows in the fields, chickens in the yard. She did not want her daughters' bodies to be sexually violated or mutilated by the overseer's whip. Her only option, she believed, was to kill them. In this instance, slavery inverts our expectations of the maternal instinct: instead of nurturing and protecting, this mother kills. But in her mind, this is a slave-woman's version of motherly love. As Morrison writes:

«Risky, thought Paul D., very risky. For a used to be slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love. The best thing, he knew, was to love just a little bit; everything, just a little bit» (56).

Later, when Sethe tells Paul D. why she tried to kill all of her children, he tells her that her «love is too thick» (202). And he leaves. Loving, for a slave mother or wife or daughter or sister was dangerous, because slavery violated this feeling or made foolish anyone who gives in to them. Yet, Sethe reasons, what other choice did she have: «It ain't my job to know what's worse. It's my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that.» Murdering her children is, for this mother, an act of love because death is preferable to slavery: «They [her children] are not at Sweet Home. Schoolteacher ain't got em» (202).

Morrison's janused-faced use of the word «pass» reflects an ideology embedded in some African statues and masks that have two faces, staring in opposite directions, but unified in one body. These statues acknowledge oppositions and contradictions as coexisting, not separate. In *Beloved*, both definitions of «pass» are operative. It is a story not to be retold to members of Sethe's family because its legacy is too painful, too horrible for future generations to «pass on»;

however, since historians traditionally have not told the full extent of slavery's devastating legacy and its continuing impact on all Americans, stories such as this one must be told. They reveal ways in which perceptions of race and gender during slavery complicated the very act of mothering for black women, and forced them to retreat, for their own lives and mental health, from loving their children too much. This story, thus, is an indictment of slavery.

Gayl Jones' *Corregidora* is, in my mind, the most stunning representation of the impact of slavery on the daughters of slave women. The narrator, Ursa Corregidora, is the great, granddaughter of old man Corregidora, a Portuguese-Brazilian slaveholder and his slave, an African woman. When Ursa's great grandmother was only five years old, Corregidora took this child out of the fields and made her his concubine and whore. Their daughter was also impregnated by Corregidora, and their daughter is Ursa's mother. These three women, Great Gram, Gram, and mother tell, in horrifying details, what the grandmothers endured as slave women. Ursa's mother was the first descendant burdened with the task of being the family's griot, the oral historian of the maternal ancestors' history, and her voice became theirs as she retold their history to Ursa. But the telling has a purpose: the women realized that all evidence of slavery, of the ownership of their bodies, no longer existed. It was up to their female descendants to provide evidence of the sins committed against them, through their voices and their racially mixed bodies. Ursa remembers the following:

His wife was a skinny stuck-up little woman he got from over Lisbon and had her brought over here. He wouldn't sleep with her, so she made me sleep with her, so for five years I was sleeping with her and him. That was when I was from about thirteen to eighteen. You telling the truth, Great Gram, She slapped me. When I'm telling you something don't you ever ask if I'm lying. Because they don't want to leave no evidence of what they done – so it can't be held against them. And I'm leaving evidence. And you got to leave evidence too. And your children got to leave evidence. And when it comes time to hold up the evidence we got to have evidence to hold up. That's why they burned all the papers, so there wouldn't be no evidence to hold up against them. I was five years old then. (14).

This is Ursa's «pass-on» narrative: a story of women reduced to objects for anyone's sexual pleasure, except black men. The function of the telling was to provide evidence, but the impact of these stories, psychologically, on Ursa is devastating. Through the telling and retelling of the stories, she confuses her history and body with those of her maternal ancestors. Since their bodies were exploited and brutalized sexually, she imagines that this is also her reality. Her body is not the site of her sensuality or sexuality; instead it is a vehicle for procreation. Ursa thinks the following: «Consequences, shit we are all consequences of something, Stained with another's past as well as our own. Their past in my blood. I have a birthmark between my legs.» (45)

Ironically, Ursa is released, although violently, from passing on this narrative when her husband accidentally causes her to fall down some steps and she loses both her unborn child and her womb. Without the ability to have children, Ursa questions her womanhood - what is her sex for if it cannot produce children? She slowly and painfully learns to perceive her body outside of the context of her ancestors' slave past, but this occurs after two failed marriages and many years of loneliness and lack of sexual intimacy. In an interview with Rosann Bell, Gayl Jones states: «Although Ursa struggled, she was able to create an affirmation of life out of harshness, cruelty, bitterness, despair, and degradation that had been so much a part of the Black reality» (284-5). Tragically, Ursa achieves this affirmation only after she loses the ability to have children; thus, her ancestors' stories are not passed on. How many other female descendants of black slave women are still passing on perceptions, informed by slavery, about black women's roles and possibilities?

The four novels discussed in this paper illustrate black slave women's ability to survive slavery, but they also frighten us with their relentless representations of their humiliations, the intrusions in and on the body, and, at times, the women's retreat into madness. And the memories of slavery, even the unspoken ones, Toni Morrison suggests, are like ghosts, hovering over us, reminding us of this awful American legacy. Although they are works of fiction, *Dessa Rose*,

Kindred, *Beloved*, and *Corregidora* remind us that any analysis of the psychology of race and gender in American culture must take into consideration slavery's role in the construction of black women's consciousness.

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Les Malheurs de Sophie: Une lecture freudienne? (*)

SOLANGE LEIBOVICI (*)

L'histoire de Sophie, l'héroïne avec qui la Comtesse de Ségur s'est manifestement le plus identifiée,¹ est racontée dans trois livres, écrits dans l'espace de deux années: *Les petites filles modèles* (1858), *Les malheurs de Sophie* (1859) et *Les vacances* (1859). L'ordre chronologique de ses aventures est cependant différent: I *Les malheurs de Sophie* (Sophie vit avec sa mère à la campagne – son père est le plus souvent absent – et elle fait toutes sortes de bêtises que sa mère punit sévèrement); II *Les vacances* (Sophie et ses parents partent pour l'Amérique mais leur bateau fait naufrage et la mère se noie – ou plutôt, elle «est noyée». Le père sauve sa fille mais il se remarie très vite puis meurt. Sophie rentre en France avec sa belle-mère, une marâtre impitoyable qui la brutalise et l'humilie cruellement); III *Les petites filles modèles* (Sophie trouve enfin le bonheur dans une famille de substitution avec de bons parents).

La pédagogue Marie-France Doray remarque qu'à tous les égards *Les Malheurs de Sophie* apparaît comme régressif par rapport aux *Petites Filles modèles*. Il s'agit premièrement selon elle d'une régression vers le passé de Sophie, qui est maintenant âgée de quatre ans et n'a pas encore perdu sa mère, en outre il y aurait régression dans la technique romanesque ainsi que dans le propos du livre: la structure du livre serait faible et ne représenterait qu'une juxtaposition de souvenirs d'enfance. Là où *Les Petites Filles modèles* oppose deux types d'attitude envers les enfants (la mauvaise mère et la bonne mère sont deux personnages différents) et relativise donc le rôle de la mère, *Les Malheurs de Sophie* nous met en présence d'une seule mère qui «assume le rôle traditionnel de mettre l'enfant sur le droit chemin par des interdits et des sanctions».²

Si les livres de la Comtesse de Ségur ont fait l'objet d'analyses, celles-ci se concentrent le plus souvent sur les processus narratifs, la psychologie des personnages et l'échec des manœuvres

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(*) Université d'Amsterdam, Département de littérature et civilisation françaises, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, Pays Bas.

¹ Il n'y a pas ici «pacte autobiographique» dans le contexte analysé par Philippe Lejeune, l'identification ne reposant que sur le prénom.

² Marie-France Doray, *La Comtesse de Ségur: une étrange paroissienne*, Editions Rivages (1990: 24).

pédagogiques décrites dans ces romans pour enfants. Pourtant l'objectif pédagogique n'est qu'un alibi de surface proposé aux parents: il occulte les structures profondes du livre, qui permettent à l'auteur de dévoiler et communiquer ses fantasmes agressifs et sadiques, à la petite lectrice de les reconnaître inconsciemment. Comme l'écrit Bruno Bettelheim à propos du conte de fées, l'enfant est confronté à ce qui l'angoisse le plus: «his formless, nameless anxieties, and his chaotic, angry and even violent fantasies.»³ C'est pour elle (car c'est surtout de lectrices qu'il s'agit ici) que fonctionne à un niveau inconscient la logique régressive du livre, qui plonge de plus en plus profondément vers des niveaux imaginaires refoulés dans laquelle elle retrouve sa propre histoire, et plus particulièrement celle de la relation ambivalente d'une petite fille avec sa mère. La juxtaposition non-ordonnée des souvenirs d'enfance par l'auteur est justement une technique féconde pour réactiver les souvenirs, et rappelle l'association libre, règle fondamentale de la psychanalyse. *Les malheurs de Sophie* sont racontés dans une perspective pre-oedipienne, c'est pourquoi une seule mère y joue les deux rôles – bonne et mauvaise – à la fois.

Les vacances racontent en fait l'échec du rêve oedipien de la petite fille: la mère disparue dans les flots, c'est le père, cet inconnu toujours absent, qui la sauve. Comme l'écrit Marthe Robert, le naufrage représente «l'ultime recours de l'âme enfantine fuyant la nécessité de mûrir, l'espoir de n'être pas né et de renaître dans un monde neuf».⁴ Alors que la mère meurt, la mer, élément féminin pur et «source inépuisable d'amour» (Robert), est comme la promesse d'un avenir meilleur. Mais l'idylle ne dure pas. Le père se montre incapable de reprendre à son compte la fonction maternelle et de protéger sa fille: il n'a qu'un peu d'eau à lui offrir en guise de nourriture, et Sophie est réduite «à l'état de nourrisson insatisfait».⁵ En outre il va lui être très vite infidèle. Il change de nom, niant par là ses origines, et acquiert ainsi une fortune considérable. Ce roman familial inversé tourne mal, puisqu'il épouse une certaine Fédora (patronyme qui renvoie par ailleurs à la mère de la Comtesse, dont le grand-père et le père s'appelaient Féodor ou Fiodor) et il meurt presque immédiatement après.

Si la nouvelle belle-mère de Sophie représente la marâtre telle que nous la rencontrons dans les contes de fée, que l'enfant peut haïr et dont il peut se moquer sans éprouver de sentiments de culpabilité, elle a aussi un aspect phallique à la fois ridicule et terrifiant, comme nous le montre le passage suivant, où l'élégante Fédora est tombée par terre:

«Un rire général salua cette chute, rendue ridicule par le ballonnement de tous les jupons qui restèrent bouffants, faisant un énorme cerceau au-dessus de Mme Fichini, et laissant à découvert deux grosses jambes dont l'une gigotait avec emportement, tandis que l'autre restait immobile dans toute son ampleur.»

L'aspect sexuel de sa puissance n'est pas seulement dévoilé, il est en outre doublé. Chez la mère de Sophie, nous découvrons également le symbole phallique qui représente en premier lieu la force virile, l'autorité voire la domination sadique dans la *verge* dont elle se sert pour punir sa fille. Le père, au contraire de la mère, ne peut remplir comme nous l'avons vu ni la fonction maternelle, ni la fonction paternelle. Voulant punir la marâtre qui a fouetté Sophie, il saisit à son tour la cravache et la bat de toutes ses forces. Ce premier acte viril lui coûte la vie: dans la nuit qui suit cette terrible scène de ménage, il est «pris d'un vomissement de sang», imitation de la menstruation et féminisation/castration du père traître, qui meurt le lendemain.

Le premier épisode des *Malheurs de Sophie* est sans doute le plus célèbre: c'est celui de «la poupée de cire», qui peut être interprété comme un fantasme oedipien.

Un jour Sophie reçoit une caisse que son père lui a envoyée de Paris, et qui contient une magnifique poupée de cire aux cheveux blonds. Craignant que la poupée ne prenne froid, elle

³ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, Penguin Books (1979: 7).

⁴ Marthe Robert, *Roman des origines et origines du roman*, Gallimard (1972: 136).

⁵ Doray (1990: 30).

décide de la mettre au soleil au bord de la fenêtre. Sa maman pourtant l'avertit: «Prends garde, tu vas la faire fondre.» «Oh, non! maman, répond Sophie, il n'y a pas de danger: elle est dure comme du bois.» Lorsqu'au bout d'un moment Sophie retrouve sa poupée, la tête de cire a en effet fondu, en outre elle est devenue aveugle: les yeux se sont détachés et ont roulé à l'intérieur de la tête. Mais la maman la console: «Voyons, ne pleure pas; je suis très habile médecin, je pourrai peut-être lui rendre ses yeux.» Etre médecin, et jouer donc dans la famille un rôle masculin, est bien sûr le rêve de la Comtesse de Ségur, dont le premier livre, un manuel de conseils aux jeunes mamans, est intitulé *La santé des enfants*.⁶ Elle prend des ciseaux et détache le corps cousu à la poitrine; elle prend les yeux avec des pinces, les replace dans la tête qu'elle raccommode avec un peu de cire refroidie. Sophie est aux anges; elle promène la poupée réparée en triomphe en chantant:

Vive Maman!
De baisers je la mange.
Vive Maman!
Elle est notre bon ange.

Plus tard cependant Sophie décide de laver la poupée comme on lave les enfants; elle la débarbouille si bien qu'elle lui enlève toutes ses couleurs. Sophie pleure, mais la poupée reste pâle. Elle veut lui friser les cheveux et les passe au fer chaud, mais elle brûle les cheveux de la poupée qui maintenant est chauve. Sophie pleure, mais la poupée reste chauve. Elle suspend la poupée à une ficelle pour lui faire faire des tours de force: la poupée tombe et se casse un bras. Sophie pleure, mais le bras reste cassé. Elle lui donne un bain de pied avec de l'eau bouillante, les pieds fondent. Sophie pleure, mais la poupée reste sans pieds. Elle fait monter la poupée dans un arbre, celle-ci tombe et sa tête frappe contre des pierres et se fracasse en cent morceaux. Cette fois-ci, Sophie ne pleure pas: elle invite ses amies à venir enterrer la poupée.

Si la structure du livre est en effet incohérente et donne une impression de morcellement par l'énonciation d'anecdotes juxtaposées, elle obéit cependant à une logique interne et associative, commandée par l'angoisse et la passion, la destruction et l'autodestruction. La dislocation du «corps» du livre – tout comme celui de la poupée – renvoie au morcellement intérieur de Sophie. La poupée est «le double idéal, le modèle inaccessible de Sophie», et il y a une équivalence symbolique entre la poupée en miettes et Sophie, elle-même aussi «toute cassée de l'intérieur.»⁷ Il existe une correspondance entre les dommages subis par la poupée et les «malheurs» de Sophie. La poupée perd ses beaux cheveux, Sophie en voulant faire friser les siens «se rend affreuse». La poupée a un bras écourté, Sophie se fait mordre le doigt par un poney puis par un écureuil. Les pieds de la poupée fondent dans l'eau bouillante, ceux de Sophie disparaissent presque, rongés par de la cheau vive où elle s'est aventurée. A chacun des «malheurs» de Sophie, chaque «idée» comme le dit la mère, Sophie est humiliée par elle et punie avec une extrême sévérité.

Ce n'est pas tant la féminité qui est désirée par la petite fille; son désir d'être belle et bien mise exprime en premier lieu le manque d'amour et la blessure narcissique. Sophie aime «à être trouvée jolie». Elle ne l'est pas, et la Comtesse la décrit avec un regard impitoyable, reprenant peut-être les mots de sa propre mère: elle a «une bonne grosse figure bien fraîche», «un nez en l'air et un peu gros», «une bouche grande», «des cheveux blonds pas frisés, et coupés courts comme ceux d'un garçon», elle est toujours «très mal habillée». Quoiqu'elle fasse, Sophie ne sera jamais la jolie poupée, et pour se consoler elle mange; elle ira jusqu'à se bourrer de crème et de pain chaud à s'en rendre malade, ou à voler des fruits confits et même le pain des chevaux à l'écurie.

La répétition d'attitudes destructrices envers la poupée symbolise la destructuration de la fillette, ainsi que sa compulsion à détruire les êtres et les objets qu'elle veut justement protéger.

⁶ Publié intégralement dans Colette Misrahi, *La Comtesse de Ségur ou la mère médecin*, Denoël (1991).

⁷ Isabelle Nières, «Quelques adaptations des *Malheurs de Sophie*, de la métamorphose à l'anamorphose», in *La Revue des livres pour enfants* (Printemps, 1985, n.º 101).

Marie-France Doray remarque que «le caractère interchangeable des épisodes révèle l'angoisse de l'enfant mal-aimée et sa tendance à l'autodestruction mais dénonce aussi l'inefficacité et la nocivité de l'attitude maternelle du point de vue éducatif».⁸

Pourtant Sophie ne copie pas les gestes de la mère, comme le pense Doray: elle en donne une caricature sadique. Elle détruit lentement la poupée, idéal irréalisable, et elle y trouve un certain plaisir, qui répète le plaisir qu'elle imagine être celui de la mauvaise mère. Elle détruit également le monde qui l'entoure et veut le rendre au chaos, à l'*hybris* et la transgression qui caractérisent l'univers sadique-anal de l'enfant. Si à chaque accident, «Sophie pleure», c'est qu'elle s'identifie aussi avec la poupée. La répétition indique où est le véritable «malheur» de Sophie: le chagrin irréparable causé par le manque d'amour maternel. Ce n'est pas la poupée mais Sophie qui «a froid» et désire le soleil, symbole du père, de la vie et de la protection. Comme la poupée qui ne se répare pas mais reste chauve, laide, sans bras et sans pieds, Sophie est chosifiée et détruite à jamais.

A première vue, l'histoire de la poupée de cire se relie à la phase oedipale décrite par Freud dans «Quelques conséquences psychiques de la différence anatomique entre les sexes»⁹ et plus particulièrement à ce que Freud a nommé «envie du pénis». Tout d'abord la petite fille refuserait d'accepter le fait de sa castration, dont la mère est rendue responsable, et la blessure narcissique entraînerait chez elle un sentiment d'infériorité. Puis la libido de la petite fille glisserait dans une nouvelle position pénis=enfant: «elle renonce au désir du pénis pour le remplacer par le désir d'un enfant, et, dans ce dessein, elle prend le père comme objet d'amour.»¹⁰ Freud, pour qui le complexe d'Oedipe représente ici une progression puisque la petite fille abandonne un rêve impossible – avoir un pénis – pour anticiper sa vie de future maman, conclut en disant que «la mère devient objet de sa jalousie; la petite fille tourne en femme».

Dans une couche plus profonde de ce fantasme, Sophie est plus jeune, peut-être deux ou trois ans. La poupée reçue du père est alors le nouveau bébé, qui vient prendre la place de la petite fille et lui voler l'amour de la mère.¹¹ Selon Freud, «l'aîné manifeste, contre le concurrent, une hostilité non dissimulée qui se soulage dans un jugement sans aménité, dans des désirs comme: “que la cigogne le remporte” et autres choses de ce genre, et qui même, à l'occasion, lui fait commettre de petits attentats sur ce qui est couché là, sans défense, dans le berceau.»¹² La poupée est le célèbre «enfant qui est battu», fantasme onaniste dérivé de l'envie du pénis et exprimant la jalousie envers le rival.¹³ L'«acting-out» implique que l'enfant non seulement est battu, mais qu'il est en outre martyrisé jusqu'au meurtre véritable, suivi d'un joyeux enterrement. Car cette fois-ci Sophie ne pleure pas, au contraire, elle s'amuse beaucoup avec ses amies et elles cherchent ensemble d'autres poupées à qui faire subir ce sort bien mérité.

Mais en fait le fantasme oedipien en cache un autre et l'histoire passe d'un niveau à l'autre, de l'oedipien au pré-oedipien, de l'amour pour le père à la relation symbiotique avec la mère, montrant bien comme les deux sont reliés. Il y a maintenant trois personnages: Sophie, la poupée, la maman. La mère est toute-puissante, c'est elle qui va réparer la poupée avec ses forces magiques et une paire de ciseaux, double symbole du phallus et de la castration. Elle ouvre le ventre de la poupée - référence à l'accouchement et la naissance, dont elle connaît tous les secrets - et elle guérit la poupée devenue aveugle, symptôme relié aux sentiments de culpabilité qu'entraîne le fantasme incestueux de la petite fille. Celle-ci projette son angoisse de l'inceste sur la poupée, qui est punie car elle sait le drame terrible qui a eu lieu: l'amour incestueux du père et de la fille, dont elle est le produit.

⁸ Doray (1990: 26).

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *La vie sexuelle* (PUF, 1992).

¹⁰ Freud (1992: 130).

¹¹ Au contraire de la Comtesse de Ségur, Sophie n'a - détail surprenant pour l'époque - ni frères ni sœurs.

¹² Freud, «Les théories sexuelles infantiles», in *La vie sexuelle* (1992: 17).

¹³ Freud (1992: 128).

En réparant la poupée, la mère commet un acte de réparation et de pardon de l'acte incestueux, mais elle procure aussi à la poupée une nouvelle naissance où le père n'intervient pas. La mère, la fille, la poupée-bébé. Dans le fantasme archaïque pré-oedipien, où l'enfant ne sait rien ou peu de la procréation, le père est en fait un rival dangereux; ici la petite fille possède seule la mère, elles ont ensemble un bébé. C'est la bonne mère, qui donne avec plaisir son lait et sa chair, et se laisse dévorer par l'enfant: «Vive maman, de baisers je la mange.»

Les tendances boulimiques de Sophie, qui elles aussi sont toujours sévèrement punies, renforcent l'impression d'un désir si fort qu'il aboutit à l'anéantissement de la mère. Pour Melanie Klein, l'envie de l'enfant est si intense que non seulement il veut s'approprier le lait mais aussi le sein et la mère entière.¹⁴ Il ne s'agit pas là, écrit Melanie Klein, d'un seul désir de nourriture: «l'enfant voudrait aussi être débarrassé de ses pulsions destructrices et de son angoisse persécutive.» Selon Klein, on retrouve dans les analyses d'adultes ce souhait d'une mère omnipotente, capable de protéger le sujet de tous les maux et toutes les souffrances provenant de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur. Freud remarque à ce sujet que l'on trouve dans la dépendance envers la mère le germe d'une attitude paranoïque ultérieure. Il note dans le célèbre article «Sur la sexualité féminine» que l'on «rencontre les désirs oraux agressifs et les désirs sadiques sous la forme à laquelle le refoulement du début les a contraints, comme une angoisse d'être tué par la mère qui, de son côté, justifie le désir de mort de la mère, si ce désir devient conscient».¹⁵ Freud ajoute: «on veut dévorer la mère de laquelle on s'est nourri; le père ne peut être le motif d'un tel désir.»

En fait, tous les épisodes des «malheurs» de Sophie sont dictés par des fantasmes pré-oedipiens, dont font également partie les célèbres passages où la petite fille, en voulant soigner des animaux ou jouer avec eux, les martyrise et les laisse mourir. Sophie met les poissons de sa mère sur la table, elle les coupe en tranches avec le joli couteau donné par son père et les saupoudre de sel, traitement dont ils ne se remettent pas. Elle laisse un poulet se promener dans le jardin, et celui-ci est dévoré par un vautour. Elle décapite une abeille pour la punir de toutes les piqûres qu'elle a faites, et mine de rien elle laisse périr dans des circonstances dramatiques les oiseaux de la volière maternelle, un chat, un écureuil, un âne et une tortue.

Chez le petit enfant, ce genre d'expérimentation sur des animaux va souvent de pair avec une excitation sexuelle et des fantasmes inconscients, et reflète les questions que l'enfant se pose au sujet de la sexualité: «à cette excitation sont liées des pulsions que l'enfant ne sait pas interpréter, impulsions obscures à une action violente: pénétrer, casser, percer des trous partout.»¹⁶ L'existence du vagin ne lui étant pas encore connue, l'enfant est déconcerté par les lacunes que présentent ses propres théories sur la sexualité. Mais dans ses expériences sadiques Sophie reproduit également les châtiments que sa mère lui inflige et qu'elle subit passivement. La soumission masochiste est ici inversée dans une activité sadique lui permettant de maîtriser ses angoisses et de tenter d'obtenir un certain contrôle sur le monde environnant.

Dans «La boîte à ouvrage», Mme de Réan appelle sa fille pour lui montrer une charmante boîte à ouvrage qui contient dans ses compartiments toutes sortes de jolies choses et que M. de Réan vient d'envoyer de Paris.

«Comme tout cela est joli, dit-elle, et comme c'est commode d'avoir tout ce qu'il faut pour travailler! Pour qui est cette boîte, maman? ajouta Sophie en souriant, comme si elle avait été sûre que sa maman répondrait: *C'est pour toi.* – C'est à moi que ton papa l'a envoyée, répondit Mme de Réan. – Quel dommage! J'aurais bien voulu l'avoir. – Eh bien! je te remercie! Tu es fâchée que ce soit moi qui aie cette jolie boîte! C'est un peu égoïste.»

Mme de Réan refuse de lui donner la boîte: elle ne sait pas encore coudre, elle perdrait tous les objets qu'elle contient, *elle est trop jeune*. Déçue, Sophie décide de voler le contenu de la boîte; elle

¹⁴ Melanie Klein, *Envie et gratitude* (Gallimard, 1968).

¹⁵ Freud (1992: 150).

¹⁶ Freud (1992: 21).

enferme dans le tiroir de sa petite table tout ce qu'elle a pris dans la boîte de sa maman. Mme de Réan bien sûr s'aperçoit très vite du vol. Sophie est fouettée et elle a beau demander grâce, «elle reçut le fouet de la bonne manière». La fureur maternelle, comme toujours, transgresse l'identité sexuelle et transforme la mère en père. Mme de Réan donne la boîte, que le père avait en effet destinée à Sophie, à son amie Elisabeth, qui est toujours bonne et sage.

La boîte tant désirée représente le ventre maternel avec les enfants qu'il contient, et à un niveau fantasmatique, Sophie vole le contenu du ventre de la mère. Il y a dans ce fantasme un certain réalisme: la boîte – le ventre – n'est pas volée, ce serait impossible, en outre Sophie espère qu'ayant déjà le contenu, elle obtiendra facilement la boîte.

Selon Winnicott, le désir de voler les bébés de la mère renvoie chez la petite fille à toutes sortes d'angoisses concernant son propre corps et la castration, ainsi que de craintes que son corps ne soit menacé par des figures maternelles hostiles. L'attaque affamée du corps de la mère progresse vers le désir de lui ressembler, et il existe selon lui une association étroite entre le vol, le désir sexuel et le souhait d'avoir un bébé. La petite fille a le désir primitif d'obtenir la féminité en la retirant du corps de la mère.¹⁷

Le châtiment infligé à Sophie est extrêmement dur: Mme de Réan donne la boîte à une autre petite fille, niant par là que Sophie puisse posséder une féminité propre, qu'elle puisse avoir un jour elle-même des bébés, puisqu'elle ne le mérite pas. Dans la perspective freudienne, elle l'empêche en même temps de laisser derrière elle l'angoisse de castration, de changer le désir du pénis en désir d'enfanter. Elle la condamne au souhait irréalisable d'obtenir ce qu'elle n'aura jamais, et à rester bloquée dans le fantasme angoissant de la mère pourvue du phallus.

La véritable Sophie, Sophie de Ségur née Rostopchine, eut huit enfants, comme sa propre mère. Après la naissance de sa dernière fille, elle cesse de pouvoir être mère. Le «tu ne seras pas mère» devient alors «tu ne le seras plus». Elle sombre dans la dépression - l'hystérie - et va rester plus de douze ans condamnée à la chaise longue, inerte et sans voix, en proie à d'affreux maux de tête. La blessure narcissique est ravivée, et en véritable hystérique la Comtesse retourne sa haine et sa fureur sur elle-même. Les médecins n'y comprennent rien.

Ne pouvant plus être mère, la Comtesse redevient la petite Sophie, et comme sa mère n'est plus là pour la punir, elle se punit elle-même, s'enferme dans sa chambre, s'interdit de bouger et de marcher, s'inflige de terribles maux de tête qui cachent peut-être des fantasmes par trop destructifs. Grâce à la dépression, les sentiments agressifs peuvent être neutralisés et refoulés.

Comme l'écrit Colette Misrahi, «à la violence masquée du symptôme, Sophie [de Ségur] substitue la violence du “taire”. Les maux de l'hystérique sont un langage, une traduction».¹⁸ En se taisant et en se contentant d'écouter, Freud va savoir rendre la parole aux hystériques. La Comtesse devra se guérir elle-même. Elle retrouve sa voix avec un nouveau rôle, celui de grand-mère: elle va écrire des livres dédiés en premier lieu à ses petits-enfants, où elle peut enfin se délivrer de ses fantasmes sado-masochistes. La mère qui disparaît dans les flots à la fin des *Malheurs de Sophie* n'est pas un motif oedipien, mais un résidu de l'angoisse envers la mère phallique et la haine qu'elle suscite. Devenue grand-mère, Sophie se libère enfin d'elle: elle est la mère de la mère.

Délivrée également de la féminité – de la castration par la mère – elle va faire carrière d'écrivain et gagner de l'argent, et la persévérance avec laquelle elle réclame le droit de disposer de ses droits d'auteur prouve que ce rôle ne lui déplait pas.

Dans toutes sortes de textes écrits avant les découvertes de la psychanalyse, nous trouvons des thèmes et des motifs qui annoncent l'évolution des théories psychanalytiques. La grande

¹⁷ D. W. Winnicott, *L'enfant et le monde extérieur* (Payot, 1972: 133).

¹⁸ Misrahi (1991: 34).

découverte de Freud, la «talking cure», n'était pas chose nouvelle. Le premier médecin à avoir systématisé la notion du secret pathogène et de la thérapeutique qu'il implique semble avoir été le Viennois Moritz Benedikt. A partir de 1864, celui-ci publie une série d'articles, où il montre que l'hystérie a souvent pour origine un secret pénible, qui a presque toujours trait à la sexualité, et que la confession des secrets pathogènes peut entraîner la solution des problèmes s'y rapportant.¹⁹ Ce sont les secrets racontés par les patientes hystériques de Freud qui l'ont amené à théoriser une méthode déjà utilisée bien avant lui: l'effet thérapeutique de la confession.

L'histoire de Sophie, cette petite fille qui n'est pas modèle dans la haine, le désir amoureux et les sentiments sado-masochistes envers sa mère (le «secret pathogène» de la Comtesse), nous rappelle la dimension historique et culturelle de la psychanalyse, qui fait partie du discours caractéristique d'une époque donnée. Cette histoire et la lecture freudienne qui en a été présentée ici forment un tout.

La psychanalyse est un discours sur la vie fantasmatique d'une période recouverte par une partie du XIXe siècle et du XXe, période dans laquelle tous les textes et énoncés sont, ainsi que l'a montré Michel Foucault, les produits des façons de penser et d'agir sous-jacents à l'expérience consciente de cette période. Dans ce sens, la psychanalyse *ne pouvait pas ne pas être découverte* à la fin du XIXe siècle. La vie onirique d'une classe sociale ainsi que la façon dont Freud l'analyse et l'interprète dans *Die Traumdeutung*, peut être lue comme un psychogramme de l'époque, le matériel apporté par les patients quadrille en quelque sorte la situation sociopsychologique d'une période. Ce qui surgit dans le rêve ou le fantasme, c'est tout ce qui demeurait réprimé dans le monde de tous les jours avec sa morale sexuelle répressive, ses tabous et ses interdits. Peut importe, remarque Hermann Glaser, si l'interprétation qu'en donne la psychanalyse est objectivement exacte, car même une interprétation erronée des symboles sexuels est éclairante: elle relie le rêveur (nocturne ou diurne) à l'*analyste* grâce au champ transférentiel.²⁰

La Comtesse de Ségur pensait écrire des livres pédagogiques qui apprendraient aux enfants à être plus sages. Elle n'a jamais été consciente du fait que ses petits lecteurs et ses petites lectrices puissent se reconnaître à un niveau imaginaire dans ses personnages, dont les fantasmes sado-masochistes reflétaient parfois leurs propres angoisses et désirs inconscients, ainsi que les secrets qu'ils allaient continuer de porter en eux le reste de leur vie adulte.

Le texte, littéraire ou autre, et en fait toute production culturelle, laissent transparaître des fantasmes inconscients ne pouvant être véritablement compris sans l'apport de la psychanalyse, qui en dévoile les dimensions cachées, les affects et les secrets sous-jacents. Ce qu'a voulu Freud, c'est comme l'écrit Robert Silhol *nous faire savoir ce qui nous fait agir* et nous tient à la peau si indéfectiblement que nous n'y renonçons jamais facilement.²¹ La psychanalyse n'est rien de moins, mais en même temps: elle n'est rien de plus.

¹⁹ Henri F. Ellenberger, *Histoire de la découverte de l'inconscient* (Fayard, 1994: 80).

²⁰ Hermann Glaser, *Sigmund Freud et l'âme du XXe siècle* (PUF, 1995).

²¹ Robert Silhol, «Le radeau de la Méduse et le sexe des anges», *Grädiva* (1996, vol. 1, n.º 2, 1975).

May Sinclair: The evolution of a psychological novelist

GEORGE M. JOHNSON (*)

May Sinclair (1863-1946) currently stands as the most undeservedly neglected Edwardian novelist who made the transition into modernism. She has not always been in this position, however. At the height of her career in the early 1920's she was recognized as the best and most widely known female novelist (Thomas Moulton, qtd in Boll, 1973: 16). One critic, John Farrar, confidently asserted that Sinclair is «the greatest psychological analyst in fiction» (as qtd. in Boll, 1973: 16). Poet Jean de Bosschere thought her «the least conventional of women writers» (McDowell 231). Others praised her pioneering contributions to the development of the novel and her versatility (Phelps 229). Despite general agreement about her significance among a number of discerning critics of her time, Sinclair has never been included in the modern British canon.

Was Sinclair overpraised during her lifetime? Has the passage of time permitted a more just assessment of her position – as a minor novelist of merely historical curiosity? I do not believe so. Admittedly Sinclair produced a large number of novels not all of which maintained a high quality, but the same might be said of D. H. Lawrence who has consistently maintained a place in the canon. Rather Sinclair's reputation has been adversely affected by a number of forces having little to do with the quality of her writing. Before touching on the most significant of those forces, I want to sketch in one of the most important aspects of her achievement, her development as a psychological novelist well ahead of her time.

Not only was Sinclair in many instances the first to assimilate some of the ideas of the «new» psychology into English fiction, but her study extended well beyond that of her contemporaries. Following a brief definition of the «new» psychology and a summary of her commitment to these ideas, I will demonstrate how her learning helped change the shape of her fiction, by focussing on her portrayal of the self, the influence of unconscious conflict on conscious behaviour and the role of the artist in relation to society in three of her novels dealing with artist figures, her first novel, *Audrey Craven* (1897), *The Creators* (1910), and a modernist masterpiece *Mary Olivier* (1919).

The «new» psychology can be defined primarily by its postulations that mind consists of psychic energy in perpetual movement on various levels of awareness and that the self is fluid. In the early nineteenth-century, Johann Herbart (among others) had prefigured the new dynamic approach through his suggestion that the mind had three layers, a narrow, conscious one, separated

(*) The University College of the Cariboo, Department of English, 900 College Drive, Box 3010, Kamloops, B. C., V2C 5N3, USA.

by what he called the threshold of consciousness from two larger ones, in which representations were inhibited or repressed, but not destroyed (Sand 470; Boring 244).

Despite Herbart's pioneering efforts, however, the «new» psychology only gathered momentum in the late 1880's through the work of Pierre Janet, William James, T. Ribot, F. W. H. Myers and, only later, William McDougall, Freud and Jung, amongst others. These psychologists made several important contributions. They explored the pathological in order to gain insight into the normal and thus broke down rigid distinctions between the two conditions. Their discovery of multiple selves in hysterics and other subjects under hypnosis led to more fluid or shifting conceptions of self and to a more sophisticated understanding of the relation between conscious and unconscious processes.

In Britain, the main vehicle for the early dissemination as well as development of the new ideas was the Society For Psychical Research. Members sought evidence in abnormal psychology to support the hypothesis that personality survived bodily death. Not only did the Society thus introduce to a varied English audience the latest European developments in psychiatry and psychology, including Janet's and Freud's, but it shaped the perceived significance of this material.

Sinclair gained some of her information about the «new» psychology from the Society for Psychical Research, of which she was a long-time member, and like the psychical researchers she entered this field through the study of philosophy. An early mentor at Cheltenham Ladies College, Dorothea Beale, fostered her interest in Kant and introduced her to Johann Herbart and T. H. Green's ideas. By 1890 Sinclair had read Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* (1855), Maudsley's *Body and Mind* (1870), and Ribot's *L'Heredité Psychologique* (1873, English Trans., 1875).¹ In her first fictions, she alludes to psychical research, William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890), and Pierre Janet's *The Mental State of Hystericals* [(Trans. 1903). (Sinclair, 1897: 134; Sinclair, 1898: 178; Sinclair, 1901: 289)].

After 1912, approximately when Sinclair began to read Freud, she engaged in a wide variety of activities revealing her commitment to the study of the «new» psychology. Most notably, she helped found and finance the Medico-Psychological Clinic, the first to employ an eclectic approach to psychotherapy in Britain, and she wrote two book-length defences of idealism, in which she evaluates from the perspective of idealism Freud, Bergson, William James, William McDougall, and psychical researcher Frederic Myers's *magnum opus Human Personality* (1903).

Nevertheless, the most imaginative and forward-looking expression of her psychological and philosophical expertise is to be found in her fiction. May Sinclair's first published novel, *Audrey Craven* (1897), is a thoughtful as well as entertaining study, both of a woman's unenlightened quest for self-revelation and of the complex relations between life and art. Through her protagonist Sinclair questions the nineteenth-century conception of the self as substantial and static. Audrey cannot conceive losing her personal identity (1897: 32), but her self is shown to be completely fluid, subject to the invasion of more powerful personalities, and her soul prey to transformation, as in metempsychosis. This dynamic portrayal thus fuses the psychologist William James's conception of the self as stream and Pierre Janet's findings about multiple personality, with a popular metaphysical concept. As illustration, Katherine Haviland, sister of Ted, one of those who influences Audrey, notices a «change of key» in her and realizes that

Audrey was playing a new part. Her mind was swayed by a fresh current of ideas; it had suffered the invasion of a foreign personality. The evidence for this was purely psychological but it all pointed one way.... Audrey was actually undergoing another metempsychosis.... No wonder that she would not announce her engagement. At the best of times her fluent nature shrank from everything that was fixed and irrevocable.... (1897: 142)

¹ This information is revealed in two sections of Sinclair's novel, *Mary Olivier*, declared by Sinclair to be autobiographical (M. Sinclair to Marc Loge, as qtd. in Boll, 1973: 244).

The narrative is omniscient but Sinclair's conception of Audrey's self is a forerunner of the stream of consciousness in the sense that James' stream metaphor evokes a view of the self as a passive receiver of impressions and Audrey is certainly that.

Though the novel is not a *bildungsroman*, Sinclair progressively reveals just enough details of her protagonist Audrey's past so that the perceptive reader can construct a picture of the manner in which her self developed. According to Audrey, she hardly ever saw her mother (1897: 62). Her father appears to have been controlling, if not tyrannical, since he «had a low opinion of all women, and he distrusted Audrey's temperament», causing him to prevent her from coming into her inheritance until she is twenty-five (1897: 8). Both parents died when Audrey was ten. Though the narrator informs us that, «The age of 10 is the age of disenchantment – for those of us who can take a hint», Audrey never wholly experienced this state, despite their deaths (1897: 7). These details suggest that she denied her grief and subsequently lived in an illusory world. From this point on, her cousin and lover Hardy «dominated her intellect» (1897: 19) and controlled her, as a comment much later in the novel makes clear. In one of the few instances where a childhood trait is imputed to be the source of Audrey's adult motivation, we are told: «Fear that had made her lie to Ted, made her tell the truth to Hardy. That fear was deep-rooted, it dated from the days when they were children and Vincent had the mastery in all their play» (1897: 196). Thus, with subtle strokes Sinclair conveys that Audrey's inability to deal with the loss of parents, combined with forced submission to the will of her cousin, has left her unable to feel and lacking in self-knowledge (1897: 309). She remains in a state of child-like dependency, «a small creature struggling with things too great for her» (1897: 324).

However, it is not simply pity that we feel for Audrey since her past misfortune is overshadowed by her present manipulations. Sinclair attends to Audrey's unconscious behaviour in order to reveal another dimension of her personality, «the secret places of her soul, its unconscious hypocrisy, its vanity, its latent capacity for evil» (1897: 196). Since Audrey is «Not given to self-analysis...», her actions frequently serve to reveal her unconscious desires (1897: 196). In a confrontation with Hardy, who returns from Canada expecting betrothal and finding that he has been thrown over, Audrey claims that she wishes she were dead, while simultaneously «she was trying to wring the neck off a little china image» she has picked up from her mantelpiece (1897: 191-192). Hardy then asks whether anything has happened and Audrey responds, while at the same time «The china image slipped through her fingers and was broken to bits on the hearthstone» (1897: 192), thus betraying her unconscious feeling. This occurrence at once symbolizes her frustration at herself, as well as her desire to destroy the old image Hardy has of her as a fragile figurine, and as betrothed to him.

Sinclair's awareness of the consequences of the repression of unconscious impulses is made clear in the following description of Audrey's maiden aunt chaperon:

If you, being young and vivacious, take a highly nervous old lady and keep her in a state of perpetual repression, shutting her out from all your little confidences, you will find that the curiosity so natural to her age, will be sure to burst out, after such bottling, in alarming effervescence. (1897: 23)

Her use of the term repression here must surely derive from her reading of Herbart. Sinclair also frequently shows characters suffering from psychosomatic illness, including morbid sensitivity (1897: 207), nerves (1897: 230, 243), depression, and moral shock (1897: 142), the last-mentioned likely based on the psychic shock theory of Janet and others. These references confirm that Sinclair's characterization is thoroughly informed by current knowledge about the dynamic nature of thought.

Audrey strives to be seen as original and is ironically referred to as an artist. A daughter of the modern age, Audrey is a woman with a room of her own, thirty years before Virginia Woolf evoked the room as a symbol of feminine independence. However, she fails to take advantage of this position and is shown to be a construct of or «looking-glass» (1897: 124) for the male artists she

encounters who transform her into their art. Her mind, like her room, is furnished with the ideas of others. In one passage rich with irony she says to her latest admirer, an idealist painter called Ted, «I'm not in the least conventional, and I don't think I'm weak-minded. And I want my room to express my character, to be a bit of myself. So give me some ideas. You don't mind my asking you, do you? You're the only artist I know.» (1897: 54). In yet another irony, neither Ted's paintings nor naturalist novelist Langley Wyndam's literary portrait capture the composite that is Audrey; their fictions are no more accurate than the fictions she lives. Through these characters Sinclair conveys both individual weaknesses of the artist, including egotism, and the limitations imposed by the systems they follow; her characterisation suggests the recognition that psychology is more complex than any one system, as hinted at in the narrator's comment that «In our modern mythology, Custom, Circumstance, and Heredity are the three Fates that weave the web of human life.» (1897: 10).

In her subsequent novels Sinclair advanced the sophistication of her psychological characterisation. In 1898 she probed the dynamics of a father's jealousy of his child (*Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson*). In 1901 she has one of her characters proclaim that «the last reality was sex» (1901: 58) and she portrays a doctor who implements a talking cure and bibliotherapy in order to alleviate a female patient's psychosomatic distress («Superseded»). By 1907 Sinclair was exploring the imaginative possibilities of sublimation, a theme that continued to preoccupy her (*The Helpmate*).

In *The Creators* of 1910, Sinclair probed more thoroughly than previously the influence of unconscious motives and conflicts on the selfhood of a number of characters, most of them literary «geniuses», though she continued to employ the technique of omniscient analysis. In particular she subtly intimated the importance of sexual drives in determining conscious behaviour, notably in the choice of marriage partners. She also suggested that the preoccupations of the self could be transcended through moments of illumination bearing uncanny resemblance to the moments of being that Virginia Woolf would begin to describe over a decade later. During one of these, Jane Holland, a writer,

could not say how or at what moment the incredible thing happened, but of a sudden the world she looked at became luminous and insubstantial and divinely still. She could not tell whether the stillness of the world had passed into her heart, or her heart into the stillness of the world. (1910: 111)

The novel explores various perspectives on the genesis and nature of genius. Early in the novel the narrator's comments on realist writer George Tanquary's view of his genius suggest that it is limited: «He denied perversely that genius was two-sexed, or that it was even essentially a virile thing. The fruitful genius was feminine, rather, humble and passive in its attitude to life. It yearned perpetually for the embrace, the momentary embrace of the real. But no more.» (1910: 15). Another character, Dr. Henry Brodrick, espouses a simplistic medical view of genius as neurosis. Owen Prospero, a doctor with spiritual awareness, challenges this and presents a more sympathetic view of the genius as a person possessed of a delicate and finely-tuned nervous system perfectly adapted for the channelling of spiritual energies. The novel also thoughtfully weighs the problems and advantages associated with being an artist. One of the central themes of the extra difficulties in being a woman writer, illustrated through Jane Holland's frustrations in marriage and Nina Lempriere's challenges as a single woman, seems very modern indeed.

Sinclair explored that theme more fully and deeply in her first *kunstlerroman*, *Mary Olivier*, which traces the title character's development from infancy to 47 (1919: 33, 329). Hailing it as an «apotheosis of middle-age», E. M. Forster remarked on its difference from the cradle to grave school of realism, but in this feature it also differs from other modernist *kunstlerroman* such as Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913) and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) (Forster, as cited in «May Sinclair», 1987: 2599). Sinclair shows the impact of family dynamics on the formation of Mary's self and in so doing destroys the sanctity of the Victorian family as had Samuel Butler, but she does it with much more psychological perspicacity. A critic in *The Little Review* hesitatingly grouped Sinclair with other moderns who employed Freud in the manner that a

home dressmaker uses Butterick patterns (Heaps, 1919: 30); this characterization is unfair since by this time Sinclair's approach to character involved a much more complex combination of psychological forces, which she infused with some Freudian elements. She employs Freudian sexual symbolism from the beginning of the novel, as when Mary builds a tower in an unsuccessful bid to draw her mother's attention away from her sons, who are building a snowman in the yard (1919: 9-10), and the symbolism becomes more complex as Mary's relationships develop. A variation on Oedipal dynamics informs but does not obtrude in Sinclair's depiction of Mary's controlling and manipulative «little holy Mamma». Starved for affection from her alcoholic husband, «Mamma» redirects her affection to her sons, particularly the eldest, and perceives Mary as a rival for their affections. Not only does Mamma withhold love from Mary but she attempts to keep Mary dependent on her, forcing Mary to take up her religious orthodoxy and imposing on Mary the traditional passive feminine role. Mary's resulting ambivalence on a number of levels is convincingly drawn. Freudian psychology, however, also probably contributed in a more subtle way to Sinclair's depiction of the influence of past conflicts and memories in present consciousness. To capture this Sinclair employed the technique of shifting from the more distanced third person in remembering an event to second person (and even occasionally first person) in order to convey the emotional immediacy that a long past event still possesses. For example, a passage describing a train ride begins: «The small, ugly houses streamed past» before moving into Mary's directly signalled memory of «Her father's hand on her shoulder», leading to the question «Why hadn't she loved him?» The next association shifts into the second person suggesting the emotional power of the scene, which also conveys the answer to Mary's question: «Mamma's face, in the hall, breaking up suddenly. Her tears in your mouth. Her arms, crushing you.... Don't think of Mamma.» (1919: 135-136). Katherine Mansfield either misunderstood or disliked the significance of the technique, disparaging the novel because «In the beginning Mary is two, but at the end she is still two – and forty-seven – and so it is throughout. At any moment, whatever her real age may be she is two – or forty-seven – either, both.» (Mansfield, 1919: 45). However, the technique effectively depicts the importance of childhood experiences in adult life and memories. Another technique that helps highlight the nature of consciousness is Sinclair's use of passages of varying lengths but as brief as one line which are marked off either by a series of dots or by section numbers within chapters (ie. 1919: 298, 363, 370, 380). Sinclair had begun to use this technique of selection in 1914 in *The Three Sisters*, a novel of repressed lives inspired by the Brontës (about whom Sinclair had written a biography), but she employs it to full effect in this novel. These imagistic set pieces, which frequently contain verbless phrases, provide the contour of incidents significant within Mary's consciousness. These of course do not necessarily correspond to outwardly significant life events, though they may include them.

That Sinclair's account is more encompassing than textbook Freudianism is suggested by several continuing influences, including naturalism. Mary struggles for selfhood against the perceived force of heredity; she fears that she will inherit the taint that resulted in her father's alcoholism and her Aunt's hysteria. As in *Audrey Craven*, to a certain extent Mary Olivier's self is shown to be a composite of the projections of others influential in her life. The spiritual also plays a role since Mary possesses a mystical nature, represented through moments of illumination, which at the close of the novel enables her to detach from her pain and to recognize the source of her happiness within (1919: 378).

In the Virago introduction to *Mary Olivier*, Jean Radford suggests that «the novel is too long; there are too many lovers lost, too much detail about her philosophical reading, too many scenes in which mother and daughter enact the same painful conflicts.» (vii). But Sinclair could be defended on the grounds that she was trying to capture the full reality of the long-term suppression of an individual. In this stifling atmosphere it seems convincing that emotional conflicts are repeated again and again. Through the multiple deaths and departures of lovers Sinclair perceptively suggests something of the origins of Mary's intellectual striving and developing artistry as a poet. Since human relationships prove inconsistent and even treacherous, Mary embraces the reliable, ordered

world of texts and ideas. In placing so much emphasis on Mary's reading, Sinclair is trying to convey the psychological needs it answers in Mary. She finds compensation for her loneliness and learns to sublimate her thwarted passions initially through her piano playing and then in her poetry writing. Unlike in her earlier novels which focused on creators in community with one another, in *Mary Olivier* she conveys the fully modern situation of the artist, isolated and alienated from those around her.

Despite Sinclair's pioneering and sophisticated assimilation of numerous insights drawn from the «new psychology», she has never received the recognition she deserves, and has certainly never been considered a canonical writer. A number of factors contributed to this situation including some biographical ones, which I can only touch on here. Sinclair abhorred self-promotion and completely disappeared from the literary scene in 1931, sixteen years before her death, when she was overtaken by the progressively debilitating neuro-physiological disease – Parkinson's – which had contributed to the falling off in quality of her final six hastily written novels. More significantly, however, her writing does not align in some important ways with high Modernism as it has been constructed. Furthermore, the gradual and successful transition that she made into modernism provides a powerful counterexample to the myth of modernism's break with the past. Traditionally, entry into the Modernist camp has been governed by the degree of formal challenge or experimentation, linguistic complexity, allusiveness and even «aloof indecipherability» (Scott 15) displayed in a writer's work. According to these (language-based) criteria May Sinclair does not quite measure up. Though she did move into formal experimentation through her use of a selective stream of consciousness, she did not discard a chronological approach or other traditional methods of structuring novels, such as chapter breaks. Sinclair's novels are informed by a complex structure of ideas, but she assimilates these smoothly and avoids jarring use of allusive fragments. She did not embrace obscurity as a sign of sophistication but importantly defended a genuine obscurity of feeling because «emotion at a certain depth is obscure» (Sinclair, as cited in Gillespie, 438).

With regards to the politics of author-reader relations, modernists have conventionally been identified as those who wrote for a select coterie of intellectuals and scorned the popular. Once again Sinclair does not conform since her novels achieved both popular success and avant-garde acclaim² and critics have taken her popularity as indicative of her role as a popularizer rather than an innovator (Kaplan 47). Margaret McDowell erroneously claims that it is «doubtful that she made more than a superficial use of the new ideas in her fiction» (234). Her work diverges sharply from the worst aspects of the popular, never being superficially optimistic as in the 'play up and play the game' school of fiction, or sensational, à la Elinor Glyn.

Unlike other popular writers, she was sensitive to modernist developments but her attitude does not align with other modernists' strategies of mythologising them. She did not propagandize a rupture with the past as did her friend Ezra Pound with his famous proclamation, «make it new». In fact, in her pioneering essay on Dorothy Richardson she demonstrates an accurate historical sense by refuting J. D. Beresford's claim that Richardson was the first to plunge into psychological reality. Richardson, claimed Sinclair, followed a growing tendency to plunge beginning «As far back as the eighties [when] the de Goncourts plunged completely». (As cited in Gillespie 443). Sinclair's own growing tendency to plunge into the psychology of unconscious motivation provides evidence to counter Woolf's famous mythologising assertions that «we are sharply cut off from our predecessors» (1988b: 357) and that «the men and women who began writing novels in 1910 or thereabouts had this great difficulty to face – that there was no English novelist living from whom they could learn their business» (1988a: 427). Woolf certainly could have learned from Sinclair,

² For example, her war novel *The Tree of Heaven* (1917) became the second best-selling novel of 1917 in America (McDowell 231) and was also acclaimed by those in the vanguard of critical opinion.

whom she met in 1909, and there is some evidence to suggest that she did so (Johnson, 546-547). After all, Sinclair was a generation older than Woolf, Eliot, and Joyce – firmly Edwardian by age and the timing of her success. Born just a few years before Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy, she published her first novel in 1897 two years after Wells' first. By the time she achieved widespread critical acclaim with *The Divine Fire* (1904) she had already begun to explore the dark places of psychology and had always avoided the materialism with which Woolf charged the Edwardians. As Rebecca West recognized, she was indeed «an anachronistic figure» (as cited in McDowell 233).

Though Sinclair's work, her career and some of her attitudes do not fit the criteria frequently associated with High Modernism, she continually broke new ground as her fiction writing evolved. However, the radical nature of her fiction stems more from her choice and treatment of subject matter than with structural or linguistic complexity. She developed a modern approach to the psyche and sexuality, and she did this well ahead of modernists Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and even James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. Increasingly, she exposed the frequent conflict of conscious and unconscious motives within individuals. Her novels demonstrate the tension between traditional conceptions of a unified self and newer ideas about shifting, multiple, and split-off selves. She moves away from portraying character types to highly individualized portraits of unique characters, frequently burdened by pathology. She dissolves traditional boundaries between the normal and the abnormal by showing perfectly «sane» individuals afflicted by psychosomatic illness. Over the course of her fiction she becomes more explicit about probing the disastrous consequences of repression and also misuse of one's sexuality as a tool of manipulation. Far from developing aloofness, Sinclair was emotionally engaged with her subject-matter, one perceptive early critic recognizing that «She has a hectic, feverish, high-tension manner that is not really unhealthy; it is more the overflowing of pent-up passion. For none of her books is made by the scraping together of what lies in the dusty corners of the mind; and no one of her books is made to order; they are more like escaping steam, that cannot be repressed another instant. They are the outcome, in other words, of fiercely held convictions.» (Phelps 226). Evidence that she stepped beyond the limits of propriety comes from contemporary reviews in which Sinclair was repeatedly attacked on moral and gender-biased grounds, for her obsessive interest in pathology and sexuality, rather than on artistic merit. Reaction to Sinclair's fourth novel, *The Helpmate* (1907), provides a striking example. The novel opens with a newly-wed couple in bed discussing the wife's discovery that her husband is not as pure as she had thought as he had had an affair some years earlier. It traces the disastrous consequences of the woman's mental splitting of physical and spiritual and of her decision to withhold herself from him physically; Sinclair maintains sympathy for the husband even when in desperation he has an affair with a flower-shop girl, though probably in deference to her readership she reconciles the couple at the close. Reviewing the novel in *The Living Age*, Lady Cecil argued that the novel's flaws arise from its morality, which teaches «the esoteric doctrine of spiritual redemption by way of fleshly sin.» (As cited in Robb 190). *The London Bookman* reviewer castigated the novel as «a morbid, sickly dream of life» (Robb 229). Sinclair continued to be criticised on grounds other than the artistic merits of her work even in the morally rebellious post-war years.

But Sinclair's preoccupations had even more radical implications since she challenged some of the dearly-held assumptions about the constitution of literary texts as opposed to other kinds. As she deepened her psychological studies of individuals afflicted by various forms of pathology she increasingly drew on science and the case study in particular, not considered within the sphere of fiction even by preeminent critics. E. M. Forster seems not to have been able to align Sinclair's *Mary Olivier* with his conception of a novel, claiming that it «is a document rather than a work of art» but he could not help but assert that «there cannot be two opinions about her book; it is a noble and a notable experiment, unattempted hitherto.» (As cited in «May Sinclair», 1987: 2599). T. S. Eliot based his critique of Sinclair's *Life and Death of Harriet Frean* on her use of psychoanalysis «because it is a scientific method, and rests upon a dubious and contentious branch of science.» (As cited in Robb 196). He also displayed his ignorance of her work by claiming that Sinclair «will

find herself forced to proceed from psychotherapy even to the supernatural» when in fact Sinclair had been exploring the meeting ground of the psychological and the supernatural in her short stories beginning in 1911. Sinclair never was a textbook psychoanalytic novelist, though even recent commentators such as Theophilus Boll (1961: 2), Hrisey Zegger (57-58) and Margaret McDowell (239) have compounded confusion about her originality by labelling her earliest novels psychoanalytic. From the beginning Sinclair avoided any one system of thought, drawing eclectically on naturalism, idealism, abnormal psychology and psychical research in forming her approach to character. Nevertheless, in her use of nonliterary texts and methods, notably the case study, she anticipates more recent novelists, including Doris Lessing and D. M. Thomas in *The White Hotel*, suggesting the need for a full reevaluation of her position in the tradition of the psychological novel.

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A linguistic miracle. Angela Carter's impression of the Magdalene

ANNELIES VAN HEES (*)

Carter's story «The Wrightsman Magdalene» both puzzled and upset me on my first reading.

It is a tale of a narrator regarding a painting and having her own thoughts about it.¹ It is puzzling because the reader does not know what these thoughts lead to and it is upsetting, at least to this particular reader, because it seems so catholic in its considerations about sexuality as opposed to Holy Motherhood.

Only after analyzing the text I understood why it upset me, an experience I would like to share with my reader. I realised it solved a riddle for me, the riddle of the overwhelming silence surrounding pregnancy and childbirth in my family. Although both phenomena were the order of the day, there was never spoken about them, not even when the women were amongst themselves.

My maternal grandmother had fifteen children, my paternal grandmother had only ten and my mother nine.

When I myself was pregnant, I suddenly realised that I knew nothing about bearing children, although I ought to have been an expert, in the light of my family's history. In reality I had to turn to my woman-friends for information, because if I asked my mother she would only give secretive hush-hush answers.

Why was that? After reading the Magdalene-story by Angela Carter, I think I have found the answer. In the eyes of catholic women, sexuality was a part of life, often an obligatory one, but one you would never admit to have indulged in or maybe even taken pleasure in. But then pregnancy would show in the light of the day what you had been doing in the dark, so pregnancy became shameful. One was not supposed to go out and show it and one was not supposed to talk about it. Being a woman in this way meant being a sexual victim to the demands of the husband and the church

(*) University of Amsterdam, Faculteit der Letteren, Nordic Studies, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

¹ «The Wrightsman Magdalene» in Angela Carter *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*, published posthumously in 1993.

An earlier version of it appeared in *FMR Magazine* in february 1992, the same month Angela Carter died. So this is the last story she published herself.

on the one side and being a social victim in not daring to show the results of the former duty in broad daylight.

Whatever one did, one was guilty.

As a child, I must have gotten this double secretive message in and I suppose now this was the cause of my immediate anger at a text that so intelligently shows how sexuality is denied as the cause of pregnancy. Let me take my reader through the text step by step.

Angela Carter's story about Mary Magdalene is first and foremost an artful text about other works of art and the interpretation of them. Now, to interpret interpretation is not only a rather post-modern activity, as it implies adding yet another layer to the existing layers of the text, but it is also a way of analyzing, of finding the underlying mechanisms that keep the text going.

I will use oldfashioned close reading to get hold of the tropes and figures and other narrative and linguistic devices which lead this text to its conclusion. My text will start with a first impression reading.

The story starts by telling what is apparently a legend on the origin of the village Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (note the plural!) in the South of France. This village came into being as three Mary's, the Virgin Mother, the mother of St John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene arrived at the coast in a rowing boat, after having thrown away the rudder. Mary Magdalene is the only one who doesn't stay there to build a chapel, like the other two.

The reason for this seems to be that she is not a mother, but rather the negation of the Virgin Mother, being neither a virgin nor a mother. It is said that she will stay in the swamps of the Camargue for thirty-three years, after which she is an old woman.

Meanwhile the narrator notes that the English language has no word for a woman like her, a woman, who is sexually mature, but not a mother. Only when a woman uses her sexuality as a profession, language will recognize her. Although this remark is by the way it is central to the meaning of the story, as I will show as we move on.

This third Mary, who in contrast to the other two of the same name, is the negation of the feminine, is now going to live deprivation in the malaria-infested swamps of the Camargue.

But then a painting comes into the picture, Georges de la Tour's painting of our heroine, Mary Magdalene who now turns from a legendary Mary into a painted one.²

From this point, and we are only at page two, the painting takes over, its interpretation of it now being the text's central point. De la Tour depicts Mary Magdalene as a woman who has not yet forsworn the feminine: her hair is newly brushed, she is looking into a mirror and she is adorned with a pearl necklace and a scarlet skirt, the apotheosis of her sexuality. The upper half of her body on the other hand is clad in a coarse chemise and glows in candlelight.

A whore, who repents, must as a consequence forswear her femininity, as she cannot, like the Mary-Mothers, sublimate it. Mary Magdalene has not used her sexuality for holy motherhood, she has abused it in sin and must therefore punish the sinful body by famine, castigation and deprivation. Mary Magdalene represents not only the negation of sexuality, but also the delights of asceticism, asceticism as a perversion, as sadomasochism, castigation as pain and reward at once. Yet another work of art is introduced to represent this side of Magdalene, the Donatello figure; his Magdalene is gaunt, anorectic and toothless, while Georges de la Tour's Magdalene is in the phase of transcendence. His is an erotic Magdalene, of whom one can expect erotic behaviour like the wiping of Christ's feet with her hair.

She transcends by staring into the double flame, the 'real' one and its reflection in the mirror. She is depicted at the very moment when she is going to disappear into the blue space in the middle of the flame; in her hands she is holding the fruit of her intercourse with the blue flame of nothing.

² I thank my hearers at the 1997-Conference on «Psychoanalysis and Literature» in Las Navas del Marqués for informing me about the Wrightsman collection of Art, among which Georges de la Tour's Magdalene, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

gness, a skull. The ascesis to come, which, according to the legend, will last thirty-three years, holds its own death in its arms.

COMPARISON

At this point in the story suddenly and disturbingly a first-person narrator pops up, the narrator until this moment having been neutral, invisible and clearly extradiegetic.

Although nothing is mentioned explicitly, the sudden appearance of a first-person narrator must be a signal that the I becomes part of the story about the three Marys.

Seemingly this new narrator talks about her own experience of giving birth only as a stylistic device, a comparison. Her own concentration on a candleflame while enduring the pains of labour is compared to Mary Magdalene's staring into the flame at the moment of transcendence, the tertium comparationis then being the moment of disappearance into the blue space. So far the story reads: *My story is comparable to Mary Magdalene's.*

Let me launch yet another comparison, not in order to introduce a sudden first-person narrator, an I, into this meta-text, but rather to confront our text with another literary text, somewhat in the same way as Angela Carter confronts two works of art in her text.

In many ways this text echoes Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale 'The little Mermaid', which is also a text about transcendence. The first transcendence in the tale is one from a non-sexual underwater-world to a sexual world above the water. Like the Magdalene's, the mermaid's transcendence is accompanied by pain, as her tail is cleft into two legs that hurt her with every step. The price to be paid for this castration is itself a castration, as the mermaid has to give up her beautiful voice to the sea-witch, who will then provide her with legs.

After her metamorphosis into a human being, the mermaid lies at the bottom of the stairs leading to her adored prince in his palace. She is clad only in her long hair, like Donatello's Magdalene.

But the castration, the loss of her voice, needed to turn the mermaid into a sexual being, also prevents her from making herself known to her beloved as the desiring woman she now is. As a consequence, the prince looks upon her as a child, a playmate, and eventually marries another woman. On his wedding night the mermaid has to kill him, as she will turn into foam on the waves and thus die a mermaid's usual death, if she will not.

But instead of killing him the mermaid throws her knife into the waves, which turn red as a consequence. This symbolic killing of the maternal underwater world ought, in a psychological sense, to imply liberation towards sexuality. But then Andersen is not always psychologically consistent in his tales.

What happens next is a miracle, as the mermaid doesn't change into foam on the waves, as prophesied, but is welcomed by 'the Daughters of the Air' as one of them. 'Daughters of the Air' are not a usual phenomenon in Scandinavian folklore, but are to be regarded as the tale's *deus ex machina*. In order to make the real point, a rather unsatisfying, religious ending is invented. If the Mermaid will spend 300 years with the Daughters of the Air, doing good works, she will obtain the immortal soul she desired all the time.

In this tale the negation of sexuality brings about religious sublimation, or perhaps one should rather conclude that in Andersen's case sexual ascesis brings about literary immortality.

The tale lingers longest on the two phases of transcendence, the first one from the mermaid world to the human world, the second from the human to the spiritual world. In both cases the mermaid lingers, because of what she has to give up before she can enter the next stage.

Georges de la Tour's Magdalene had to give up her scarlet skirt, the sign of her sexuality, and her pearls for the salvation of her soul, like the mermaid in the first instance has to give up her tail with its adornment of oysters, and in the second phase her phallic attribute, the knife, to become her spiritual self.

The two women have their androgyny in common, the absence of motherhood in these stories having as a consequence that there is no room left for female sexuality.

So far for the comparison; I will return to it.

REPETITION

As we saw, the central rethoric device in the story was comparison. The central stylistic device, though, is repetition. As the events of the story are told, we find numerous repetitions of (mostly) Noun Phrase plus Verb, as the following examples will show:

Mary went... Mary went (p. 140)
They stopped... they threw... they permitted (p. 140)
The woman walked... She walked... She walked... (p. 141)
There she found... There she stopped... There she prayed (p. 141)
She did not speak... she did not see... she was old... (p. 141)
Sometimes... Sometimes... Sometimes... (p. 142)
it's rank... it's raw... it's horrible... (p. 143)
She is as untouched... She sits... She sings... (p. 144)
Her hair is... Her hair shows... Her hair shows... (p. 144)
I was in labour... I thought of a candle... I was in labour... (p. 145)
I fixed... I concentrated... I was entirely... (p. 145)
Mary M. meditates... She enters... She becomes... (p. 146)
She can't speak... She will put speech aside... She will put speech aside... (p. 146)
She carries it... she carries a skull... (p. 146)

The above examples abundantly show that the repetitions come in threes. Only the first one, *Mary went...* is twofold, having a fine parallel at the end of the story in the repetition of: *she carries...*, leading to the final blow of what she is actually carrying, the skull, at the very end.

So far the story can be read as: *My story repeats Mary Magdalene's*. But there is more to come.

MIRRORING

The central thematic device is the mirror. In the painting its function is to double, i. e. to repeat the candleflame. But in the story as a whole it functions as a signal that Mary Magdalene's fate is repeated in the fate of the I, the narrator.

As Mary Magdalene looks into the two flames, the 'real' one and the mirrored one, she disappears into the blue space in the middle of the flame. The text has it that this is her moment of transcendence into nothingness. From the supreme example of a sexual being, a prostitute, she turns into an ascetic, gaunt spiritual being, which comes down to a non-being. In fact the narrator at this point needs another work of art, i. e. Donatello's, to show us the Magdalene that she is to become. In this way the flame in the mirror is the turning point in the Magdalene's personal history. We must not forget, though, that this is in fact a story about a legend and two works of art, about interpreting them in such a way that its result will be an integrated story about a woman, represented in art. Why is that?

Mary Magdalene's story is needed to put the narrator's story into perspective, since she mirrors the transcendence of the narrator, who turns into a different being as she looks into a candleflame while she is giving birth. So far each of the linguistic and rethoric devices adds to the meaning of the text, which has now become: *My story mirrors Mary Magdalene's*.

REVERSING

The central narrative device is *reversal*. Not only does the mirror function as a signal about Mary Magdalene's story being comparable to Angela's, the narrator's, but also about them being reversed, like all images in mirrors.

Angela's rite de passage is the negation of Mary Magdalene's. While Angela used to be a mature woman with sexual praxis, the kind of woman that the English language only has a word for if she practises as a whore; she now, by way of giving birth, turns into a Mary, say St John's mother. As was also the case for Mary Magdalene, transcendence takes place through meditation, through staring into a flame, until the blue space takes her in.

The state of nothingness that she obtains this way ends as she gives birth to a son. From an asexual angel – Angela – she has become a mother – Mary – since that is what mothers are called as far as this text goes.

Whereas the Magdalene turns from a whore, the negation of the Virgin Mother, into nothing, Angela turns from nothingness into the personification of what Mary Magdalene is not. At this point the story reads: *My story reverses Mary Magdalene's*.

In fact – and that is where Andersen's story comes in – in fact this is also a text about hubris and ego inflation. The inflated ego is a mother, who believes in holiness through motherhood, as in Andersen's text immortality is brought about by sublimation. It is only Mary Magdalene's pure ascesis which brings death.

This text can be read as an allegory about the narrator's own situation, her transcendence from being nothing into being.

The candle represents intercourse, so the text claims; the blue space could in that case represent the 'little death' of orgasm, which can only be justified by holy motherhood.

After all the angel – let us call her Angela for the sake of the argument – could have become not Mary, St John's mother, through childbirth, but rather the other Mary, the Virgin Mother. There are several indications for this: there is the first sentence of the text: 'For a woman to be a virgin and a mother, you need a miracle...' But there is also the period that the Magdalene wants before she is reduced to nothingness, thirty-three years. The same number of years wanted for Christ to be sacrificed and thus for his mother to become a true Mater Dolorosa. If all of the Magdalene's fate is mirrored by the narrator, the 33 years should also be mirrored in this respect. In that case she can't have turned into Mary, St John's mother, since he is known to have been much older, but must necessarily be Mary, the Virgin Mother.

Motherhood in this text is the denial of sexuality, which in effect is not represented as performed by a man, but by a blue space, say the Holy Spirit. Here we have the miracle the first sentence of the text promised. So far the story reads:

My story is about a miracle.

TRINITY

Trinity is the central religious device in the text. The threefold repetition that was mentioned above can be read as the linguistic expression of a central core of meaning, which is Trinity, as if the Holy Trinity had taken possession of the language as well. In a sense this is true, as far as this story goes. Only here Holy Trinity has turned female.

The three Mary's the text started with are soon reduced to two, since Mary Magdalene is sent out into the swamps to repent. Only the maid Fatima – don't forget Fatima – stays with the mothers. In the course of the text the sinful Mary Magdalene, through de la Tour's and Donatello's works of art is reduced first to a semi-ascetic, then to an anorectic, self-destructive non-being: a memento mori in its own right.

After this murder of the third Mary a miraculous resurrection takes place. By means of the same flame through which Mary Magdalene has been reduced to nothingness, the narrator comes into being. She becomes a Holy Mother through giving birth to a son. Now the three Marys are reunited. The maid Fatima has turned into a Mary too. A new trinity has arisen. Only this time it is female. *My story is really Mary's, the Virgin Mother's, story.*

DENIAL

Denial is the central psychological device in the text. The psychological mistake this text with its many layers has as its drive, its core, is founded on a linguistic mistake.

The narrator derives her certainty about the identity establishing motherhood from her own statement that a woman who is grown up and sexually mature, but not a mother, is nothing. But why is she nothing? She is nothing, because there is apparently no word for her in the English language.

The psychological core of the text is a fallacy, the mistaken view that regards sex without motherhood as evil, as prostitution, as annihilation.

The linguistic device behind the text as a whole is the denial of a word that does exist, also in the English language, the word WOMAN.

The passion of new Oedipus: A reading of Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

MARIA ALINE FERREIRA (*)

In this paper I will be arguing that Angela Carter's novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) can profitably be read as a powerful and subversive rewriting of the myths of Oedipus and the Fall.

Reflecting on Myth, both mythmaking and demythologizing, was a fundamental activity for Angela Carter, who may even be said to have built her whole fictional enterprise around it. As she herself famously commented: «I am in the demythologizing business» («Notes from the Front Line», 71).

The Passion of New Eve was Angela Carter's favourite novel because, as she explains in a letter,

it is so ambitious, so serious and so helplessly flawed – flawed, I guess, partly because I started off writing the novel thinking I was interested in myth with a capital M., [deletion] you know what I mean, and ending up realising that Myth bored me stiff which is why Mother has a nervous breakdown when the revolution starts.¹

At the beginning of the novel the narrator summons Rilke and the Ancient Greeks to launch a reflection on myths and symbols:

I think it was Rilke who so lamented the inadequacy of our symbolism – regretted so bitterly we cannot, unlike the (was it?) Ancient Greeks, find adequate external symbols for the life within us – yes, that's the quotation. But no. He was wrong. Our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision; how could they do otherwise, since that life has generated them? Therefore we must not blame our poor symbols if they take forms that seem trivial to us, or absurd, for the symbols themselves have no control over their own fleshly manifestations, however paltry they may be; the nature of our life alone has determined their forms.

A critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives. (5-6)

(*) Universidade de Aveiro, Departamento de Línguas e Culturas, 3800 Aveiro, Portugal.

¹ Quoted in Elaine Jordan, «The Dangerous Edge», 213.

Steeped in mythological references, *The Passion of New Eve* goes on to offer an incisive critique as well as a parody and a metacommentary on the oedipal myth, on the one hand, and the myth of the Fall, on the other. It is these two interrelated, central narrative strains, conflated into the story of Oedipus in the Garden of Eden, that provides the narrative momentum and which I wish to interrogate here.

Luce Irigaray once commented that «with a few additions and subtractions, our imaginary still works according to the schema set in place by Greek mythology and tragedy» (*Sexes and Genealogies*, 11). Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, as indeed most of her work, is a consummate example of Irigaray's theory.

The narrative of *The Passion of New Eve* starts with the arrival of Evelyn, a young British man, at New York, a city devastated by war and disease, a «syphilitic city»², in many ways like the plague-ridden city of Thebes. There he meets a young woman, Leilah/Lillith, with whom he lives for a while and who becomes pregnant by him. Tired of her and of the hardships in New York, however, Evelyn decides to abandon the city and head for the desert, leaving her in New York (Thebes) physically sick and emotionally wounded after having undergone an abortion at his instigation.

In the Californian desert Evelyn, cast as both Adam and Oedipus, is captured by a tribe of Amazons and brought face to face with «Mother», a grotesque embodiment of the pre-Oedipal, omnipotent mother, in a reenactment of his (every male child's?) repressed wishes and deep-seated fears: the desire to commit incest with the mother and simultaneously the fear of castration. In a parodic and radical twist of the oedipal plot, Mother/Jocasta is, however, a giantess and a surgeon who, after copulating with her «son», literally castrates him and transforms him into a woman, New Eve.

Unable to unravel the riddle of the Sphinx (Mother), which is also clearly the riddle of femininity, Evelyn/Adam will be punished for the heartless way in which he behaved towards Leilah/Lillith. As a retribution, Mother, clearly a «phallic» mother, castrates him and transforms him into a woman. He becomes, then, the very embodiment of the Sphinx's riddle, although with a twist, for s/he is both man and woman, New Eve. Indeed, like Oedipus, who correctly answered the riddle of the Sphinx, «man», New Eve is particularly well-suited to solve it, since she has been both man and woman, a modern Tiresias. Her answer, however, we might conjecture, in a significant departure from the original Oedipian reply, would in all plausibility be «humankind», that is, man and woman. It is especially fitting that this scene, which Hegel considered as the primitive scene of philosophy, placing «man» as it does strategically at the centre of philosophical discourse, also encapsulates some of the most crucial concerns with which Carter's novel deals: the riddle of masculinity and of femininity.

There is, however, another fundamental twist in Carter's narrative, which must be addressed: if Evelyn is transformed into a woman as a punishment, then the inference to be logically drawn is that being a woman is after all a fundamentally flawed, undesirable state. It is this contradiction that stands at the heart of *The Passion of New Eve*.

PRIMAL SCENES/SCENES OF TRANSFORMATION

Luce Irigaray envisages an «original matricide» as a counterpoint to Freud's contention that it was the murder of the father that stands as the source and primal scene of Western patriarchal and filiarchal culture. In *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993) she claims that «when Freud, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, describes and theorizes about the murder of the father as the founding act for the primal horde, he is forgetting an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city» (11).³ As she further declares: «The

² Interview with Angela Carter conducted by Kerry Goldsworthy in *Meanjin*, 44/1 (March 1985): 4-13, 12.

³ Jean-Joseph Goux makes a similar point when he argues that «matricide is the great unthought element of Freudian doctrine» (27).

social order, our culture, psychoanalysis itself, are all insistent that the mother must remain silent, outlawed. The father forbids any corps-à-corps with the mother» (14).

Roland Barthes, conversely, offers a different paradigmatic primal scene, when he writes:

«Death of the father would deprive literature of many of its pleasures. If there is no longer a father, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus? Isn't story telling always a way of searching for one's origin?» (*The Pleasure of the Text*, 47) In *The Passion of New Eve* I see at work a reenactment of and engaging with these primal scenes of origin described by Freud, Barthes and Irigaray. In her characteristically irreverent, satirical mode, Carter dramatizes the killing of the Father in the shape of Evelyn's gender transformation while simultaneously stressing the role played by the Mother, whose silencing at the end of the novel, however, constitutes an index of her paradoxical powerlessness. Indeed, according to Carter,

one could argue that *Oedipus the King* is really, deep down, about the overthrow of *Mother Right*, that the play contains, transforms, subverts, patricises the ideology of those antique matrilinear communities around the Mediterranean celebrated somewhat circumspectly in *The Golden Bough*, and increasingly cherished by women of my type as we reach a certain age, in which kingship was attained by marriage with the queen and terminated in ritual combat with the inevitable defeat by a more nubile successor when the hapless consort's hairline started to recede or his ardour flag. This is the version Robert Graves gives in his *Greek Myths*, and though Graves's anthropology is just as shaky as J. G. Frazer's, I love the poetic truth at the kernel of it. («Eric Rhode: *On Birth and Madness*» 201-202. The emphasis is mine.)⁴

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter rewrites the oedipal story by refocusing the narrative on the power of the Mother, even though at the end of the novel Mother disappears leaving New Eve on her own, thus suggesting the mythic character of that figure, as well as New Eve's need to distance herself from Mother to find her own path.

Mother is a gigantic, mythic figure, a dark, bearded goddess, a parody of motherhood with her «two tiers of nipples, the result... of a strenuous programme of grafting, so that, in theory, she could suckle four babies at one time. And how gigantic her limbs were!» (59) In her mythical animality and monstrosity, Mother can also profitably be associated with the figure of the Sphinx⁵, who, in Lévi-Strauss's reading, may be considered a phallic or «bad» mother. Mark Kanzer suggests that the Sphinx exemplifies «an allegory of the problems presented by female sexuality... she combines the beloved and dreaded aspects of femininity which the boy must reconcile» («The Oedipus Trilogy», 562).

The importance attributed to Mother in the novel, as well as her conflation with the mythical Sphinx, should alert us to the significance of their twin roles, in many ways undervalued in the Freudian interpretation of the Oedipal myth. Indeed, according to Jean-Joseph Goux, the Sphinx is «the unthought element of Freudian psychoanalysis» (23), remaining «uninterpretable in the Freudian code» (23), an argument which appears to receive fictional illustration in Carter's revision of Freud's analysis of the Oedipal scenario. Instead of ascribing the threat of castration to the Father, who according to the Freudian explanation is bent on preventing his son's incestuous desire for his mother (the Father's wife), Carter interposes the figure of the menacing Mother, who graphically incarnates and replicates the (monstrous) desires attributed to the son of having intercourse with his mother. Indeed, in his fight with «Mother»/Sphinx, it is clearly not a symbolic Father that Evelyn is battling against, in order to preserve his life and identity, but more specifically a symbolic Mother, a threatening maternal figure who embodies his most deeply repressed, unconscious fears. Evelyn's

⁴ Carter might here be thinking of Bachofen's *Mother Right* (1861), where Bachofen defends matriarchy.

⁵ Another candidate for the role of Sphinx in Carter's novel is Sophia, who has the smile «of an ecstatic sphinx» (56), Sophia who might also be an avatar of Lilith/Leilah. On the other hand, Tristessa/Tiresias can be said to be another Sphinx who provides Eve/lyn with the most mysterious riddle of all, but one that he is now equipped to answer, having been man and woman, another Tiresias.

journey of initiation, the rites of passage he goes through in his quest and which include the encounter with Mother and the Amazons of the desert, make of him an anti-hero on an expedition that overthrows the characteristic stages of the mythical journey of the paradigmatic hero. Carter is thus simultaneously debunking the myth of the heroic journey, the mythical hero and some of the related initiatory rites. Being forced to confront the Monster (Mother), Evelyn fails to kill her and is thus denied access to another woman, his future wife in traditional tales of initiation, but with a vengeance, for in Carter's truculent version he himself becomes the prototypical woman.

Goux's analysis of the figure of the mythical Sphinx, this female entity who threatens and kills so many young men, is particularly relevant and appropriate to the role played by Mother/Sphinx in *The Passion of New Eve*. According to Goux, the Sphinx

still plunges into animality, even if, in her very morphology, the creature realizes the articulation between humanity and animality. According to a general theme, divine teramorphic or teranthropomorphic beings are the ones who perform the tortures of initiation. They are always superhuman beings carrying out a sacred act in the name of the gods. The Sphinx and not a father, is the being to whom is imputed the torture and death of the son – because of the desire he arouses. It is significant that in certain versions, the Sphinx is held to be an animal that makes young people uneasy because of the sexual relations she would seek to have with them. Here can be read the young man's dangerous desire for a negative, dark, animal femininity, for a horrifying union in which he risks being completely annihilated. (37)

Goux goes on to note how «the episode of the Sphinx is the meeting with the mystery of sexuality and of death, in which the young man has to run the risk of disappearing. He has to experience the fact that his own desire for the dark mother is lethal. It is this confrontation alone that allows, after a symbolic death, the hero's rebirth with a new identity» (37). This was indeed Evelyn's fate, to face the dark, menacing, archetypal Mother, her blatantly obtrusive sexuality, only to be reborn with a new body, a new sex and a new identity. These seem to be indeed uncannily and ominously premonitory words as far as Evelyn's adventures are concerned. Evelyn's is indeed a story of initiation which, however, deviates from the central pattern at a pivotal stage. His descent to the underworld is indeed followed by a rebirth, which is not, however, the result of a victory over the Monster but the result of his unwilling submission to the powers of this enigmatic entity. Goux explains the mythical pattern of the hero's initiation in terms reminiscent of Evelyn's trajectory in the world of the Faustian Mothers:

The central phase, the deepest core of every initiation is constituted by the rite that provides a pathetic symbolization of the neophyte's death (a return to chaos or hell, to the bowels of the earth, the primordial womb, and so on), followed, after a period of uncertainty and mourning, by the initiate's return among the living, as in a «second birth». The initiate is someone who is born a second time. The death traversed by the postulant corresponds to a phase of disaggregation, dismembering, and fragmentation without which the recomposition of identity on a new basis cannot occur. The novice is supposed to be swallowed by a monster, cut into pieces, burned, and so forth. He undergoes an ordeal that is supposed to leave an indelible trace, or some substitute for body mutilation... (41)⁶

These words cast light on Evelyn's predicament and go a long way towards providing a possible reading of Carter's novel from a mythical and psychoanalytical point of view, which seems consonant with the drift of Carter's general argument. Goux also notes how

⁶ The alchemical vocabulary of initiatory rites also finds powerful expression in *The Passion of New Eve*. Baroslav, the Czech alchemist who lived on the floor above, accurately predicted Evelyn's fate when he assured him that «in this city, you will meet immortality, evil and death» (13). Baroslav's seventeenth-century print of a hermaphrodite which exerted such a deep fascination upon Evelyn is also uncannily premonitory of coming events. Evelyn's journey can indeed plausibly be constructed as the alchemical path taken by the neophyte, from the base metals to gold, from darkness to light, gathering added momentum towards the end of the book where New Eve receives the ingot of alchemical gold, the Philosopher's Stone.

metaphors of gestation, regeneration, and the birth process make the initiation a form of birth: not the first, physical birth by extraction from the mother's body, but a second birth, by way of the spirits, the ancestors, the fathers. This latter aspect of initiation revises one of its essential dimensions: becoming a «man»... in a sense means ceasing to be one's mother's child so as to become one's father's son... Only this regendering through the fathers and inscription into their genealogy allows access to manhood and makes marriage and procreation possible. (41-42)

This is precisely where Evelyn's initiatory rites of passage diverge from the traditional pattern, where Carter significantly reverses the archetypal scenario and substitutes the Father with the Mother as the main agent of the second initiation stage. It is indeed apt to remember Carter's contention that *Oedipus the King* «is really, deep down, about the *overthrow of Mother Right*» («Eric Rhode: *On Birth and Madness*», 201-202). In *The Passion of New Eve* Carter is bringing the Mother back into the light, from the deep cave in which she had been metaphorically confined. By means of this narrative strategy, Carter overturns the myth of the hero who, after confronting the (maternal) Mythological Monster is rewarded with the nonmaternal feminine, with a wife. Evelyn, in his role as anti-hero, is indeed given access to the feminine, as a prize, but in the shape of his own body, metamorphosed into an idealized version of the supremely beautiful and desirable woman.

TROUBLED ORIGINS: BORN FROM ONE OR BORN FROM TWO? BORN FROM DIFFERENT OR BORN FROM SAME?

In the same essay («Eric Rhode: *On Birth and Madness*»), Carter also addresses one of the questions around which the oedipal story centrally revolves: «Who is your father?» (202) observing that «“father” is always metaphysics: a social artefact, a learned mode» (203). In a similar vein, Carter goes on to reflect, still in the context of the oedipal predicament, on the ethics and politics of maternity and paternity, in words which also direct us to Lévi-Strauss's concept of the structures of kinship:

The fact of maternity has become a good deal more problematic in the late twentieth century than it has hitherto, however. For example: am I the mother of the fertilised egg I carry when it does not originate in my own ovary? I'd say: yes, of course. But where does the child who eventually comes out of this egg stand in relation to such a mother in terms of incest taboo? What degree of kinship would the Sphinx ascribe? If Jocasta had donated a fertilised egg to Merope, what then? (203-204)

Carter considers that although these are «academic, even scholastic points» (203), they «underpin a good deal of the discussion about mechanical intervention in the processes of maternity, where the culture of high-tech surgery manifests itself at its most “unnatural” by taking on, and succeeding at, a job that Mother Nature shirked. And if this train of thought is followed to the end, we must conclude that “mother” is also primarily a conceptual category. Just like “father”.» (204) These vexed questions stand indeed at the heart of *The Passion of New Eve* and the oedipal myth.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, in «The Structural Study of Myth», the Oedipus myth

has to do with the inability, for a culture which holds the belief that mankind is autochthonous... to find a satisfactory transition between this theory and the knowledge that human beings are actually born from the union of man and woman. Although the problem obviously cannot be solved, the Oedipus myth provides a kind of logical tool which, to phrase it coarsely, replaces the original problem: born from one or born from two? born from different or born from same? (180)

Carter, who had obviously read her Lévi-Strauss and who loved Freud «as though he were an uncle» («The Savage Sideshow: A Profile of Angela Carter», 56) gives dramatic illustration to a scenario

which defies Lévi-Strauss's and Freud's wildest surmises and interrogations: New Eve, a man turned into a woman, becomes pregnant by Tristessa/Tiresias, a man who masquerades as a woman. As Leilah/Lilith tells her: «Your baby will have two fathers and two mothers» (187). On the other hand, according to Mother's original plan, New Eve would have become pregnant with her own sperm, Evelyn's sperm, kept in a jar for later use. As Mother explains to Eve/lyn (Evelyn itself a highly ambiguously gendered name): «first of all beings in the world, you can seed yourself and fruit yourself. With the aid of my sperm-bank, you're entirely self sufficient, Eva!» (77). As Mother goes on to specify: «That is why you have become New Eve, and your child will rejuvenate the world!» (77)

In *Alice Doesn't*, Teresa de Lauretis, in her analysis of the problem of Oedipus's origins, comments that «men will have to imagine other ways to deal with the fact that they, men, are born of women. For this is the ultimate purpose of the myth, according to Lévi-Strauss: to resolve that glaring contradiction and affirm, by the agency of the narrative, the autochthonous origin of man.» (156) Carter, for her part, problematizes and dramatizes precisely these riddles in *The Passion of New Eve*, where she writes an alternative script for the story of Oedipus.

Teresa de Lauretis, indeed like Carter, similarly invents a plot where Oedipus becomes a woman:

Suppose: Oedipus does not solve the riddle. The Sphinx devours him for his arrogance; he didn't have to go to Thebes by that particular crossroads. Or, he kills himself in disgust. Or, he finally understands Tiresias' accusation («You are the rotting canker in the state») to mean that patriarchy itself, which Oedipus represents as he represents the state, is the plague that wastes Thebes – and then he blinds himself; after which, possibly, Artemis would grant that he become a woman, and here the story of Oedipus could end happily. (*Alice Doesn't*, 156)

In related vein, Carolyn G. Heilbrun, in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, argues that «the androgynous overtones of *Oedipus*, which suggest that the destiny of murdering one's father and marrying one's mother might perhaps refer to strong inner impulses toward the rediscovery of one's "feminine" self» (12) have been largely ignored. Carter appears to concur with Heilbrun when she illustrates precisely the latter's point in transforming Evelyn into a woman, «the Tiresias of Southern California» (*The Passion of New Eve*, 71), «Eve and Adam both, on a mission to repopulate this entire, devastated continent» (165).

For Carter, the myth of Oedipus, together with the fiction of woman's castration, stands at the heart of Western culture. In *The Sadeian Woman*, a book about the politics of sexuality in the work of the Marquis de Sade, she argues that

the social fiction of the female wound, the bleeding scar left by her castration ... is a psychic fiction as deeply at the heart of Western culture as the myth of Oedipus, to which it is related in the complex dialectic of imagination and reality that produces culture. Female castration is an imaginary fact that pervades the whole of men's attitudes towards women and our attitude to ourselves, that transforms women from human beings into wounded creatures who were born to bleed (23).

Indeed, Evelyn's castration by «Mother», which leaves him, now her, with a wound which will bleed once a month, is inextricably bound up with the Oedipal story, as suggested by Carter. Evelyn is Oedipus, copulating with «Mother», while simultaneously he is also cast as Adam. Before being raped by Mother, Sophia asks the former what sounds like a ritual question: «Where is the Garden of Eden?» (63) to which Mother answers: «The garden in which Adam was born lies between my thighs» (63).⁷

⁷ Bearing in mind Carter's Surrealistic bent, it is tempting to link this image with Marcel Duchamp's intriguing «Etant données», also already a possible intertext to Exhibit One in «the Mansion of Midnight» section in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman* (1972).

Carter concretizes in dramatic form what for Freud constitutes every boy's wish: to copulate with his mother. As Freud wrote in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, on the 15th of October 1897, in relation to Oedipus's discovery of his crimes of parricide and incest: «Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in phantasy, and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfilment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one.» (*The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, 272) However, as Pietro Pucci notes, this early elaboration by Freud of the

universality of the oedipal desire makes no mention of castration, that fear that prevents the child from pursuing his fantasy; instead, it focuses on the horror that Oedipus (and his adult audience) feels at realizing that the infantile dream has become true in the experience of an adult. (42)

It is this Freudian primal scene of fantasy on the part of the little boy that Carter gives narrative voice to. Castration, on the other hand, figures centrally in *The Passion of New Eve* and is an integral part of Evelyn's punishment and of his transformation into New Eve. Significantly, before his surgery, Evelyn keeps dreaming of «blindness» and of «women with knives» (68), dream images clearly associated with castration⁸, as well as figuratively looking forward to Oedipus's fate, who blinded himself with Jocasta's brooches, after learning that she was his mother as well as his wife and mother of his four children, and that the man he had killed on the crossroads was really Laius, his father.

EVELYN/ADAM/FAUST/OEDIPUS

Pushing further the similarities between Evelyn and Oedipus, the former, like Oedipus, who was pursued and fell victim to the Eumenides, deities who sometimes appear as black goddesses and whose grove gave access to the Underworld, was similarly taken to the underground city of women, Beulah, with its Blakean overtones, where he would undergo his transformation into Eve. The Eumenides, also known as Erinnyes, are «fearful deities and their chief duty is to avenge wrong, particularly murder. The Erinnyes pursue the murderer with frenzied chants which arouse repentance and remorse, and they send him insanity and madness, and will not release him, not even in Hades» (102, *Concise Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*). The parallels between the Erinnyes, themselves chthonian, and the women who lived in the Underworld with Mother are numerous and meaningful⁹, namely their pursuit and punishment of Evelyn, the man who had mistreated Leilah. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, the Furies are described as unrelenting in their chase of those who have sinned, like Evelyn.

During his Faustian descent to the Mothers, the desert Amazons, Evelyn is perceived «as a criminal since they did not organise the world on the same terms as I did ... I knew I was a criminal because I was imprisoned, although I knew of no crime which I had committed» (53). The masculine point of view can find no fault in the way he handled his relationship with Leilah. It is the «tribe of desert matriarchs» (52), like a Greek chorus, that will fulfil the function of reversing the traditional gendered behaviour, punishing him in a way that mimicks the fate of Oedipus. The narratorial voice explains that «in complicity with phallocentricity, he [Oedipus] concludes his trajectory a blind old man, wandering by the seashore in a search for reconciliation» (53).

⁸ As Rudnytsky notes, it was Sándor Ferenczi who, in «The Symbolic Representation of the Pleasure and Reality Principles in the Oedipus Myth» (1912) first put forward «the now canonical psychoanalytic interpretations of Oedipus's self-blinding as a displaced act of castration» (261).

⁹ Winnington-Ingrum describes the Erinnyes as «agents of punishment, called into operation by offences in some area with which the gods are particularly concerned» (*Sophocles: An Interpretation*, 207), such as «the great traditional commandments - to honour gods, parents and strangers» (207). With respect to these categories, Evelyn fails on several accounts, by behaving in a disrespectful manner towards Leilah and «Mother».

As well as her symbolic role as the Sphinx, Mother is also cast in the role of Jocasta, mother and wife of Oedipus. In the Chorus of the women of Beulah, sung in honour of Mother, which reads like a list of goddesses from the whole world, reminiscent of the names in Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères*, the name of Jocasta stands out among that of many other goddesses, for it is repeated several times. By copulating with Mother, Evelyn is clearly recreating the mythical story, committing incest with his «mother». By the same token, Mother becomes the Archaic, Engulfing Mother of male imagination. Indeed, she is literally the castrating mother, for with her surgeon's knife she will cut Evelyn's genitals and, through a series of operations and brain conditioning, what Mother calls «psycho-surgery» (68), she will turn him into an attractive young woman, Eve, the epitome of male desire, a «Playboy center fold» (75). As Mother triumphantly proclaims: «I am the Great Parricide, I am the Castratrix of the Phallogentric Universe, I am Mama, Mama, Mama!» (67) In fact, and in another fundamental twist to the oedipal myth, it is Mother who is the «Great Parricide», who kills Father (Evelyn/Everyman), castrates him and copulates with her «son», Oedipus/Evelyn. Mother explains, addressing Evelyn: «Father doesn't know how beautiful he is. His cock intercedes with Mother for him» (65). Evelyn, furthermore, is urged to be braver than his mythical counterpart: «Embrace your fate, like Oedipus – but more brave than he!» (67) This fate, as Mother concisely explains to him, follows with uncanny precision the oedipal scenario: «Kill your father! Sleep with your mother! Burst through all the interdictions!» (64) What the narrative will stress, however, is that in spite of effectively «killing» Father/Evelyn, traces of masculinity will always remain, impossible to erase.

Sophia, one of the women in Beulah, explains the procedure to the terrified Evelyn: «Myth is more instructive than history¹⁰, Evelyn; Mother proposes to reactivate the parthenogenesis archetype, utilising a new formula. She's going to castrate you, Evelyn, and then excavate what we call the "fructifying female space" inside you and make you a perfect specimen of womanhood» (68).¹¹ She also goes on to opine that «woman has been the antithesis in the dialectic of creation quite long enough ... I'm about to make a start on the *feminisation of Father Time*» (67. The italics are mine)¹² After her transformation from Evelyn into Eve, Eve feels steeped in an ontological vacuum.

I know nothing. I am a tabula erasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as monstrous as Mother herself; but I cannot bring myself to think of that. Eve remains wilfully in the state of innocence that precedes the fall. (83)

In order to comfort him/her, Mother suckle, reminding him again of the contiguity of his fate with that of Oedipus:

Then I felt a great peace and a sense of reconciliation. It seemed the breasts I suckled could never be exhausted but would always flow with milk to nourish me and my relation to the zone of mother had not changed and could never change for *Little Oedipus* had lived in a land of milk and kindness before his father taught him how to stab with his

¹⁰ For Luce Irigaray, similarly, «myth is not a story independent of History, but rather expresses History in colourful accounts that illustrate the major trends of an era» (*Thinking the Difference*, 101).

¹¹ In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir refers to the process of parthenogenesis, in words that can be applied to Carter's novel: «In cases of parthenogenesis the egg of the virgin female develops into an embryo without fertilization by the male, which thus may play no role at all.... More and more numerous and during experiments in parthenogenesis are being performed, and in many species the male appears to be fundamentally unnecessary» (36).

¹² As Pietro Pucci remarks, «the old friends of Oedipus mention a father figure, Time (Khronos)» (147). The sexual politics of Time, associated with the Father, and Space, linked with the Mother, play a central role in *The Passion of New Eve*, where they are thoroughly investigated and deconstructed by Carter. This discussion, however, falls beyond the scope of this essay.

phallus and baby's relation to the breasts bears no relation to his or hers.

Now I am her daughter, am I not? (75. Emphasis mine)

From Little Oedipus, the paradigm of every little boy, Evelyn/Oedipus is transformed into Eve, thus partially escaping his fate as the mythical Oedipus through his transformation into a woman.

Evelyn, like Oedipus, had embarked on his journey in order to find his own identity, «that most elusive of all chimeras, myself» (38). However, again like Oedipus, that identity appears to elude him. Vernant's words, applied to Oedipus' predicament, could just as pertinently be used in relation to Evelyn. According to Vernant, Oedipus discovers himself to be «enigmatic, without consistency, without any domain of his own or any fixed point of attachment, with no defined essence» (139).

This search can also be seen as a powerful illustration of Freud's belief, put forward in «The Uncanny», of the inevitable return to the origins, the place of birth, which are equivalent to the mother's womb, a perception which is given such graphic and literal dramatization in the novel. Indeed, Carter, in her usual jocose manner, plays with Freud's very words, voicing New Eve's thoughts: «I have come home. The destination of all journeys is their beginning. I have not come home» (186). *The Passion of New Eve* can thus also be read as a faithful illustration of Sándor Ferenczi's conclusions, suggested in *Thalassa* (1923), according to whom the impulse of human life is ruled by a compulsion to go back to the womb. This return to the womb takes two main forms: the first symbolic instance occurs when Evelyn copulates with Mother and the second example comes to pass when New Eve, after many adventures, attempts to go back to Mother, creeping along a maze of tunnels that feel like flesh compressing her, like the uterine walls.

In related vein, Peter Rudnytsky argues in *Freud and Oedipus* that the «scene reported by the Second Messenger in which Oedipus rushes into the palace and blinds himself» (259) represents «a culmination of the process by which Oedipus returns to his origins, and, as such, enacts a reentry into Jocasta's womb» (259-260). In the corresponding scene in *The Passion of New Eve*, New Eve forces her way up a labyrinthine system of caves¹³, mimicking the birth canal, only to find the empty space of the caves that betray Mother's absence.

At the end of the novel, and after New Eve was forcefully expelled by «the walls of meat» (186), instead of blind Oedipus wondering on the seashore, we encounter an old woman, a profoundly enigmatic blind old lady, wrinkled and withered, her «Adam's apple prominent as that of an old man» (178), an «old woman with hair like a nest of petrified snakes, old enough to have been either man or woman» (190), sitting on a chair by the sea. This Medusan figure, a conflation of pathetic Tiresias and blind Oedipus, about to meet her death, can be read, I would argue, as New Eve's alter ego, a hermaphroditic being who seems to recognise Eve at once, even though she had never met her.

Evelyn/Oedipus, now a woman, New Eve (and what is more, his own «daughter», since he was earlier described as «Father Time») can also plausibly be seen as corresponding to Antigone, at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus*, surrounded by images of sea and of wandering, profoundly tormented by her situation and her father's fate. However, and in characteristic revisionist fashion, New Eve will break all bounds that link her with America (Thebes) and, unlike Antigone, who goes back to Thebes, the former will set sail and drift towards some unknown destination.

Also like Oedipus, who in *Oedipus at Colonus*, before dying, reveals a secret knowledge to Theseus, which can be interpreted as constituting a new position, intended for the future, so New Eve is the bearer of a secret, similarly a forward-looking secret, inscribed in her own body and her offspring. Thus, like Oedipus, who in Sophocles's Theban plays is the initiator of a new tradition,

¹³ Reading this passage in the light of the recurring alchemical imagery, entry into the labyrinth is in itself already an initiation, while the labyrinth constitutes, in the alchemichal tradition, a sacred place of transformation, where the neophyte has to go from darkness (*nigredo*) to illumination.

the founder of a new lineage, so New Eve/New Oedipus, the Mother of the New Messiah, the «Messiah of the Antithesis» (67) becomes the originator of a novel order, which will «rejuvenate» (77) the world. However, does Eve/lyn's/New Oedipus's story end happily, after he is turned into a woman, according to Teresa de Lauretis's script? How is the New Messiah going to renovate, revitalize the world, destroyed by the «plague» of patriarchy and capitalism, as Carter seems to suggest? Can New Eve/New Oedipus be seen, at the end of the novel, as a paradigm of humanity, as Sophocles explicitly considered Oedipus to be, in the Chorus's words?

CONCLUSION

Teresa de Lauretis considers that

the most exciting work in cinema and in feminism today is not antinarrative or anti-Oedipal; quite the opposite. It is narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance, for it seeks to stress the duplicity of that scenario and the specific contradiction of the female subject in it, the contradiction by which historical women must work with and against Oedipus. (*Alice Doesn't*, 157)

Carter's novel exemplifies and gives dramatic illustration to precisely this contradiction: New Eve functions indeed «with and against Oedipus», she is the new Oedipus but transcends him by becoming a woman, who was nevertheless made from a man Evelyn/Adam/Oedipus, thus still containing elements of the opposite sex. As New Eve, she embodies femininity and has to face the problems encountered by a beautiful woman, while at the same time knowing what it feels like being the man she has to deal with.

Angela Carter once remarked that «most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode» («Notes from the front line», 71). I believe that is precisely what she set out to do in *The Passion of New Eve*, that is, to put new wine in old bottles, although we could also reverse the terms and say that in this novel she actually put old wine in new bottles. Whatever the case, the pressure was surely strong enough to explode old concepts and rehearse new ones.

The Passion of New Eve can be read, as I have suggested throughout this essay, as a profoundly subversive demythologizing and at the same time a transgressive reactivating of ancient, heroic archetypes in a female guise. The novel insistently attempts the demystification of symbols, legends and myths which, the narrator insists, should be put away until «the times have created a fresh iconography» (174). At the same time, *The Passion of New Eve* is centrally concerned with the riddle of human identity, the nature of femininity and of masculinity, a conundrum that in spite of having been «both man and woman», Adam and Eve, Eve/lyn is still at odds to solve.

Carter's novel is about playing with new figures, novel images, role-reversals, demythologized characters. The whole novel can be seen, indeed, as an answer to Barthes's question in *The Pleasure of the Text*, where he reflects about the ontological status of the author, the reader and of authority: «If there is no longer a Father, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus?» (47) Carter's parallel interrogation and reply to Barthes would probably be something along the terms: «If there is no longer a Mother, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Jocasta?»

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Sylvia Plath, depression and suicide: A new interpretation (*)

*BERTRAM WYATT-BROWN (**)*

Psychological depression played an enormous role in the celebrated career of Sylvia Plath. The thirty-year-old American poet ended her life by suicide in a London flat in 1963. From the time of Hippocrates to the present era, chronic melancholy has defied easy medical answers. Biographers of literary figures have too often treated it as a moral as much as a mental aberration or else laid the blame on external factors as if a happy environment alone could readily cure the melancholy victim. Likewise, Plath's chroniclers – Ann Stevenson, Paul Alexander, Linda Wagner-Martin, A. Alvarez, and, more recently, Janet Malcolm – have not dealt adequately with her subjection to the mental disorder that is so prevalent among writers and original thinkers. Following along the lines that Thomas Caramagno established in his work on Virginia Woolf, I adopt a neurological and genetic approach to Plath's manic-depression. At the same time, one cannot overlook early childhood trauma that clearly made matters worse. Some biographers blame her husband Ted Hughes for infidelity and indifference. Others have denounced Sylvia herself for moral weakness. Neither of these interpretations take account of the irremediable nature of her illness before anti-depressants were available. I argue that she should be interpreted as mad – intermittently so – and therefore not wholly accountable for her actions during those episodes. Yet, her affliction helped enormously to shape the character of her art, and it greatly contributed to its energy and mordant insight, especially in her later poems.

Sylvia Plath's parental history is lost behind the veils of family reticence. Aurelia Plath, her mother, never quite acknowledged her daughter's mental problems, much less any possibility of familial precedents for them. Because of its very severity, Sylvia Plath's manic-depressive condition of violent mood swings had to have arisen from genetic as well as environmental factors. In any event, the death of her father, a distinguished professor of entomology at Boston University, in 1940 had a devastating impact on his eight-year-old daughter. Years later Plath, in a powerful

(*) I am grateful to Anne M. Wyatt-Brown for her critical contributions to this essay and especially her insights into this interpretation of Sylvia Plath's art and life, and to Natalie Silkey, Robert Zieger, Lucas Myers for additional, substantive suggestions. Jan Lewis's superb editing is also deeply appreciated.

(**) University of Florida, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 4131 Turlington Hall, P. O. Box 117320, Gainesville, Florida 32611-7320, USA.

poem, mourned, «Daddy, I have had to kill you./ You died before I had time».¹ In her fictionalized autobiography, *The Bell Jar*, she recalls that in adulthood she realized when she burst into tears at the sight of her father's gravestone that she had never cried over his death before. So, she continues, «I laid my face to the smooth face of the marble and howled my loss into the cold salt rain». Writing in verse and prose were the means for expressing her grief and anger at his sudden departure. Indeed, her remembrance of how neither she nor her mother had wept at the time was accurate. Her mother believed in adopting the cheerful approach. Her daughter, however, reacted to the news of the tragedy by dully remarking in her profound resentment, «I'll never speak to God again». Then the little girl trudged off to school in untearful grief and unreconcilable misery.²

A precocious child, Sylvia Plath was thereafter terrified of abandonment. As she grew up, Sylvia sought to ward off pain by throwing herself with abandon into everything she did: biking, intent study, group projects at school, tennis – and writing. Nonetheless, her father's death had obliterated her self-confidence. School activities of all sorts became a way to shore up a fear of losing respect and a means to evade the sense of inner void. She strove with increasing fervor for fame, even as a youngster, but earned success chiefly with school authorities, not with her peers. In the ninth grade she lost a hard-fought election for class secretary and remarked in her diary, «Perhaps I was doomed always to be on the outside».³

As Anne Stevenson records in her biography, in these years Sylvia won prizes – including a college scholarship from Olive Higgins Prouty, inspiration for the long-running radio soap opera *Stella Dallas* – but captured no popularity contests at Smith College. Yet despite her increasing promise as a published writer and winner of awards and high grades and her almost desperate concern to keep ever busy, she could be sarcastic, arrogant, and sullen. Such behavior masked a sense of insecurity. It suggests that she was judging herself by impossible standards, and so she scrutinized others with an equally critical eye. Those who knew her were well advised to keep their distance at times. She had a biting tongue, and her sometimes mean-spirited self-centeredness could be exasperating.⁴

Behind this behavior was her mental illness. It was not merely a set of neurotic tendencies, which are subject to some degree of self-control, but an unmanageable psychosis that rose or fell according to its own arbitrary imperatives.⁵ Indeed, during her college days at Smith, Sylvia Plath's manic-depressive illness was coming so fast upon her that even encouraging letters from publisher Harold Straus, impressed by a short story she had written, failed to give her much solace. She veered uncontrollably from mania to despair. In her journal in 1952, she pondered her internal plight with these words, «It is like lifting a bell jar off a securely clockworklike functioning community, and seeing all the little busy people stop, gasp, blow up, and float in the inrush (or rather outrush) of the rarified scheduled atmosphere-poor little frightened people, flailing impotent arms in the aimless air». She felt that she was «running madly, in a crowded schedule, in a squirrel cage of busy people».⁶ Though prompted by her emotional dismay, her remarks are particularly

¹ «Daddy», in Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems*, ed. Ted Hughes (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 222.

² Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (New York: Bantam, 1972), 137; Linda Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 28.

³ Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*, 40.

⁴ Anne Stevenson, *Bitter Fame: A Life of Sylvia Plath* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 25. Author's conversations with Amy Gardner of Eaglesmere, PA, and Cynthia Parsons of Cockeysville, MD, November 29, 1996. These two classmates of Sylvia at Smith College concur with that conclusion.

⁵ Frederick Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 31-35. Admittedly this is a very controversial area in the study of affective disorder, and it was only at very troubled times that Plath succumbed to the full range of classic symptoms of psychosis – delusional and disoriented thinking, hallucinations, and prolonged insomnia.

⁶ July 11, 1952, entry in Ted Hughes and Frances McCullough, eds., *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* (New York: Dial Press, 1982), 51.

acute for so young an observer of the human condition. Her words show an affinity with David Riesman, whose book *The Lonely Crowd* criticized the contemporary impulse for conformity.

Like Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Lowell, both victims of manic-depression, Sylvia dreaded most this very possibility: loss of reason.⁷ In the summer before her junior year at Smith, she recorded in her diary how she walked under the shade trees of Wellesley's residential streets and imagined herself living in the body of one inhabitant or another – anyone's but her own frightening flesh and bone. Of course, as mentioned earlier, poets and writers like Plath must cultivate a skill for imagining others' lives and hearing a variety of voices – conceptualizations that are essential in the creative process. For instance, an early poem, «Temper of Time», deals with the emotional wraiths that had hunted her down: «Black birds of omen», she wrote, «Now prowl on the bough» while «tall skeletons walk». The poem ends with the lines, «There's a hex on the cradle / And death in the pot».⁸ The poem is interesting less for its inherent merit than its indication of her themes and direction so early in her writing career.

In her emerging creativity she was beginning to find a way to express the mysterious sources of her solitary wretchedness: «So I press thumb-down-on-latch and step up into the light, into tomorrow, into people I know by sight, by sound, by touch, by smell, by flavor ... and the door closes behind me, and I turn the lock with a click that shuts out the disturbing wasteland of sleeping streets and fenceless acres of night».⁹ However effectively she translated the emotions of the illness, the disease itself remained always a source of mortification and sense of disgrace. Robert Graves observed of his own experience that after the «intoxication» of manic feelings passed, «my chief emotional reaction is shame and disgust with myself, and a wonder that my fear of death could be so wonderfully and idiotically twisted. That the facing humiliation, of despair, or deprivation should produce a desire for death is quite natural».¹⁰ Plath could have echoed his sentiments.

Her most critical biographer, Anne Stevenson, concludes that «her gift was for romantic self-aggrandizing» as she found herself «trapped in her story, condemned to telling it again and again to whoever would listen». Although that might seem plausible, one must remember that those cursed with a genetic and, at that time, medically untreatable mental disorder struggled with emotions too wild to be vanquished. Plath confessed in her diary that «with the groggy sleepless blood dragging through my veins», she was not far from choosing death over the persistence of pain in life. Successes in her senior year did nothing to relieve her misery, rigidly hidden from the outside world. «I feel behind my eyes a numb, paralyzed cavern, a pit of hell, a mimicking nothingness», she grieved. «I want to kill myself, to escape from responsibility, to draw back abjectly into the womb. I do not know who I am, where I am going».¹¹

For such problems of identity as these, the parent, not the victim, is often blamed. Aurelia Plath, a woman of intelligence and great intensity, had tried to please her austere, patriarchal, European husband, who stubbornly rejected her advice to see a doctor despite his illness from cancer. As a widow, she had reared Sylvia and her son with the attention, discipline, and self-sacrifice that women of her day were expected to employ. One can too readily overanalyze and thus morally condemn her. Just as a mother might be overly protective of a child with a severe physical

⁷ Paul Mariani, *The Last Puritan: A Life of Robert Lowell* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 176-88, 229-36, 435-48; Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance* (New York: Harper, 1991), 176-77, 296-97, 373-74, 415-18.

⁸ «Temper of Time» in *Collected Poems*, 336.

⁹ Sylvia Plath's Smith College journal quoted by Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 32.

¹⁰ Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 19.

¹¹ Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 32; November 3, 1952, entry in Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 59; last quotation from Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*, 89.

handicap, so too, Aurelia Plath confronted moods and conduct in her daughter that would defy both the soothing and the authoritative approaches of the best of mothers. The analyst D. W. Winnicott has called such women as Aurelia Plath «good enough mothers». He refers to normal circumstances in which mothers encourage the child's sense of selfhood. But the term could well be used to describe abnormal situations in which the mother, with the usual imperfections of the human species, must find means to compensate for elements missing in the child. Love is necessary, of course, but can it alone suffice, meeting all the complexities that childish tendencies leading toward insanity can generate? The child rearing of «good enough mothers», no matter how caring, simply cannot supply the deficiencies in mentally afflicted children's ego development.¹² With a daughter who could plunge herself into the very depths of despondency, what could a mother like Aurelia Plath do but be forever cheerful while trying to show her daughter the brighter, gentler side? She was not consigned merely to being a mother but a psychiatric nurse of sorts to a patient whose eventual cure was at best problematic. In 1961, during a visit to Sylvia and Ted Hughes in London, Aurelia Plath exclaimed after a lifetime of frustration, «Everything I do is *wrong*; I can't seem to do anything right». Breaking with her usual optimism about Sylvia, she added, «I just don't know how Ted stands it».¹³

Sylvia Plath could barely stand it herself. Like Virginia Woolf, another woman writer who chose the option of death, Sylvia Plath early learned that her uncontrollable sense of emptiness that rose and fell so rapidly had only two resolutions – the temporary but exhilarating act of creating art and the temptation of suicide. Writing, claimed Sylvia Plath, was the only way to «get rid of the accusing, never-satisfied gods who surround me like a crown of thorns». The language is remarkable in its poetic resonance and its self-dramatization. Both Woolf and Plath were victims of unsettled childhoods. Equally if not possibly more significant, however, was the second factor of biological dysfunction in the very seat of consciousness. Referring to Virginia Woolf, literary critic Thomas Caramagno notes, «Suicide is at once a personal and an impersonal event, an intended act – at the very least, it is an attempt to escape one's pain – but it is also one that occurs when... conditions may have undermined the intention-mediating neural circuits in the brain».¹⁴ So it was with Sylvia Plath. An imbalance of serotonin, dopamine, and other chemicals that move thought through the synapses creates the conditions for melancholia. In some instances, chemical malfunctioning of a similar nature may be a significant factor in the frantic drive of the victim to kill all consciousness by dying.

One expert calls depression «a biological storm in the brain». After lengthy investigation, psychiatrist Kay Redfield Jamison, who has eloquently told the story of her own college-age distress with both mania and depression, affirms that the mental disorder has a biological component. Neither she, Sylvia Plath, nor any other victim has much if any control over these devastating neurological conditions. That state of wandering through the labyrinth of isolation was particularly

¹² D. W. Winnicott, *The Family and Individual Development* (1965; London: Tavistock/ Routledge, 1989), 17-19. There is no reason to think that Aurelia Plath was a deficient mother rather than a brave and enterprising widow who managed to keep things together as well as one could expect. See Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*, 15-30; Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 9-12. For an inappropriately critical view, see Ronald Hayman, *The Death and Life of Sylvia Plath* (London: Heineman, 1991), 30-42. Blaming everyone else for her condition as much as she blamed herself, Sylvia, in *The Bell Jar* and some of her poems, lashed out at her mother cruelly and quite irrationally.

¹³ Aurelia Plath quoted in Dido Merwin, «Vessel of Wrath: A Memoir of Sylvia Plath», in Stevenson, appendix 2 *Bitter Fame*, 332.

¹⁴ Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 166 (quotation); Thomas Carmelo Caramagno, «Suicide and the Illusion of Closure: Aging, Depression, and the Decision to Die», (unpublished paper); idem, *The Flight of the Mind: Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive Illness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); «Biochemical Models», in Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 402-15; Elliot S. Gershon et al., «The Inheritance of Affective Disorders», in A. G. Steinberg et al., eds., *Progress in Medical Genetics* (Philadelphia, Saunders, 1977), 2: 101-64.

hard to bear in the era before the current array of antidepressants became available.¹⁵ Earlier in the century Emil Kraepelin and other psychiatric authorities had begun to recognize the disease as a physical as well as emotional disorder.¹⁶ In Sylvia's time, however, the illness was still considered in the lay world a terrible stigma, a signal of unforgivable moral failure, and few indeed believed in the efficacy of psychotherapy, however defective it might have been.

Sylvia Plath's mental health deteriorated precipitously in 1953. A symptom of her descent into mental hell was her intense identification with the plight of the Rosenbergs, about to be executed for treason. It seemed as if she imagined herself strapped in the electric chair. In *The Bell Jar*, she explained, «I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. I thought it must be the worst thing in the world». Their Jewishness also drew them to her. It was as if her father's Germanic roots had been responsible for the Holocaust and other forms of anti-Semitic persecution.¹⁷ Aurelia Plath's fragile health was also a factor, but still worse was Sylvia's rejection for a seminar in fiction writing at Harvard under Frank O'Connor's direction. She scolded herself unmercifully. The decision against her admission signified, she felt, a complete annihilation of her existence. Meeting famous members of the New York intelligentsia while working for *Mademoiselle* did nothing to lift her spirits, and she entered what St. John of the Cross called «the dark night of the soul». In a climactic outburst, she cried out, «Oh, Mother, the world is too rotten! I want to die!» Alarmed, Aurelia Plath put her daughter under the care of an inexperienced physician, who ordered the torture of shock treatments without any prior discussion or follow-up with the distraught patient. He then went on vacation! Soon after, diving into the maelstrom of mental confusion, Sylvia swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills and crept into a crawl space under the house. There, unconscious, she remained curled up for two days. Frantic over her disappearance, Aurelia Plath called the police, and soon officers, friends, and news reporters were scouring the neighborhood. A low moan from her hiding spot finally revealed her location. Sylvia was hospitalized «more dead than alive» said a nurse at the Newton-Wellesley Hospital. Still suicidal, she took a year to recover and then returned to complete her degree at Smith.¹⁸

Full of honors and enjoying a rising reputation for her published short stories, Sylvia graduated and looked forward to two years abroad. «If only I get accepted at Cambridge!» she exclaimed to her mother. «My whole life would explode in a rainbow.»¹⁹ How seldom do lives explode in rainbows. For Sylvia, however, the prospect represented release, a door to possible independence and maybe an escape from the blue devils, as melancholia once was called, that might follow her across the seas. Furthermore, like other manic-depressives, Sylvia had a desperate need for external validation. High grades, prizes, special notice of the Manhattan intelligentsia, acceptance into prestigious summer writing programs were supposed to fill the empty vessel within. As a recipient of a Fulbright scholarship, she felt vindicated and triumphant when she was accepted into Newnham College in 1955. That was also the year I went to King's College and first met her.

As it happened, I was affiliated with a group of poets who put together a slim but handsome journal during the winter of 1956. The *St. Botolph's Review*, as it was impiously dubbed, contained

¹⁵ Edwin Shneidman, *Suicide as Psychache: A Clinical Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), 55 (quotation). See Kay Redfield Jamison, *The Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

¹⁶ Emil Kraepelin, *Manic-Depressive Insanity and Paranoia*, trans. R. M. Barclay, ed. G. M. Robertson (1921; New York: Arno Press, 1976); Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 25; Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression. From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 207-11.

¹⁷ Plath, *Bell Jar*, 1.

¹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* (New York: New Directions, 1956), 75 (quotation); Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*, 92-105 (103, 105, quotations); Hayman, *Death and Life of Sylvia Plath*, 56.

¹⁹ Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*, 120.

Ted Hughes's first published poems. Sylvia bought a copy from me and raced off on her bicycle. Having read the poems, hours later she found me a second time and asked how she could meet Ted Hughes, whose poems she had already memorized.²⁰ Astonished at her almost off-putting effervescence, I invited her to attend a celebration for the *Review* at the Cambridge Women's Union in Falcon Yard that evening. She did so, and immediately fell in love with him. Ted Hughes struck her as the ideal masculine intellectual – handsome, brilliant, a combination of virile protector and poetic genius. «Sylvia had always, in her way, gushed and gone on and been very public about all the men she was spending time with», recalls Jane Baltzell, one of Sylvia's housemates at Whitstead Cottage, a Newnan College lodging, where they were living. But, Jane continued, «this was not so with Ted. I remember thinking she was serious about Ted because she didn't talk about him, had absolutely nothing to say about him».²¹

Yet for all the romance of those days, Sylvia had to encounter the ambivalence of her fellow students, an attitude that she had generated against herself, consciously or not. At Whitstead, there had been mild trouble. Jane Baltzell (now Jane Kopp), a brilliant Marshall Fellow and poet from Pembroke College, Brown University, remembers that Sylvia was not well liked by the other residents. They were a rather prissy lot, as I recall. Some disliked Sylvia's supposedly vulgar American ways. She raved effusively over things the English thought unremarkable. Once the authorities at Whitstead scolded her for allowing a young male visitor to use an upstairs bathroom, where he might see forbidden feminine things.²² (In those days, the university rules governing parietal hours and similar regulations for both men and women were, by today's standards, ludicrous. Many of us were military veterans, and women like Sylvia and Jane were already college graduates, senior to the other inmates at Whitstead.)

Sylvia Plath thought of Jane Baltzell as her «Doppelgänger» – her double, a second identity. Baltzell grew very exasperated with the role that Sylvia wanted her to play. It «gave [me] the creeps», Jane once exclaimed. In truth, however, they were somewhat alike in appearance though not in temperament. Both were striking blonds, strong-limbed, with glowing cheeks and shining teeth in a very northern European way. Subject to odd spells of envy, Sylvia resented Jane's intelligence, sensitivity, and self-control. Jane also played the classical piano with considerable talent. She was unquestionably gifted in her own right. Sylvia once told her «double» that «Cambridge wasn't big enough for both of us» and, though laughing, «she sort of meant it», as Jane later confided to a biographer. After one vacation, Jane explained to me how she and Sylvia had had a big quarrel in Paris. Sylvia had been consumed with rage because Jane, exhausted from a stormy channel crossing, had inadvertently locked her out of the hotel room and slept on through her frantic banging on the door. To be sure, Sylvia had reason for grievance, but her fury was

²⁰ The poems by Ted Hughes were «Fallgrief's Girlfriends», «When Two Men Meet», «Whenever I Am under My Gravestone», and «If I Should Touch Her», *St. Botolph's Review* 1956, 16-19. The other poems were by Daniel Weissbort, Daniel Huws, E. Lucas Myers, and David Ross; three short sketches were written by Than Minton, E. Lucas Myers, and Daniel Weissbort. When I spoke with Sylvia on the day of the *Review's* publication, she was particularly struck by Hughes's «Fallgrief's Girlfriends» and Luke Myers's «Sestina of the Norse Seaman», *idem*, 8. Daniel Huws of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, has since published his poems under the title, *Noth* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972). Daniel Weissbort, formerly of London, now professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Translation Workshop at the University of Iowa, has recently published his fifth book of poetry in a collection entitled *Lake: New and Selected Poems* (Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York: Sheep Meadow Press, 1992).

²¹ Edward Butscher, *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 202.

²² Jane Baltzell Kopp, «"Gone, Very Gone Youth": Sylvia Plath at Cambridge, 1955-1957», in Edward Butscher, ed., *Sylvia Plath: The Woman and the Work* (New York: Dodd, Mead Company, 1977), 63-65; Butscher, *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*, 184-85.

extraordinary. Despite Sylvia's erratic moods, Jane proved a loyal friend. Although she hinted at some other problems with her hotel roommate, she was too discreet to gossip to me or any other man about Sylvia's lovemaking with «Richard S—» on that expedition, as biographers have later recounted.²³ Baltzell did, however, complain once in a while about the way Sylvia would appropriate clothing from Jane's closet without a by-your-leave.

If Sylvia had trouble getting along with even so temperate a friend as Jane Baltzell, her associations with the poets who were Ted's friends were also problematic. Consisting of a dozen or so young men with shared interests in poetry, the group generally met in the afternoons or evenings at the Anchor on Queen's Road overlooking the Cam. They had not known Plath before her dramatic evening at the Women's Union, but weeks before had read her poems and ephemera in Grant and other Cambridge papers that remained inaccessible to their own work. They judged her poetry shallow and phony. Besides, she published in American magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Mademoiselle*, in which male poets would scarcely deign to appear. Lucas Myers was an American friend of Hughes and prominent figure in the preparation of the *St. Botolph's Review* for publication. On another occasion, Myers contended that her ambition shone through her poems, «or so we thought, and we thought it was not legitimate to write poetry which should come down on the poet somewhere, out of sheer will».²⁴ With these penetrating opinions we were all in agreement, but smugly unaware that her talent might later mature.

The attitude of Ted Hughes's Cambridge friends did not help make the path of courtship and love smooth and cheering. Also at the beginning Hughes himself may not have been as enthusiastic about the marriage as Sylvia was. She could press very hard for something she desperately wanted. Sylvia earnestly believed that Ted could be her salvation and free her from her own worst compulsions. He would help her achieve fresh knowledge of herself and enhance her drive toward poetic greatness. At the beginning of a courting, any such conviction would certainly place strains on the relationship unless the other party welcomes the prospect of becoming a personal therapist. In any event, on June 16, 1956, at the Church of St. George the Martyr in Bloomsbury, London, Hughes did marry her «against his better judgment». At the start of their love life Ted Hughes «fundamentally felt apologetic», Myers remembers, at least when they were around the Cambridge poets.²⁵ I recall our unhappy surprise to hear the news.

An element in this tense situation was something of those living through that period did not consciously recognize. The St. Botolph's crowd, as Ted's friends might be called, represented a certain Anglo-American male attitude toward female writers. At that time Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner dominated the literary landscape like great, virile colossi, however tarnished the image has lately become. To compete against such reputations must have been discouraging for a female writer like Sylvia Plath. One of her early sponsors, Stephen Spender, who had little use for any of the Botolph clique, took a typically English swipe at the supposedly female source of Sylvia's creativity. He pointed out that, while Wilfred Owen's message «came out of the peculiar circumstances of the trenches» of the Great War, the case with Plath was different. «Her femininity is that her hysteria comes completely out of herself», Spender pontificated, implying that hysteria was purely a female problem. During World War I, William Halse Rivers Rivers, senior alienist (with a curiously repetitive middle name), and his colleagues had treated such shell-shock victims

²³ See Butscher, *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*, 185-92, 187 (quotation), 202 (quotation). Butscher is not very accurate with the facts: he calls Botolph's a priory; I am identified as Bart Wyatt-Brown; he names Jane Baltzell as Jane Kopp, her name after marriage some years after the Cambridge interlude; and he misspells Whitstead Cottage.

²⁴ Lucas Myers, «Ah Youth: Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath at Cambridge and After», appendix 1 in Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 312.

²⁵ Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 90.

as the poets Owen and Siegfried Sassoon at Craiglockhart Hospital for Officers in Scotland. Contrary to Spender's remarks, the hospital physicians concluded that hysteria was very much an internal problem with deep childhood roots for men. In some cases homosexual or bisexual inclinations added another burden of shame and remorse, as any sort of attraction to other men was a taboo no less condemned than cowardice or desertion at the front. Spender's prejudice that women's experiences were by the nature of things less dramatic, less «poetic» than those of Lord Byron dying at Missolonghi, Shelley sailing to his death off the coast of Leghorn, or Owen in a rat-infested dugout on the Western Front in the last week before the Armistice was typical of male artists of the time. What women did, even in art, did not matter – that seemed to be Spender's prognosis.²⁶

In retrospect, Sylvia's early work, as the Cambridge crowd claimed, was indeed unformed. The very ambition that had set the male poets' teeth on edge, however, helps to explain Ted Hughes's early successes. For all her emotional difficulties, Sylvia Plath was the ideal literary agent – efficient, knowledgeable, and persuasive as she carried a briefcase of Ted's poems on her visits to editors' offices. On the other hand, he had the poet's disdain for self-promotion, preferring to let her stoop to conquer.²⁷ For his part, though, Ted served as a most constructive critic, and she learned much about poetry writing from him. «Ted had a unique way of helping, stimulating, encouraging writer friends», Lucas Myers reports; «after spending an afternoon with him, they could come out with a batch of new poems from parts of themselves that had been dormant».²⁸

Far from being frivolous or merely pretty, Sylvia Plath's mature verse grew out of patience, discipline, hard work, determination, and an ever deeper exploration of herself that Spender dismissed as a source of inspiration. After her marriage to Ted Hughes in 1956 – and certainly partially as a result of Ted's literary help – her poetry began to assume a self-confident, probing, and serious character. She boldly reached down into her own depths, as Walker Percy later advised artists to do. Critic Richard Blessing observes how remarkably she touches the reader's emotions. John Berryman, he points out, once observed that he sought «to terrify and comfort». So did Plath. Even though never far from death or even cruelty, the notion of comfort is evident in her poem «Kindness», written on February 1, 1963, only ten days before she died. After describing how «Dame Kindness... glides about my house», she ends it with the lines «here you come, with a cup of tea» and «hand me two children, two roses». Yet even in this poem, there's another, compulsive note about the creative role that has a somewhat angry edge: «The blood jet is poetry / There is no stopping it.» It is as if she thought of her verse as a life stream spilling out into the world and leaving her drained and dying. In like manner, there's something infinitely sad about her lines in «Morning Song»: «I'm no more your mother / Than the cloud that distils [sic] a mirror to reflect its own slow / Effacement at the wind's hand.»²⁹

Her late poems strike hammer blows, driven as they were by her manic state before her final decision. That period in the emotional cycle is often a time of special peril for the suicide who fears losing the inspiration of the moment and again entering into the dark shadows of madness. The verses deal with subjects that could run from the mordant to the seemingly commonplace. Yet

²⁶ Richard Slobodin, *W. H. R. Rivers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 59-66; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 101, 102, but more to the point is the detailed account of Rivers and his patients, especially Graves, in Miranda Seymour, *Robert Graves: Life on the Edge* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 65-70, 105-07, 115-17. See also Anne M. Wyatt-Brown, «Headhunters and Victims of War: W. H. R. Rivers and Pat Barker», in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference on Literature and Psychology* (Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, 1997); Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, 44.

²⁷ Myers, «Ah Youth», 314.

²⁸ Myers, «Ah, Youth», 315.

²⁹ Blessing, «Shape of the Psyche»; «Kindness», in Sylvia Plath, *Ariel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 82. «Morning Song», in *Ariel*, 1.

whatever the subject, the language is dramatic and immediately arrests the reader's concern in the fashion of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. In her poems about her dead father she reveals how, even as an adult, she still misses him and still hates him for abandoning her by dying. In «Daddy» she writes,

I was ten when they buried you
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.

Again at thirty she would try once more, she promises, and oddly counts his death as the last of three episodes of her own suicidal efforts, as if a part of her has been buried with him. In the same poem, she inspects a picture of her father standing before a blackboard and notices «A cleft in your chin instead of your foot / But no less a devil for that» – as if her father had Satan's cloven hoof.³⁰

The ordinary duties of motherhood, the exasperation with children who demand and demand in their ravenous need for love, the monotonous tasks of cleaning, feeding, shopping, and washing – these topics were then regarded as subjects unworthy of poetic notice. In the hands of Sylvia Plath, though, they become sources of madness themselves. As she interprets her experience, they stifle the creative impulse and, in a circular way, divert her from the very preoccupations with insanity and death into which domesticity seemed, in her fright, to lead her. Children's tears and «cries are hooks that catch and grate like cats». She finds herself at «the center of an atrocity» and comes to hate «babies». In «Three Women: A Poem for Three Voices», she tries to master the situation. Yet the effort is a failure, as she confesses in a prefiguring of her suicidal plans. «I am calm. I am calm. It is the calm before something awful.» Hope has fled, life has no joy or meaning, only remembrances of a dead father, memories dulled in repressed fury. «I am dumb and brown. / I am a seed about to break. / The brownness is my dead self, and it is sullen. / It does not wish to be more, or different.»³¹

It is not surprising that throughout her life, but especially in her later years, she was most attuned to poets whose work sought, as Theodore Roethke put it, to create verse that took «the shape of the psyche itself, in times of great stress [...] that is what I wanted to write».³² Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Roethke, and above all, her soul-mate Anne Sexton, were kindred souls. They were united in the same preoccupation with the hovering presence of mortality that Plath knew so well. Having met Lowell at Smith College in 1958 when teaching there, Plath was especially attracted to his aggrieved and ferocious style. «Taste the phrases: tough, knotty, blazing with color and fury, most eminently sayable: “where braced pig-iron dragons grip / The blizzard to their rigor mortis”», she quoted from Lowell's «Lord Weary's Castle». As Steven Axelrod observes, she could never have written her masterpiece, «Daddy», without his «life studies» of his father?³³

Like her, these poets, Lowell in particular, provided death – that inevitability most of us deny – with imagery, drama, and fresh insights as if by dressing Father Death in fine literary apparel they could tame him. In the introduction to Plath's collection *Ariel*, Robert Lowell wrote perceptively about his one-time student and compatriot in the domain of despair, «Dangerous, more powerful than man, machinelike from hard training, she herself is a little like a racehorse, galloping relentlessly with risked, outstretched neck, death hurdle after death hurdle topped».³⁴ Having once

³⁰ «Daddy», in *Ariel*, 51, 50.

³¹ Plath, «The Detective», in *Winter Trees* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 13-14; «Daddy», in *Ariel*, 51; «Lady Lazarus», in *Ariel*, 6; «Three Women: A Poem for Three Voices», in *Collected Poems*, 179. This section owes much to Norman H. Holland, «Literary Suicide: A Question of Style», *Psychocultural Review*, (Summer 1977), 299.

³² Blessing, «Shape of the Psyche», 57, 58.

³³ Plath quoted in Steven Gould Axelrod, *Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 64-65.

³⁴ Robert Lowell, foreword to Plath, *Ariel*, vii.

dismissed her as immature, Lowell had been stunned by the sudden death of his former student and overwhelmed by her posthumous poems that first appeared in the British magazine, *Encounter*. Both he, as well as John Berryman, were left feeling almost as if «all other poetry were about nothing».³⁵

Plath was also among the handful of brilliant female poets who questioned the feminine proprieties, especially those conventional demands for a delicacy that seemed to suffocate the artistic temperament. Like Adrienne Rich or Anne Sexton, Plath, in her poem «The Disquieting Muses», closes on a bitter note. The poet protests to her mother that the «kingdom» of ovaltine, piano lessons, absent father, and vigilant aunts that she presented her is not her style at all: «Mother, mother. But no frown of mine / Will betray the company I keep.»³⁶

In one of Plath's most arresting poems, «The Moon and the Yew Tree» (1961), the reader enters the sunless, «cold and planetary» inner realm – the desperation of one living in a world that offers no hope or succor. The setting is a churchyard at night. «Fumy, spiritous mists inhabit this place», the narrator exclaims. «How I would like to believe in tenderness.» An effigy of Mary is supposed to offer that gift of compassion, but instead, «her blue garments unloose small bats and owls». Richard Blessing claims that the reference to the virtues of affection, opposite to hopelessness, creates a tension, a «motion rocking back and forth between these emotional poles». Yet there is no self-adjusting spinning on an emotional axis, but rather an ultimate denial of salvation, a repudiation of love. The gyre is hurtling downward end over end. Unlike the melancholy Walker Percy, who, in his novel *Lancelot* provides a tentative «yes» to the possibility of redemption, Plath arrives at the bleakest conclusion possible. Her poem makes the point emphatically in the last lines. The moon, she writes, is blind to the gentler facets of humanity. «She is bald and wild. / And the message of the yew tree is blackness – blackness and silence.»³⁷ Art alone, one might guess, is the only solace that makes living worthwhile in Plath's world of imagination, but even that resource is not a cornucopia. The ache of mental exhaustion can empty the soul.

During her Cambridge years, Sylvia's black moods were usually hidden from the view of outsiders. The Botolph crowd had gradually come to respect this brilliant addition to the group, but how much they really liked her is hard to say. With Ted Hughes's support, Sylvia was probably happier and more carefree than at any other time in her brief life. That idyllic interlude in her life at Cambridge did seem to fulfil her dream of an exploding rainbow, particularly in the company of Ted Hughes. As the years went by, and the pair tried to cope with academic life in New England and then in London and Devonshire, the pleasant days were not to last. Domesticity, as British culture then expected it to be in those prefeminist years, left Sylvia little time for her own work. With two small ones, Frieda and Nicholas, to care for, she had to rise at five to enjoy a silent period in which to write. Moreover, she could be easily frustrated by impish behavior that male poets then seemed to think appropriate to their romantic calling. Once, when the couple was living in a cramped London flat, she was preparing dinner when she asked Ted and their guest, Lucas Myers, to get something for the meal and return quickly. Instead, they spent too long at a nearby pub and returned much, much later than Sylvia thought right. She was understandably furious. Despite their protestations of remorse and compliments for the meal, she refused to speak to the pair and forced them to eat a congealed supper – half-filled bowls of clam chowder – in tense silence.³⁸

Yet Sylvia Plath could give as good as she ever got. On a weekend at a French chateau at Fons, owned by the well-known English anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers, Sylvia Plath's behavior

³⁵ Quoted in Mariani, *Lowell*, 313.

³⁶ Sylvia Plath, *The Colossus and Other Poems* (1962; New York: Random House, 1968), 60; Middlebrook, *Anne Sexton*, 109-110.

³⁷ Blessing, «Shape of the Psyche», 63; Plath, «The Moon and the Yew Tree», in *Collected Poems*, 172-73.

³⁸ Recalling the incident in a memoir, Myers claims they were only forty minutes late but acknowledges that memories of embarrassing moments can be tricky: see Myers, «Ah, Youth», 307-21.

was so outrageously selfish and even vicious that Ted had to take her away early to save themselves and their hosts further embarrassment. According to Dido Merwin, Sylvia's jealousy of Margot Pitt-Rivers, a brave fighter in the Spanish Civil War and an accomplished anthropologist in her own right, was the ostensible reason for her rudeness. But a second pregnancy, then in the third month, might also have frightened her into a nearly psychotic state.³⁹

The growing strains of the marriage, eventual estrangement, and separation need not detain us. Let it simply be said that, compelled to devote so much energy to battling madness, Sylvia had few inner resources for dealing with married life's complications. Who was more to blame for Sylvia's mental collapse and suicide – Ted Hughes or Sylvia herself? Needless to say, those driven to near suicide are not generally very companionable. Their habits become maddeningly erratic. They require a degree of understanding and imposed discipline that becomes extremely taxing, sometimes to the edge of endurance. Clinical findings demonstrate that those nearest someone in the throes of mania or melancholy find themselves by turn worried, angry, repelled, appalled, or stubbornly, blindly unwilling to recognize the obvious. They might pretend that all is well when clearly it is not. Paul Auster recalls that «when my sister suffered through a series of debilitating mental breakdowns, my father continued to believe there was nothing wrong with her». All that was needed was a change of scene, meeting new people, getting a job, as if it simply were a matter of insufficient moral courage and will-power. But, Auster notes, the worst of it was the sense of helplessness that such illness elicits from the apprehensive onlooker. Kindness is rejected, and efforts to control or discipline simply lead to recrimination. His father, hiding his grief beneath a rigid mask, tried to accept what could not be changed, but, Auster observes, «the more you accept it, the greater your despair becomes».⁴⁰

Although subject to these varying emotions, Ted Hughes loyally tried to be Sylvia's caregiver as best he could. For his part Ted Hughes, to adapt Winnicott's characterization, might be called a «good enough husband», neither the best nor worst of that customarily flawed species. Little serious guidance or knowledge of the affective disorder, however, was available to him in the early sixties, before the advent of lithium. That drug and others would later be combined with medical and psychological therapies – to imperfect but at least ameliorative effect. Dido Merwin, Ted's friend, once asked him why he did not show more authority in dealing with her. He wisely replied, «it would only make things worse... she couldn't be helped that way».⁴¹ Dido Merwin agreed: «How can you dissuade or even warn someone who is incapable of accepting that they might be wrong?» The answer to Merwin's rhetorical question is indisputable, but she was assuming that Plath had a hold on reality. The fact was that she did not.⁴² To be sure, Ted's infidelity – perhaps inevitable under the circumstances – doubled Sylvia's lifelong sense of insecurity and fear of abandonment. Her agonized bereavement over the marital collapse was a second loss that grievously compounded the anguish that she had never resolved after the death of her father years before.

In the final analysis, no one should take the blame for her death, save the hooded Fates who preside over who should suffer and learn to create from the abundance of that suffering. Winston Churchill called his onslaughts of the malady «the black dog». Walker Percy entitled his «the sweet beast of catastrophe». Sylvia Plath named her illness «the demon of negation» and «the groveling image of the fearful beast in myself». For all of them as well as many others so afflicted, depression had to be fought minute by minute with a «stoic face» and «a position of irony», as Plath reminded herself in her journal. «I cannot ignore this murderous self; it is there. I smell it and feel it, but I

³⁹ Didi Merwin, «Vessel of Wrath», 337-41.

⁴⁰ Auster, *Invention of Solitude*, 25-26.

⁴¹ Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 217.

⁴² Merwin, «Vessel of Wrath», 341.

will not give it my name... When it says: you shall not sleep... I shall go on anyway, knocking its nose in.»⁴³ Brave, sad words.

Fear of imperfection pursued her all her life. She strove to be the perfect daughter, student, wife, mother, and, most of all, perfect poet. Her letters to her mother tended to be so overly cheery that the reader would scarcely know how often the center was not holding. Her mother's false light-heartedness was a natural response to Sylvia's mordancy, but it did lead to an inauthentic relationship between them. Aurelia's repression of grief and worry set an example before her daughter, who replied with even greater false happiness to assure her mother that all was well. The result was that, in keeping with the times, Aurelia Plath believed that her daughter's illness was at most a temporary thing. Admission of helplessness had to be a matter of familial shame. Chronic and irremediable despondency was something to be hidden as much as possible from public knowledge.⁴⁴

Sylvia Plath knew her goals were impossible. Always an admirer of Virginia Woolf, she took her standards of achievement from the great Bloomsbury novelist. Sylvia, however, was a married woman of the 1950s. When she and Ted Hughes settled for a while in America in the late 1950s, Hughes received the most attention. His *Hawk in the Rain* established him as a major poet. She rejoiced when he won a poetry prize; it had been judged by Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, and, ironically, Stephen Spender. She was thrilled and declared, «it is as if [Ted] is the perfect male counterpart of my own self».⁴⁵ Yet when she was relegated to being known simply as Ted's wife, she soon promised herself to outdo Woolf – and also, perhaps, match her husband's fame.

In 1957, while working at a clerical job at a psychiatric clinic in the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Sylvia Plath pledged to write down her observations, the stories told her by other women, and her own «passing thoughts», just as Woolf had done. But «I will be stronger» than she was, Sylvia determined. «I will write until I begin to speak my deep self, and then have children, and speak still deeper. The life of the creative mind first, then the creative body.»⁴⁶ It was a noble aim, and she was beginning to sort out her priorities. Sylvia joined Robert Lowell's Boston University seminar, returned to psychotherapy, and had long martini afternoons with Anne Sexton at the Ritz Carlton off the Boston Commons. The poet Adrienne Rich, who did not know of Sylvia's fragile mental health, nonetheless tried to advise her not to try too much. Like Rich herself, she might become savagely torn between motherhood and the urge to write, Rich warned.⁴⁷

Yet the burden of conflicting aims – all to be mastered with equal efficiency and dispatch – became too much of a strain. Poems and babies followed, but the nemesis of perfection never faded. In one of her last poems, she recognized the danger of her lifelong obsession: «Perfection is terrible, it cannot have children. / Cold as snow breath, it tamps the womb.»⁴⁸ How hard it was, though, to resist the impulse. Perhaps she thought that striving toward empyrean heights was the indispensable source of her imaginative powers. The latter gift had kept her alive to her thirtieth year. The afflictions of the brain, the sleeplessness, the distracted thoughts and imagined horrors, however, had become unbearable. For Sylvia, writing was not just avocation, disciplined and

⁴³ October 1, 1957, entry in Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 177; Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 114-15; Anthony Storr, *Churchill's Black Dog. Kafka's Mice and Other Phenomena of the Human Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), 76.

⁴⁴ Sylvia Plath, *Letters Home: Correspondence, 1950-63*, ed. Aurelia Schober Plath, ed. (1975; New York: Bantam, 1977). Olwyn Hughes, Ted's sister, wrote Janet Malcolm quite convincingly that «Mrs. Plath was ashamed of the mental illness» and shrank from recognizing «just how very ill Sylvia was with her first breakdown». See Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes* (New York: Random House, 1994), 29.

⁴⁵ February 25, 1957, entry in Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 154.

⁴⁶ July 17, 1957, entry in Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 165.

⁴⁷ Middlebrook, *Anne Sexton*, 103-4, 111.

⁴⁸ «The Munich Mannequins», in *Collected Poems*, 262.

professional though she was. Composing verse was an exercise of quite a different dimension. For her, the creative impulse, she once wrote, «*breaks open the vaults of the dead and the skies behind which the prophesying angels hide. The mind makes and makes, spinning its web*».⁴⁹

Like Sylvia, Virginia Woolf had tried to kill herself once before she succeeded. She had known that same downward vortex of mind into which Sylvia was sucked. Neither Woolf's loyal husband, Leonard, nor Ted Hughes could prevent them from slipping into incurable psychosis and suicide, whether the surviving spouse was faithful or not. Before Virginia put stones in her pockets and waded out to sea, she wrote Vanessa Bell, «I feel I have gone too far this time to come back again.... I am always hearing voices, and I know I shan't get over it now».⁵⁰ Sylvia, however, apparently wrote no note of her intention, perhaps out of fear that they might stop her. Elizabeth Hardwick, Robert Lowell's wife, observed that although Sylvia sought to be «both heroine and author; when the curtain goes down, it is her own dead body there on the stage, sacrificed to her own plot».⁵¹ In light of more recent findings about the afflictions of the mind, that reading seems shallow and almost contemptuous. Yet it does point to the histrionic, narcissistic aspect of her desperation.

Leaving behind two babies motherless, she might seem to have been unconscionably callous to indulge herself in this way. But the suicide feels bereft of choices. The purpose of the act is to end a crashing cascade of intolerable mental agony. Sylvia Plath was prompted to die, stalked by fears and terrifying whispers in her mind similar to those that haunted Virginia Woolf. Sylvia Plath's psychiatrist, John Horder, had argued that an accumulation of personal disappointments and an artist's «irresponsibility» by no means could be the causes of so tragic an act. The wildness of her swings of mood, he wisely guessed, were «so excessive that a doctor inevitably thinks in terms of brain chemistry».⁵² If the leading expert on the subject, Edwin Shneidman, is accurate, the deed arises from a form of psychosis that must be understood as something apart from even so ostensibly similar a state as clinical depression. Schizophrenics and alcoholics, he points out, may also open the door to a beckoning death. In recent years, biochemists have discovered that there is an indisputable relationship between self-elimination and a serotonin metabolite called CSF5-HIAA. The research has been replicated in autopsies of suicidal patients in whose brains the affected receptors have been located. In more familiar terms, it is safe to say that the feelings of low self-esteem, anger, emotional numbness, and sense of lovelessness, which psychological depression arouses, sometimes tempt the manic-depressive to seek a permanent closure on pain, perhaps prompted by the disarray of these chemical compounds.⁵³

Thus, Sylvia Plath died of an illness, that, in a sense, still has no name. Suicidal psychosis, if that is the nearest term for it, is as mysterious in its biological complexity as the cause of cancer and no less elusive. Neurologists, geneticists, and biochemists have located some of the elements involved but are still searching for its eradication. Rather than being the source of anguish, the neurological factors could perhaps arise from the emotional effects of stress, or possibly psychological and somatic dysfunctions are interconnected, even joined together. The addition of a physiological element does not by any means simplify the whole problem of mental cause and effect. Instead, it

⁴⁹ July 17, 1957, entry in Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 165.

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, March 23, 1941, in Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautman, eds., *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* 6 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 6: 485.

⁵¹ Harding quoted in Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 298.

⁵² Horder quoted in Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*, 298; Shneidman, *Suicide as Psychache*, 33-34.

⁵³ Goodwin and Jamison, *Manic-Depressive Illness*, 493. On the same page Goodwin and Jamison also have noted «increased postsynaptic serotonin receptors... and decreased presynaptic auto-receptors» – both signals of a slowing of neurotransmissions. There are, they say, curious variations in the data that are related to alcoholism, homicide, aggressive behavior, manic-depression – variables that «need to be explored more systematically in future studies». See Shneidman, *Suicide as Psychache*, 55, *passim*.

makes her doleful pilgrimage into the Valley of the Shadow of Death all the more confounding. None of Plath's biographers has dealt with the neurological sources of her malady, and indeed, too little is yet known about the medical aspect to settle the question beyond all doubt.⁵⁴

Yet amazingly, Sylvia Plath's creative spirit did not desert her. In a matter of weeks after her separation from Ted Hughes in 1962, she wrote her masterpiece, the collection of poems published posthumously in *Ariel*. Hughes remarks that «she knew with a great certainty that she had made the leap. As she wrote her mother on October 16, in the middle of her extraordinary month: "I am a genius of a writer: I have it in me. I am writing the best poems of my life; they will make my name."»⁵⁵ Six days before her death she composed one of the most moving of all the pieces in her enduring testament: «Edge». «The woman is perfected. / Her dead / Body wears the smile of accomplishment, / The illusion of Greek necessity.» She re-enfolds her «dead child» into her flesh like a rose whose petals curl at a time when «odors bleed» in the garden. The moon, like a paid mourner dressed in funereal garb, is indifferent: «She is used to this sort of thing. / Her blacks crackle and drag.»⁵⁶

Alone, having refused the company of her solicitous friends, she turned on the gas in the oven of her London flat and died on February 11, 1963. Her babies upstairs were spared the fumes, as she had carefully planned. Yet they were never to know thereafter either the warm breath or the unbearable desolation of their mother. Their chief comfort would have to be gratitude for the literary inheritance that Sylvia Plath's dark torment bequeathed. The same sentiment applies as well to so many other writers. Examples include such different practitioners as Jack London, Tennessee Williams, J. D. Salinger, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, John Kennedy Toole, and, in most recent years, Gail Godwin, Kaye Gibbon, and William Styron, among others.⁵⁷ Among novelists both here and abroad, the range of creative depression runs from Lawrence Sterne and Charles Dickens to Joseph Conrad and Marcel Proust, from Mark Twain, who spoke of «sudden changes of mood from... deep melancholy to half-insane tempests and cyclones», to the often despairing New York novelist, Paul Auster.⁵⁸ Each artist was afflicted – and inspired by that affliction – in separate but still proximate ways. Their art and lives were shaped by a condition about which much has yet to be unearthed. In any case, we are the beneficiaries of the sadness and ecstasy that Sylvia Plath most particularly expressed with an eloquence and profundity not to be matched in our lifetime.

⁵⁴ Plath's biographers, including those already cited, are: Stevenson, *Bitter Fame*; Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath*; Malcolm, *Silent Woman*; Butscher, *Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*; Eileen Aird, *Sylvia Plath* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Paul Alexander, *Rough Magic: A Biography of Sylvia Plath* (New York: Viking, 1991); Hayman, *Death and Life of Sylvia Plath*. As Malcolm notes, A. Alvarez's biographical sketch of Plath in *The Savage God*, cited earlier, makes her the victim of an unfeeling husband, as if living with someone subject to violent swings of mood and an almost constant self-preoccupation or narcissism presents only minor vexations. See Malcolm, *Silent Woman*, 23.

⁵⁵ Hughes and McCullough, eds., *Plath Journals*, 357.

⁵⁶ Plath, «Edge», in *Collected Poems*, 272-73.

⁵⁷ See Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Margaret Walker, *Richard Wright, Daemonic Genius: A Portrait of the Man: A Critical Look at His Work* (New York: Warner, 1988); Walker Percy, foreword to John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), v-vii; Lyle Leverich, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* (New York: Crown, 1995); Godwin and Gibbon in Dannye Romine Powell, comp., *Parting the Curtains: Interviews with Southern Writers* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: John Blair, 1994); William Styron, *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (New York: Random House, 1990).

⁵⁸ A. Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* (New York: Random House, 1972); Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Michael Reynolds, *The Young Hemingway* (New York: Blackwell, 1986); on Proust, see Arnold M. Ludwig, *The Price of Greatness: Resolving the Creativity and Madness Controversy* (New York: Guilford, 1995), 99, 103; and Albert Rothenberg, *Creativity and Madness: New Findings and Old Stereotypes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 104, 115; Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude* (1982. London: Faber and Faber, 1988); Walter Schönau, «Fantasy Structures in Paul Auster's New York Trilogy», in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Literature and Psychology* (Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, 1993), 233-41; Justin Kaplan, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York: Touchstone, 1966), 123 (quotation).

Neurosis and recovery in Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*

SHERRY LUTZ ZIVLEY (*)

Margaret Drabble's novel, *The Waterfall*, traces the severe neurosis and gradual recovery of a young woman, Jane Gray, who, although married, pursues an affair with the husband of her cousin – a cousin who is the only person who could be called Jane's friend. Drabble's novel is fragmented; it is comprised of two narrations which are interfoliated throughout the novel. One narration, in the third person, is a selective omniscient, chronological presentation of the neurotic Jane's thoughts. The other narrative, told by Jane in the first person, is not limited to chronological order, but includes many analepses, repetitions, and reinterpretations. In this first person narration, Jane is striving to understand herself – pursuing precisely the kind of self-analysis which Karen Horney calls «work», a work that although «hard and upsetting» is ultimately «liberating» (*Neurosis* 356).

Certainly, Jane's childhood fit the pattern Horney describes for neurotics. Her parents were certainly «too wrapped up in their own neuroses to be able to love [her]» and she never had, therefore, a «feeling of belonging» but rather experienced a «basic anxiety» which Horney defines as «a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness» (*Neurosis* 18). Jane's parents were hypocrites for whom keeping up appearances for the neighbors and the parents of the students at the private school of which her father was headmaster were far more important than attending to the emotional needs of their daughter (53-57). Jane knows that her mother, who regularly said «I can't imagine... how people can have favorites amongst their own children», had «rejected me at my sister's birth and had disliked me ever since». And Jane admits that she «never knew how to respond to lies, lies uttered not with confident ignorance but with a kind of desperate unease that forced me to pretend to believe them, because I knew that if I showed my disbelief I would be hitting at something too fragile to sustain even my puny, childish attacks» (56).

From the opening page of Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*, it is clear that Jane Gray fits Karen Horney's description of neurosis, in that she «feels entitled to special attention, consideration, and deference» from others (*Neurosis* 41). Jane demonstrates neurosis in the three general ways

(*) University of Houston, Department of English, Houston, Texas 77204-3012, USA.

Horney specifies. First, the neurotic «establishes a title which exists in his own mind only, and he has little, if any consideration for the possibility of the fulfillment for his claims» (*Neurosis* 47). Second, the neurotic manifests «egocentricity» (*Neurosis* 48). And, third, the neurotic expects «things [to come] to him without *his making adequate efforts*» (*Neurosis* 49).

Fulfilling Horney's explanations of neurosis, Jane's behavior is clearly a «deviation from the normal», and she has what Horney calls «two characteristics ... [of] all neuroses ... : a certain rigidity in reaction and a discrepancy between potentialities and accomplishments» (*Personality* 20). Jane is clearly driven by what Horney calls the «one essential factor common to all neuroses and that is anxieties and the defenses built up against them» (*Personality* 22) – anxieties which obviously make her «suffer ... more than the average person» (*Personality* 24).

Jane suffers from enormous anxieties. When alone with her cousin Lucy, whom she has known all her life and who has come to sit with her because it is about time for Jane's second child to be born, «[p]anic rose in her», and Jane admits that «[s]uch unease had come in the past so near to killing her». She says, «hot waves of it [the unease], uncontrollable, poured through her» (19). When James comes to replace Lucy, Jane she perceives his being there as «a massive social problem» (23). Jane «felt herself to be nothing, nebulous, shadowy, undefinable» (141).

Jane also manifests three of the four primary behaviors in which Horney explains the neurotic participates to allay anxiety: withdrawal, submissiveness, and seeking affection (*Personality* 82).

Jane has withdrawn almost completely from the world. In the opening section of the novel she admits that «she had retreated already so far that there were few further places to go to, and no one with the discernment to follow or measure whatever further acres she might cross» (38). When her toddler is invited to visit another child and the hour for the visit neared, «she sat in her own house, paralyzed, unable to move» (138) and «immobilized» (130). She lies awake at night worrying about the other toddler's mother and «fe[lt] her throat dry up and her knees weaken» as she approached the child's house (139). She felt «she had to withdraw herself», and «[s]he wept when she irritated telephone operators or bus conductors» (139), just as she wept at her own «indecision, duplicity, [and] lack of confidence» (142). When she tries to take Laurie to the zoo, she is so traumatized by the thought of going out among people that she calls herself an «agoraphobe» (161). Jane, herself, is, as Alan Goldstein says of most agoraphobics, «convinced that [her] case is hopeless» (9).

Second, she is so extremely submissive that she is both helpless and will-less. She thinks of herself as a victim (26). In the first section of the novel, Jane has become as isolated and emotionally dead as the dead potted plant which symbolizes her life (41). Jane even believes «that because [her son] was hers he was doomed» (79). As she becomes more aware of James's obsession with fast cars, she is cannot even generate any jealousy; instead she is so «subdued» that she feels «no resistance» (74). Jane is so will-less that she describes herself as having a «total lack of volition» (152) and believes that she is «fated» (41). Jane emphasizes the extent of her willlessness in the opening sentence of the novel, when she says, «If I were drowning I couldn't reach out a hand to save myself, so unwilling am I to set myself up against fate» (7). She is also helpless. Although she had been a professional writer, she no longer does any writing (24). She is «amazingly careless about most aspects of her domestic life», even though she feels guilty about «neglecting ... [these] jobs» (143). Consequently, there is «bread lying around» that is «stale» and «hard as a brick», and there are «biscuits going soft, and cakes drying up» (144). In fact, one of the things that she likes about being with James is «the feeling that nothing at all is expected of me: ... I don't have to do anything but stand here» (75). She admits to living in «some ice age of inactivity» (7) and claims that she finds the «emptiness» in which she lives «comfortable» (8).

Third, and most important, Jane's primary actions throughout most of the sequence of events about which she writes reveal her deep need to secure affection. As James continues to visit her, she experiences a dramatic «diminution of anxiety» (27), and in a few days she wonders «what he had done to the unease that had so wracked her so few nights ago» (32). She tells him she expects him «to rescue me» (37). By the end of the first section, she simply says to him, «I want you» (45), not so much because she is in love with him, but because he allays her anxieties. Even after they

have been together for several weeks, she candidly admits to him, «It is so easy, to love a person that one doesn't know» (73). She even attempts to account for the previous nothingness of her life, saying that «perhaps ... she had emptied her existence, for th[e] lovely, insatiable anguish» of her love for James (132).

She also believes that she is «special» with respect to her love affair: «[s]he vainly believed, with the arrogance of all lovers, that she was the only woman who had waited as she waited» for James (132). In describing the specifics of her love for James, she sounds like an adolescent experiencing a first crush. She says, «While waiting for him, ... she would feel her knees start to tremble, [and] her hands to shake» (133). She «thought of nothing else» but James (135), and was overwhelmed by «[w]eariness and desire» (136). And when he is away, she marks off each day on the calendar as she waits for his return (156). All she could think was, «I loved him, I loved everything about him» and believes of this love «that there was nothing to do but endure it» (152), even though she sums up the experience by saying, «I was in bondage» (153). She truly believes it when she says to James, «I can't get on without you» (166). Clearly Jane is doing precisely what Horney says a neurotic person does. She is «expecting more of love than it can at best give»; she is indeed expecting «the perfect love» (*Neurosis* 300). Jane makes absolutely no attempt to change or to recover from her neurosis. Instead she believes that such a condition is «predestined» and that «[o]ne is not saved from neurosis, one is not released from the fated pattern, one must walk it till death» (161).

Nevertheless, Jane, who has shown no desire to change her life, is forced to abandon her neurotic behavior by a major trauma – an automobile accident. As she is riding with James and her children just before the accident, she says, «I could die now, quite happily», giving no thought to her children. Then their car hits a brick with «a violent explosion which threw the whole car up in the air» (184). The car then careens across oncoming traffic and smashes into a tree, throwing James out of the car. Jane's first conscious awareness is that James is missing, but what she thinks is «I did not begin to care: all I cared for was the survival of the children» (185). And after determining that they are all right, she thinks, for the first time in the story, «of significance» (186). Then Jane, who has been almost catatonically passive up until this point, begins to act. Thinking James dead, she runs toward him, «wanting to get there first» in order to «cover him up» (188). Learning that he is alive, she again acts; she takes his hand. And then Jane, who asserted on the first page and demonstrated for 180 pages of the novel that she was completely will-less, rediscovers her will power, announcing «I would refuse to let him die» (190).

During this crisis, she acts, not like a helpless neurotic, but like a capable, thoughtful woman making the best pragmatic decisions she can. She searches for and finds the baby's bottle. Then, knowing she will need money, she «abstract[s] James's» wallet from his ... pocket». She comforts the children. As she explains, «I did what was necessary» (191). Once at the hospital, she «[h]ad the presence of mind to see the advantages of being taken for James's wife», and gives her name as Lucy Otford (191). And for the first time in the novel, she claims that she is telling the truth. When the authorities deduce from the smell of alcohol in the car that James had been drinking, she immediately tells them that «all they needed to do was to go and test» his breath or take a blood sample (192). At the hospital she locks herself into a closet in order to check the amount of money in James's wallet, then «calmly» asks the matron to ring a hotel for her (194).

More importantly, Jane understands the significance of these changes in her behavior. She admits, «If it hadn't been for the children I probably would have taken refuge in insensibility or hysteria: but as it was I pulled myself together» (193). She recognizes that when she decided to leave the hospital, «I was so insistent and so collected and so evidently determined to have my way – so evidently, in fact, shockproof» that the matron agreed (194). And, once at the hotel, she realizes, «I could tell that I was entering into something permanent, a way of life that was like a whole lifetime» (195).

Of course, Jane's behavior during the period of acute crisis – from the accident until James is delivered to the hospital and she and the children are safely ensconced in the hotel (185-190) – is no guarantee of permanent change.

But, during the weeks after the immediate trauma is over, she continues to act responsibly. She admits her guilt in her adultery, saying «I could no longer evade the dreadful assessments that crowded upon me, the comparisons, the judgements, the knowledge» (196). And, although inept at mechanical things and afraid of electricity, she assembles and reassembles a toy electric car for Laurie until it runs perfectly, at which achievement she is «filled with achievement» (197). She recognizes that «I had done nothing for so many years, for some many years I had withheld myself from action» and admits that in the past «I ... had chosen to play the victim» (200). She even realizes that «I should have kept myself from loving» James (201) and asks, «For what, after all, in God's name had [she and James] been playing at? Fast cars, card tricks, kisses, sighs, vows, the lot. And those other things which she could not bring herself to name? What on earth had they thought they were doing. It had been some ridiculous imitation of a fictitious passion, some shoddy childish mock-up» (202).

Jane no longer focuses all her attention on securing James's affection. As Jean Wyatt says, Jane has reached «a more comprehensive view of love» (42), which «can encompass mixed motivations ..., like the admixture of need in their love» (43). Jane can admit, «Romantic love, that was what he had died for», and asks, «how could she have let herself accompany his suicidal fall» (202). Putting it bluntly, she says that what they had told one another were «lies», a «delusion», «[t]he emperor's new clothes», «[n]othingness, shadows, [and] mockeries» (202). She says, «Such a shallow, transient, selfish affair, their so-styled love had been» (204) and realizes that it «was Malcolm [her estranged husband] that had endured her and paid for her in cash and sorrow» (204). As she «looked back on the past and saw it crumble to dust», she admits «[d]esperation had thrown them [Jane and James] together: past failures had held them there» (205). She realizes that not real love, but «need and weakness bound us» and that «we were starving when we met» (208). And, as if having an intuitive understanding of what Erich Fromm has called «egotism a deux», she admits that she had acted out of the «depths of selfishness» (209) and that as a result she has «come to dislike myself so much» (215).

Nevertheless, she is grateful for her experience, probably because it was the precipitant to her growth, and she continues to give James credit for her growth, saying, «He changed me forever and I am now what he made» (229).

By the time Jane finally returns home, she no longer exhibits symptoms of neurosis. First, no longer helpless, she cleans up her filthy house – a house that had become symbolic early in the novel for Jane's own disintegration. In her absence, pipes had burst, cardboard had fallen from a broken window, and, consequently, cats ran in and out. Like Jane herself during the early days of her affair with James, «It had rotted so quickly: it had become so quickly derelict». Seeing it, she «decided that there was nothing for it but to try to clear it up» because, as she asks, «how could she live any longer in such decay» (224). She even acquired an *au pair* girl (235). Second, she is no longer devoid of will. She «remembered the poems that [she] intended still to write» (217), and begins writing again – apparently successfully, because she says, «I took up publication again» (233). By the time James is beginning to recover, Jane herself can say, «I felt so strong» and «I could measure my own change» (223). Third, she no longer considers the well-being of only herself and James. Instead, in her attempts to tell the truth, she puts their love affair in the context of its effect on other people. She provides long expositions in which she gives a more nearly honest explanation of how her affair with James began. She also presents full and fair descriptions of James, Malcolm, Lucy, and their respective marriages (947). And although she is not virtuous enough to give James up entirely, she is honest about the kind of relationship she and James have.

Finally she realizes that «[n]one of it [the love affair] mattered», and decides to call Lucy and tell her the truth (206). By the end of the novel, she is no longer describing the affair in romantic hyperbole, but can call it what it is. She says, «One might as well face it. Particularly when one sees it in black and white. Adultery with James Otford» (226). She realizes that had she been more honest should would have «said more about guilt But instead, I wrote about love» (227). In retrospect she sees her previous motivations clearly. She says,

The more I emphasized my sorrow, I must have thought, the more claims I made for my love, the better I would emerge. Damaged before birth, I think I described myself. A curious plea for acquittal. In fact there probably wasn't much wrong with me at all. Looking back with the wisdom of my present knowledge, I could well claim to have been perfectly well adjusted all the time: merely waiting, I might have said, for an opportunity to prove it. What, after all, was I complaining about. Nothing very significant, surely. An unhappy childhood, an unsatisfactory marriage, my own laziness. I had been perfectly all right all the time, and in trying to claim that there had ever been anything wrong with me I was merely trying to defend myself against an accusation of selfishness. Judge me leniently, I said, I am not as others are, I am sad, I am mad, so I had to have what I want. I cannot be blamed, I said. Let me off lightly. (227)

But the most powerful evidence of Jane's psychological growth can be seen in her own writing. Jane's narration is presented alternately in two separate voices. Although Caryn Fuoroli assumes that one story is «literary» and the other «true» (118), Jane's two narrations demonstrate the quite different attitudes – both true – that she held at the two different stages of her life. The third-person narrative, with which the novel opens, which dominates the first half of the book, and which Gayle Green describes as «stylized and conventional» (52), is little more than a superficial, chronological romance novel that attends to nothing but the lovers and their loving and considers neither nor the moral implications nor the effects of that affair on other people. Even the style of much of this narration sounds, as Fuoroli claims, like a «trite romance» (114). Three examples will suffice as evidence. Jane writes,

She began to live for his coming, submitting herself helplessly to the current, abandoning herself to it, knowing then at the beginning things that were to be obscured from her by pain and desire – knowing it could not end well, because how else could it, what good ends were there to such emotions? (38-30)

and

“You're beautiful, you know. I've always thought so, I always thought you were beautiful, I thought so even before I loved you, when I didn't know you ...” – and she flinched and sighed, listening to him, alarmed and yet hopelessly moved by his willing blind suicidal dive into such deep waters. (36, ellipsis Drabble's)

and

And she started to cry, not violently or painfully, but softly and warmly, and through her tears, which flowed down her cheeks quietly, rising unchecked in her eyes and slowly overflowing like a fountain, brimming over like a mild fountain. (37)

In contrast, the post-neurosis Jane has created a sophisticated narrative with none of the excesses of romance-novel prose. And the honesty and maturity of Jane's style in these portions demonstrate not only Jane's own developing honesty and maturity but also that she is overcoming her neurosis. Whereas Jane's purpose in her third person narration seems to have been to tell a love story in a way which would glean sympathy for herself, the purpose of her first-person narrative is to try to discover the truth. The first segment of the first first-person narration begins,

It won't, of course, do: as an account, I mean, of what took place. I tried, I tried for so long to reconcile, to find a style that would express it, to find a system that would excuse me, to construct a new meaning, having kicked the old one out, but I couldn't do it, so here I am, resorting to that old broken medium [of the doubly-presented narrative]. Don't let me deceive myself, I see no virtue in confusion, I see true virtue in clarity, in consistency, in communication, in honesty. (46)

In this passage, even the stops and starts and repetition sound like the language of someone struggling to discover the truth. And she admits «it's obvious that I haven't told the truth about myself and James». She had in the third person narrative, she says, «omitted everything ... except that sequence of discovery and recognition» that she called love (46). She had omitted her «feelings for the baby» (47), omitted James's wife Lucy, omitted the fact that she herself had chosen the isolation and loneliness which led to her depend so totally on James. But as she develops her first-person narration, she grows stronger. By the beginning of the second first-person segment, she can denounce her previous third-person, romantic version of the story as «Lies, lies, it's all lies. A pack of lies» (84). And she can now describe their love as «[a] passion, a love, an unreal life, a life in limbo, without anxiety, guilt, corpses ... , the pure flower of love itself, blossoming out of God knows what rottenness, out of decay, ... growing out of my dead belly like a tulip» (84). And she begins to try to «tell some of the truth» (85).

Writing about it in retrospect, Jane shows how trite their romance had been. She sums up her previous foolishness by sighing and saying, «Ah love» (59). She realizes she had been «faint with love», admits, «I loved him. I was faint with love for him», and says «I loved him so much that it seemed I must always have loved him» (60) – all of which she now recognizes to be hyperbolic and pathetically superficial claims.

She realizes that she had been comparing herself to various literary heroines who were overwhelmed by love. She admits to having been reared in the tradition of Jane Austen novels. She quotes *Jane Eyre*, ironically, saying «Reader, I loved him». She even compares herself to Tennyson's hopelessly depressed «Mariana», whose refrain was

«My life is dreary,
He cometh not,» she said;
... «I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!»

and who was bent on mourning herself to death. And Jane realizes that she had thought of herself as a «Maggie Tulliver» or «Sue Bridehead» and admits to being haunted by «[t]hose fictitious heroines» (153). And Jane herself describes her earlier narration as a «schizoid third-person dialogue» (130).

In her attempt to tell the truth, Jane presents a self-conscious first-person narrative which comments on itself. She had begun the first-person narratives admitting how hard it is to find a kind of discourse which will present the truth. Yet near the end of the novel, she is honest enough to recognize that she has failed, saying,

I was hoping that in the end I would manage to find some kind of unity. I seem to be no nearer to it. But at the beginning I identified myself with distrust: and now I cannot articulate my suspicions. (207)

Apologizing for the disjunctions in her narrative, she asks of her reader to «Forgive me. It is no less than the truth that I try to express» (217). At this point in her recovery, Jane prefers to present a disjointed and sometimes self-contradictory narrative that attempts to tell the truth rather than a unified one which is false.

In the last pages of the novel she admits to searching for the best way to end her narrative discourse. She admits, «A death would have been the answer, but nobody died. Perhaps if I should have killed James in the car, and that would have made a neat, possible ending» (230). She also considers «[a] feminine ending», saying, «I could have maimed James so badly in this narrative that I would have been allowed to have him, as Jane had her poor blinded Rochester» (235). And she even considered «the idea of ending the narrative not so much with James's death as with his impotence» (238). Instead she and James both keep their respective spouses and intermittently continue their affair, but with a much more realistic view of their love.

Perhaps Jane's almost instantaneous recovery after the accident is not psychologically believable. Drabble is not, of course, a psychiatrist. Nevertheless, Drabble does a fine job of portraying

the thoughts and behaviors both of a severely neurotic woman and of that same woman as she is recovering from her neurosis. If anyone had the qualifications to successfully perform self-analysis and to guide herself from neurosis to health, Jane did. After all, Jane had always been an intelligent, well-educated (at Cambridge, no less), introspective, and highly verbal woman. Horney herself, in *Self-Analysis*, says that «certain gains are beckoning to those who are capable of self-analysis» and recognizes that writing can be a useful tool for self-analysis, because it provides «an honest recording of conscious feelings, thoughts, and motivations» (171). And Horney concludes that for those who are successful, «[s]uch achievement gives rise not only to a justifiable pride but also to a well-founded feeling of confidence in one's capacity to meet predicaments and not to feel lost without guidance» (34).

Jane herself certainly believes she has recovered. She asserts, «I learned to swallow neurosis» (235) and she realizes that compared to her previous self-delusions, that she can now face life realistically. And the final sentence of the novel. «I prefer to suffer, I think» (239), indicates her willingness to embrace life and its inevitable pain, which can lead to growth, rather than retreating into neurotic delusions and enduring unproductive neurotic suffering. She has achieved a remarkable degree of what Horney calls «self-realization», which Horney defines as involving three achievements. First, «[w]ith regard to [her]self it means striving toward a clearer and deeper experiencing of [one's] feelings, wishes, and beliefs». Second «[w]ith regard to others it means ... striving toward relating [one]self to others with ... genuine feelings» and «toward respecting them as individuals in their own right and with their own peculiarities». And, third, «[w]ith regard to work it means that the work itself will become more important ... than the satisfaction of ... pride or vanity and that [one] will aim at realizing and developing [one's] special gifts and at becoming more productive» (*Neurosis* 364).

Most importantly, Jane has embarked on what Horney insists has been advocated by wise people «throughout human history ... [—] the road to reorientation through self-knowledge» (*Neurosis* 341).

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La disociación de la figura femenina materna en la literatura infantil.

Blancanieves y los siete enanitos: De la adecuación psicológica a la corrección política

MARÍA DEL CARMEN PÉREZ DIEZ (*)

Blancanieves y los siete enanitos es uno de los relatos más antiguos y entrañables tanto para niños como para adultos. También es uno de los que más rescrituras se conocen, desde las antiguas versiones medievales adaptadas para el gran público por los hermanos Grimm, pasando por la animación de Walt Disney, hasta llegar a las versiones feministas e irónicas de nuestro siglo. Quizá este relato es uno de los que muestran con más fuerza la disociación que el niño hace de la figura materna en madre buena y madrastra, resultado de ser la madre el único lazo de unión con el mundo exterior durante sus primeros años.

En mi comunicación voy a tratar de analizar la curiosa evolución que experimenta esta figura desde la interpretación psicoanalítica de Bruno Bettelheim hasta las versiones de Angela Carter y James Finn Garner.

Antes de comenzar, parece aconsejable resumir en unos párrafos lo que el psicoanálisis ha visto o pretendido ver en la figura femenina, desde sus comienzos hasta las recientes teorías del psicoanálisis feminista o feminismo psicoanalítico de las que tomaremos como exponente en los últimos 20 años a Nancy Chodorow.

Como todo conocedor del psicoanálisis, ya sea profesional o aficionado, conoce, para Freud las mujeres eran poco más que seres humanos de segunda. «[Freud] claims that women have less sense of justice than men, are overwhelmed by jealousy and shame, are vain, are unable to submit to life's requirements, and have made no contribution to civilization» (Chodorow 1978: 143). Sus ideas sobre lo femenino, influenciadas por su propia experiencia y sacadas a la luz como muchas otras de sus teorías tras el autopsicoanálisis que llevó a cabo en Julio de 1897, quedarían más tarde plasmadas en su obra *Tres ensayos para una teoría sexual* (1905). Es aquí donde aparece su

(*) Universidad de León, Departamento de Filología Moderna, Campus de Vegazana, 24071 León, España.

división por fases en el crecimiento del niño: una *fase oral*, caracterizada por el sentimiento de unidad madre-hijo, o pecho materno-niño, según Melanie Klein, que cesa cuando éste empieza a ver a ese ser como objeto externo; una *fase anal* y una *fase fálica*, el nombre de esta última dejando fuera de duda que Freud pensaba solamente en el desarrollo del niño y no de la niña. El rasgo característico del período edípico, en el cual desembocaba la fase fálica, era el temor ante la castración, al retar a la figura paterna en un intento de conservar la primitiva unidad con la madre. La resolución satisfactoria del así llamado estadio edípico residía en la supresión de ese deseo sexual que quedaba en estado de latencia y en la apropiación-interiorización de la figura paterna que daba como resultado la construcción del super ego. Tras un período de unos 7 años se llegaba a la fase genital en la que el deseo volvía a despertar y con él la llegada de la madurez. Así pues, Freud veía una progresión cuyas etapas eran identidad, dualidad y relación bi-personal. Pero, ¿qué sucedía con las niñas? Según Freud todos tendríamos una masculinidad primitiva, confirmando la paradoja de su frase la anatomía es el destino. A partir de la fase fálica llegaban los cambios: la niña iba a descubrir su carencia de pene, y el trauma causado por esta revelación le hacía abandonar la figura materna para volverse hacia aquél que sí lo poseía, el padre. Esto mismo, ya en la madurez, le llevaba a desear ser madre para así poder sustituir su carencia de falo por un hijo. A pesar de la falta total de evidencias para estas tesis, sus adeptos veían así un modo de defender y apoyar la sumisión de la mujer al hombre debido a su defecto y eterna limitación.

Entre el sector femenino, especialmente a partir de los años 30, surgieron los detractores. Melanie Klein defendió una mayor atención hacia la etapa pre-edípica y de sus teorías nació la llamada escuela de las relaciones-objetales. Según ésta, lo que más iba a marcar el desarrollo del niño era esa primera relación con la madre. Las reacciones y temores infantiles ante la madre y sus atributos formarían el futuro del niño, contribuirían en gran manera a la construcción de la persona, y a la preocupación por el otro. En Karen Horney encontramos el origen del feminismo teórico y político. Incluía en sus análisis la influencia de la cultura y de la sociedad como condicionantes del lugar que se le da a la mujer frente a la envidia fálica freudiana. La revalorización de las cualidades femeninas estaba considerada como condición *sine qua non*, equilibrada con una tendencia a generalizar, a ver a todos los seres humanos como iguales.

Es en los años 70, según Nancy Chodorow, cuando se sientan las bases del feminismo psicoanalítico. En 1971 se publica *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* de Juliet Mitchell, considerado el primer exponente del feminismo psicoanalítico; en 1976 aparecen tres obras básicas para el feminismo psicoanalítico y la teoría feminista de la maternidad: *The Mermaid and The Minotaur* de Dorothy Dinnerstein, *Toward A New Psychology of Women* de Jean Baker Miller, y *Of Woman Born* de Adrienne Rich; en 1978, la propia Nancy Chodorow publica *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Nancy Chodorow se declara cercana a la escuela de las relaciones-objetales al defender la construcción de la persona en el contexto de relaciones emocionales primarias, como apuntaba Melanie Klein, pero su rasgo original radica en considerar que esta construcción se está renegociando continuamente mediante la conexión, la separación y otras posiciones intermedias. Frente a Freud defiende la no existencia de diferencias innatas de personalidad entre hombres y mujeres a la hora de enfrentarse a la maternidad, y la mayor facilidad de estas últimas para alcanzar la madurez. No hay lugar para el instinto maternal – *primary maternal preoccupation* – defendido por Winnicott o Guntrip¹. Sus argumentos son los siguientes: en una sociedad como la nuestra, un patriarcado

¹ «Whether or no we accept Winnicott's view that the center of the self is incommunicable or not, it is clear that both he and Guntrip felt there is something in healthy people that can be called the "core of being" and that this trait is a product of the special kind of responsiveness in the mother, which Winnicott called the "primary maternal preoccupation"» (Holbrook 1989: 21). El feminismo psicoanalítico se muestra totalmente escéptico ante las afirmaciones de este tipo que ven a la mujer como una especie de maga o hechicera que lee la mente del recién nacido.

capitalista, la consecución de una identidad resulta mucho más difícil, tanto para hombres como para mujeres, y una vez conseguida es mucho más inestable. Pero, como resultado de tener una figura femenina como único lazo de unión con el exterior durante los primeros años, también hombres y mujeres consiguen esta identidad de forma distinta. En el caso de las mujeres, la diferenciación, el paso hacia la madurez, presenta una mayor continuidad con el mundo conocido hasta entonces, dando como resultado un yo en el que priman las relaciones. La mujer tiene su identidad femenina adscrita, se limita a existir sin necesidad de probar nada. Esto la hace psicológicamente fuerte, pero socialmente nula. En cuanto a la figura paterna, recurre a ella para conseguir su heterosexualidad, pero nunca abandona la relación previa con la madre. Es más, la ausencia de la figura paterna hace que tenga una mayor capacidad de racionalización y distancia. Por el contrario, los hombres desarrollan una identidad basada en la negación de relaciones, mucho más aislada, debido a los dictados del sistema social. La masculinidad lleva en sí una reacción defensiva ante lo femenino, una devaluación de todo aquello que puede poner en peligro la fragilidad de la identidad masculina. Y para probar que se ha conseguido lo que la sociedad demanda se degrada todo lo que podría impedirlo. De aquí, la opresión de la mujer en la mayoría de sociedades y culturas. «In a setting where they [men] are passive and dependent upon a woman or mother-figure in a position of power or authority, men's sexuality freezes or is denied» (Chodorow 1989: 194). A esta consecución traumática de la identidad por parte del niño, que debe romper con todo lo hasta entonces conocido, hay que sumar la ausencia de la figura paterna, que le hace asumir una masculinidad posicional basada en la negación de los valores femeninos.

Resumiendo, podríamos decir que la masculinidad es vista como algo problemático, requiere negar cualquier tipo de relación de dependencia o necesidad para alcanzar una diferenciación. Se reprime y devalúa lo femenino y la identificación con la figura paterna es posicional debido a su ausencia, y carente de afecto, por seguir el dictado del sistema que demanda una represión de las emociones. Las mujeres construyen una personalidad relacional, pero se imposibilita la consecución de autoestima, al impedir su realización como seres sociales. No son vistas como sujetos, sino como simples objetos que ayudan al desarrollo del niño. Como afirma Chodorow

Women's mothering perpetuates itself through social-structurally induced psychological mechanisms. It is not an unmediated product of physiology. Women come to mother because they have been mothered by women. By contrast, that men are mothered by women reduces their parenting capacities (1978: 211).

La consecuente objetificación de la madre que de aquí se deriva, y su única presencia durante los primeros años del niño va a hacer que sea considerada el continente de todo bien y mal, literalmente por los niños, simbólicamente por los adultos, dependiendo de su actuación como apunta Alice Balint: «For all of us it remains self-evident that the interests of mother and child are identical, and it is the generally acknowledged measure of the goodness or badness of the mother how far she really feels this identity of interests»². En el mundo infantil, es aquella que da y que niega, siempre rodeada de un halo de misterio, creadora y destructiva. En ella reside, para el niño, el origen y fin de todo.

The problem of woman is thus the problem of life and its secret. Woman can create us – by reflecting us – and enable us to seek meaning in existence; or, she can leave us without a created identity and in a condition of meaninglessness. No wonder she is feared and hated, as well as respected and loved (Holbrook 1989: 62).

No es de extrañar, pues, que su cara negativa adopte la imagen de la bruja, mujer desagradable y a la vez atrayente, poderosa y sabia, cuyo apetito voraz demanda la energía vital de sus víctimas: su

² Citado en Chodorow 1989: 104.

sangre y vísceras. Esta figura viene asociada a la oralidad y al narcisismo, a una visión infantil de la sexualidad. Según la visión junguiana adoptada y extendida por Durand (1969) en su imaginario, forma parte de las dominantes digestiva y cíclica, del régimen nocturno de las imágenes, y muestra una regresión de lo sexual a lo digestivo y bucal. Llegados a este punto, intentaremos ahora aplicar lo hasta aquí tratado al análisis de las versiones de *Blancanieves y los siete enanitos* mencionadas al comienzo.

Bruno Bettelheim ve en este relato el desenlace trágico al que se llega si uno se deja llevar por sus instintos, simbolizados en los zapatos al rojo vivo que llevan a la reina a la muerte. La figura materna es incapaz de diferenciarse de su hija y permanece anclada en un estadio de oralidad primitiva, en el que prima el *id*. De ahí su apariencia de bruja.

El miedo de la reina a que Blancanieves la supere es el tema central del cuento de hadas, que lleva erróneamente, el nombre de la niña, al igual que el mito de Edipo ... [La vanidad] impulsa a la reina a cometer su villanía. Ésta, que quería ser siempre la más bella, es castigada a bailar con unos zapatos al rojo vivo hasta morir (Bettelheim 1977: 273, 274).

Creemos importante apuntar que el análisis de Bruno Bettelheim está aplicado a la versión moral y aburguesada de los hermanos Grimm. Las primeras versiones no daban importancia a la presencia de los enanitos, ni siquiera nombrados en algunas de ellas, por ser no más que «una excusa para poner de relieve las importantes evoluciones que se dan en la figura de Blancanieves» (1977: 279). Una diferencia muy importante para el posterior análisis de las rescrituras es el hecho de que en estas versiones es el conde el que desea una niña y su esposa la condesa la que siente celos ante la idea, y una vez que aparece desea abandonarla. Aquí se amalgaman como en la vida real las dos figuras en una, no hay una madre buena y una madrastra, simplemente una madre celosa. En la versión de los hermanos Grimm todo este relato edípico pierde fuerza para Bettelheim al disociarse la figura. El relato comienza con la imagen de la madre buena cosiendo. Al pincharse con la aguja, su primer pensamiento es desear una niña tan blanca como la nieve y con labios tan rojos como las tres gotas de sangre que han brotado de su dedo, lo que Bettelheim interpreta como indicación de la menarquía y la mezcla de alegría y dolor presentes en el momento del alumbramiento. Tras la muerte de su madre, el padre se vuelve a casar y los celos de la madrastra hacen que la niña sea abandonada a los siete años en un bosque por un cazador que se apiada de ella y no la mata como había ordenado la reina. El relato nos muestra una madrastra que se ha quedado en la fase oral como lo corrobora la actitud narcisista de mirarse al espejo y el deseo de comer las vísceras de la niña para así interiorizar todas sus cualidades. El escapar hacia el interior del bosque supone el internamiento inconsciente en el período de latencia que concluirá con la llegada de la pubertad. Esta etapa está marcada por la reaparición de la madrastra y con ella todo aquello dormido: el narcisismo de los primeros años (lazo, corsé) y el deseo sexual (manzana). Cuando Blancanieves sucumbe por tercera vez a las tentaciones de la bruja y come la parte roja de la manzana asistimos al despertar físico de la muchacha como mujer. Sin embargo, esta madurez física no implica una madurez emocional, y por ello cae en un sueño simbólico del que despertará cuando aparece el príncipe y le hace abandonar definitivamente la fase oral, simbolizada por el trozo de manzana que le hizo caer en ese sueño. Siguiendo a Bettelheim, «simbólicamente, la historia nos dice que hay que reprimir las pasiones incontroladas o éstas se convertirán en la propia perdición» (1977: 299).

Poco añade la versión de Walt Disney (1937), en la que la reina muere perseguida por los enanitos tras haber envenenado a Blancanieves, una muchacha que sueña con un príncipe azul como dice en su canción. En el relato de los hermanos Grimm, Blancanieves no elige a su príncipe, simplemente se muestra amable y parte con él. No parece haber amor alguno, ni deseo, simplemente agradecimiento, y aceptación de la única salida posible. Como apunta Jill P. May, los personajes populares en los cuentos femeninos carecen de elección. «Little has evolved in the plot of a traditional folktale to show the reader that the females in the story will need to change from their childlike ways of passivity and trust in order to be truly happy» (1995: 93). Las protagonistas

deben cambiar pero, ¿son factibles estos cambios? Y si lo fueran, ¿gozarán de aceptación? El cambio en un relato tradicional no parece algo fácil como afirma Valentina Pisanty: «La estructura narrativa de los cuentos de la tradición oral está hipercodificada, es decir, que responde a precisas convenciones culturales sobre el “modo” de la narración, y de ello deriva la extremada estabilidad de los cuentos populares en el tiempo» (1995: 22). Pero la falta de autor, a su vez, parece autorizar la manipulación de los textos para adaptarlos a circunstancias concretas, algo inevitable y a la vez necesario para su supervivencia.

Los narradores tradicionalistas, que aspiran a conferir al cuento una forma escrita estable en el tiempo, tienden a bloquear este proceso continuo de transformación al que está sometido el cuento, oponiéndose a cualquiera que quiera modificar las versiones autorizadas de Perrault y de los Grimm. Estos cultores del cuento literario clásico, sin embargo, se olvidan de que, para continuar ejerciendo una función activa en el ámbito de la sociedad, el cuento debe colocarse en lo más vivo de los diferentes contextos en los que se encuentra. De lo contrario corre el riesgo de agotar su eficacia comunicativa, para convertirse en un documento histórico fosilizado, carente, además, de una dignidad artística que garantice por lo menos su supervivencia en el ámbito de la cultura occidental moderna (Pisanty 1995: 80-81).

Las dos versiones que vamos a analizar a continuación demuestran que el cambio es posible y necesario, que enriquece las versiones antiguas y que amplía el rango de lectores de este tipo de relatos, que no tomaron forma con los niños como oyentes/lectores potenciales en mente como defendía J. R. R. Tolkien³.

THE SNOW CHILD DE ANGELA CARTER

Angela Carter (1940-1992) rescribe la historia de Blancanieves para poner de manifiesto que incluso la fantasía, como queda patente en las versiones capitalistas burguesas de los cuentos, es fruto de una sociedad y cultura patriarcales que marcan las diferencias entre hombres y mujeres. Carter utiliza la ridiculización y la risa como factores subversivos. En la colección donde se encuentra el relato – *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) – la sexualidad femenina ocupa un primer plano, como seña inequívoca de la liberación de la mujer, del cambio en el sistema y de la revalorización de las cualidades femeninas. Este es el comienzo de la narración:

Midwinter – invincible, immaculate. The Count and his wife go riding, he on a grey mare and she on a black one, she wrapped in the glittering pelts of black foxes; and she wore high, black, shining boots with scarlet heels, and spurs (Carter 1981: 91).

En el paisaje nevado destacan dos figuras, un hombre y una mujer, esta última vestida con pieles negras y con botas negras y rojas, sensual, contrastando con la blancura del paisaje al igual que las plumas negras de los cuervos y el pozo de sangre. Ante los estímulos cromáticos el conde desea una niña, ‘the child of his desire’, coincidiendo con las versiones primitivas, y ésta aparece ante él desnuda, provocando los celos de la condesa. A medida que la condesa pide cosas para conseguir deshacerse de la niña y se le niegan, sus pertenencias pasan a la niña de nieve: primero, sus pieles; después, su calzado, llegando a una inversión de los papeles tradicionales, ya que es la figura masculina la que concede y niega, mientras que la figura femenina desvalida pasa a ser la condesa y no la niña. Una vez que la condesa está desnuda el conde no le puede negar una rosa, símbolo de

³ «Actually, the association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history... the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused» (1975: 34).

pureza. Al pincharse con las espinas de la rosa, la niña cae como muerta, y el conde satisface su deseo con ella bajo la atenta mirada de la reina. La experiencia sexual, traumática y temprana, hace que la joven se diluya, y así la condesa consigue su objetivo. Cuando el conde le entrega la rosa, ella la rechaza al pincharse con las espinas. Esta acción consume la inversión de la figura materna, que ante el estímulo del pinchazo deseaba ser madre. El instinto maternal no tiene cabida en esta figura. Angela Carter pone ante nosotros un relato lleno de sensualidad y libera a la mujer de una maternidad forzada por la sociedad, a la vez que culpa del desenlace al sistema patriarcal, ya que es la figura masculina la que desencadena los acontecimientos.

CUENTOS INFANTILES POLÍTICAMENTE CORRECTOS DE JAMES FINN GARNER

Quizá el libro de James Finn Garner es el más novedoso de las versiones hasta ahora analizadas. Su título no deja de ser paradójico e irónico: paradójico, porque estos cuentos no van a ser leídos por niños; irónico, por ser considerados políticamente correctos por una sociedad patriarcal como la nuestra, pues destruyen totalmente sus bases, al menos en el caso que nos ocupa. La corrección política se limita a no llamar a las cosas por su nombre y a la utilización de perífrasis para aludir a virtudes o defectos⁴. Pero lo que aquí nos interesa es la relación que se establece entre hija-madrastra y la evolución que va a sufrir. Como en el relato tradicional Blancanieves despierta los celos de su madrastra pero no exactamente por la vanidad de esta última sino por los cánones impuestos por la sociedad patriarcal.

Blancanieves hizo cuanto estuvo en su mano para agradar a su nueva madre política, pero no pudo evitar que entre ambas se estableciera una relación de frialdad y distancia... sus largos años de condicionamiento social bajo una dictadura jerárquica masculina habían convertido a la reina en una mujer considerablemente insegura acerca de sus propios méritos (1996: 88).

Las medidas que toma la reina para librarse de Blancanieves son consideradas «un acceso transitorio de prepotencia masculina» (1996: 89). Ya en casa de los enanitos, estos no acogen a Blancanieves de muy buena gana y ante el relato de sus desventuras sus opiniones son éstas: «¡He ahí la mutua vengatividad femenina! ... – Típico de las mujeres ... se buscan a un hombre para que les haga el trabajo sucio» (1996: 93). Solamente aceptan su presencia por la siguiente razón: «Nos será tanto más fácil comprobar nuestros progresos como verdaderos hombres si contamos con la presencia de una hembra con la que poder compararnos» (1996: 96) Parece evidente que estos personajes pretenden esconder su inferioridad, no sólo física, negando el carácter humano a la protagonista, a la que denominan no niña o mujer, sino hembra. Pero Blancanieves se rebela ante ellos, abandona la actitud sumisa de las protagonistas de los cuentos tradicionales: «¡Me niego a seguir aquí en calidad de objeto...!» (1996: 96). Y los cambios continúan. La madrastra se arrepiente de lo que iba a hacer y confiesa a Blancanieves su envidia. Ésta se muestra comprensiva y le ayuda a ver que la belleza reside en nuestro interior, no sin antes hablarle de los beneficios de la meditación, el aeróbic y una dieta sana. El final da el triunfo a la mujer, y demuestra que la unión hace la fuerza. Blancanieves concluye que «de ahora en adelante, pienso dedicar mi vida a eliminar el abismo que se abre entre el cuerpo y el espíritu de las mujeres. Proyecto enseñar a todas ellas a aceptar su imagen física natural y a superar su desintegración» (1996: 105). La sociedad patriarcal y con ella la imagen de la bruja o madrastra malvada han desaparecido. El apoyo y la lealtad son posibles en la nueva sociedad, pero no debemos olvidar que el relato mantiene un tono irónico de principio a fin. Nos deberíamos preguntar si esta clase de final feliz podría darse en el mundo real.

⁴ Blancanieves es presentada como «una joven princesa en absoluto desagradable desde el punto de vista estético»; los siete enanitos como «siete hombres barbudos y verticalmente limitados» (1996: 87, 91).

La disociación de la figura materna ha pasado de estar basada en un estancamiento en la fase oral con el consecuente narcisismo como factor principal, a desaparecer dejando a cambio una figura materna madura y arrepentida que acepta que lo importante es realizarse como persona, y que las mujeres deben apoyarse entre sí. La inseguridad de la primera figura ha dado paso a la creciente autoestima de la última; el aislamiento, a la importancia de las relaciones; la visión psicoanalítica tradicional, a la visión del feminismo psicoanalítico. La mujer puede desarrollar su faceta social si quiere, o puede volver al entorno doméstico; la novedad radica en la posibilidad de elección que tanto los cuentos tradicionales como la estricta norma de la sociedad patriarcal no contemplaban.

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Birkin's struggle for separateness in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*

ROLAND A. PIERLOOT (*)

INTRODUCTION

In the fictional and non fictional writings of D. H. Lawrence the search for a mature sexual love relation is an important theme. It is striking, however, that in his presentations he primarily emphasizes the impediments of a mature sexual love. In this respect he joins some psychoanalytic authors who, according to Balint (1947), don't accentuate the presence of certain positive qualities in genital love but «only the absence of certain others» (p. 109). In many passages of his works the need of separateness emerges as an essential condition for a sexual love relation. An extensive elaboration of this issue can be found in the behaviour and the statements of Birkin, Lawrence's spokesman in *Women in Love*.

In the psychoanalytic literature the capacity for mature sexual love is considered as a result of a number of developmental processes. Freud (1930) stressed the necessity for the ego to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation, even at the height of being in love. Modell (1968) states: «With the painful acceptance of the limitations of other persons and an acceptance of separateness, there is established a capacity for a more mature form of loving...» (p. 60). And Kernberg (1980) contends: «I think, however, that there can be no meaningful love relation without the persistence of the self, without firm boundaries of the self, which generate a sense of identity» (p. 290). This implies the existence of a self with firm boundaries in the partners engaged in a love relation.

In *Women in Love*, Birkin's fulfilment in the relationship with Ursula Brangwen is presented as the result of a struggle to achieve a separation of his self from a devouring mother image. In this struggle we can detect three different strategies: the homoerotic escape, the direct attack on the devouring mother image and the anal erotic self-assurance. In our exposition we will analyse the devouring mother concept as well as these strategies and check whether the data related in the novel can fit in psychoanalytic formulations of relations and fantasies concerning the separation-individuation process in infancy and early childhood. Finally we wonder to what extent the eventual relationship of Birkin with Ursula, presented as a fulfilment, can be conceived as a mature sexual love relation.

(*) University of Leuven, University Centre St.-Jozef, Leuvensesteenweg 517, 3070 Kortenberg, Belgium.

Birkin's statements and behaviour are determined in the first place by his representation of women as devouring mothers from whom he must break away. In this respect he expresses Lawrence's unconscious fantasies on this issue. At the time he wrote the novel, the author struggled with serious problems in the relationship with his wife Frieda. In a letter of 5 December 1918 to Katherine Mansfield he declared: «In a way, Frieda is the devouring mother» (Letters III, p. 302). And in a letter of 14 March to Koteliensky, he wrote: «She really is a devil – and I feel as if I would part from her forever...» (Letters III, p. 337). In his situation of helplessness during the war years, he also had to rely on the benevolence of several, influential upper-class ladies. When he was accused of pro-German and anti-war attitudes, he solicited the help of Cynthia Asquith, whose father-in-law was directing the wartime government. Ottoline Morrell, half sister of the sixth Duke of Portland and wife of a liberal M. P., offered him a lodging at her Garsington cottage in 1915. She became the model for Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*. Margaret Radford, another upper-class woman, put at his disposal a cottage in Berkshire. Not only his wife but also his sister Ada meddled in his health problems. The interference of all these women in his personal affairs obviously activated the fantasy of an engulfing mother he already exposed in his autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Birkin's expectations of a «union in separateness» are revealed in lengthy expositions. Ursula's viewpoint is less developed in the novel. To understand the meaning of her attraction to Birkin and her eventual marriage with him, we must rely on *The Rainbow* in which her narcissistic need of a union with «one of the sons of God» is elaborated. Hermione Roddice, with whom Birkin is involved in an affair at the onset of the novel clearly personifies a devouring mother image. She is the daughter of a Derbyshire Baronet, and hostess of the intelligentsia. She is introduced in the first chapter:

«No one could put her down, no one could make mock of her, because she stood among the first, and those that were against her were below her, either in rank, or in wealth, or in high association of thought and progress and understanding. So she was invulnerable» (WL, p. 63)¹

At the meeting with Hermione, in Ursula's class-room, Birkin reproaches her: «It is your bullying will, You want to clutch things and have them in your power» (WL, p. 92).

The devouring mother concept has been tackled by many psychoanalytic authors. Freud (1931) related the «fear of being killed (? devoured) by the mother» (p. 227) to the pre-oedipal attachment of the girl to the mother. With regard to the boy he expresses some doubts. Rank (1936) points out that too close a union with a love object by its meaning of self-annihilation may activate the fear of death. For Klein (1946) the phantasy of a «bad mother» or «bad breast» results from the splitting of the primal object of opposed libidinal and death instinct impulses. Infants split the mother object so that the mother is separately endowed with wholly good and benign qualities and intentions, or else with wholly bad ones. Like Freud, Erikson (1950) assumes that the child sees the mother as an agent of destruction because he has projected his own urge to devour onto her. Several authors have stressed the importance of real negative feelings in the mother. Freud (1931) already noted that «It is impossible to say how often this fear of the mother is supported by an unconscious hostility on the mother's part...» (p. 237). Ferencsi (1929) thought that in children who observe the conscious and unconscious signs of aversion of the mother, the death instinct is activated and their desire to live is broken. Fairbairn (1940) defined the «possessive» mother. «Such mothers are unduly possessive of their children and are unable to accord them the status of separate persons – with grievous consequences for the unfortunate children» (p. 19). Rheingold

¹ WL refers to *Women in Love*, edition mentioned in the references.

(1964, 1967) offered an extensive survey of the literature supporting his theory that the devouring nature of the mother inheres to the motherhood itself. He described an impressive number of types of destructive mothers; one of them is «the mothers who do not release a child from symbiosis» (1964, p. 137). Angel (1972) links the experience of a devouring mother to a specific age period. Before the age of one and a half the symbiotic panic of annihilation is more overwhelming than the separation anxiety. «Intrapsychically there is a wish to merge with (to devour) the omnipotent invulnerable object, simultaneous with a fear of merging with (or being devoured by) the weak, bad object» (p. 542).

THE HOMOEROTIC ESCAPE

One of the characteristic features of Birkin's behaviour is his persistent search for a homoerotic relation with the industrial magnate Gerald Crich. If we take into account the «Prologue» (Lawrence, 1917), destined for the novel but published only posthumously, Birkin's position and the meaning of this homophile attraction to Gerald Crich are clearly highlighted. In this «Prologue» the relations between Hermione, Birkin and Gerald Crich are depicted as a triangular situation. The intellectually superior Hermione behaves as a possessive mother figure, wanting to absorb and subjugate Birkin, who is looking for a way of escape in his friendship with Gerald Crich. At the onset of the novel, when Birkin and Gerald travel together to London, «the heart of each burned from the other. They burned with each other, inwardly. This they would never admit» (WL, p. 83). After, in a burst of passion, Birkin has made love with Ursula, he is ill and on his sick-bed he makes up his mind that the love offered by Ursula is, like Hermione's, a bondage. Such as in the dismissed «Prologue» he looks for an escape in the man-man love. When Gerald Crich pays him a visit, he proposes to swear a *Blutbrüderschaft* by making a little wound in their arms and rub each other's blood into the cut. Gerald keeps his reserve and holds himself back.

When Birkin returns from the house of Ursula after a proposal to which she refused to respond, he is «deeply, mockingly angry that Ursula persisted always in this old cry: "Why do you want to bully me", and in her bright, insolent abstraction» (WL, p. 344). He goes straight to Gerald and proposes a game of Japanese wrestling. They strip and wrestle till they both lose consciousness. Afterwards Birkin concludes: «At any rate, one feels freer and more open now – and that is what we want» (WL, p. 352). At the end of the novel, when he already married Ursula and Gerald is dead, Birkin still expresses his nostalgia of a man-man blood- brotherhood.

The meaning of a homoerotic relationship as an escape from the fusion with a devouring mother figure is confirmed in psychoanalytic literature. For Stoller (1975) «the need to raise this barrier against the desire to merge with mother... could be one more contribution to the multiple causes of homosexuality...» (p. 155). Heimann (1955) presumes that, «Envy and hatred of the mother, which accompany the first homosexual impulses in the boy, form an important source of the man's fear of the woman» (p. 28). Socarides (1988) described a case of homosexuality in which «the precipitating factor was a premature attempt to effect separation from an engulfing mother» (pp. 247-248). And he concludes «that the significant incidence of homosexuality in the general population is due to the necessity for all human beings to traverse the separation-individuation phase of early childhood, which is decisive for gender-defined self identity...» (p. 261).

Within a developmental perspective Birkin's attraction to a male friend can be conceived as referring to the child-father relationship in the course of the separation-individuation process. Psychoanalytic authors have emphasized the importance of the father in the growing separation from the mother. «Thus, after the first weeks of life, the movement in the child is toward a gradual separation from the mother, which may ultimately allow the growth of a relationship on a different level. The father, however, must emerge from a murky figure "off there" to one with whom the child is familiar, after which at least an incipient object relationship is possible» (Greenacre 1966,

p. 198) Mahler (1966) stressed the non-symbiotic origin and quality of the early father-child relationship, opposed to the original mother-child bondage. «Furthermore, we have the impression that identification with the father or possibly with an older brother facilitates a rather early beginning of the boy's gender identity» (Mahler *et al.*, 1975, p. 215).

This experience of the early positive role of the father has been formulated by Abelin (1971) as «*early triangulation*». «During the practising subphase of the separation-individuation process the father is now thought to play an important part in the development of the child's exploratory and early phallic attitudes; and in the subsequent rapprochement subphase his role may be crucial in the disentanglement of the ego from the regressive pull back to symbiosis» (Abelin 1975, p. 293). «The boy will also at first attempt actively to court the father as a triangular partner» (Rupprecht-Schampera 1995, p. 464). Of course, this longing for the father as a triangular partner is normally restrained to a transitory developmental period. Birkin's persistent need of a man friend, equalized with his marriage to Ursula, refers to Lawrence's unconscious fantasies modeled at this infantile developmental stage.

THE DIRECT ATTACK ON THE DEVOURING MOTHER IMAGE

On the occasion of a party at Breadalby, the house of Hermione, a clash between her and Birkin breaks out. She appears «with amazing persistence, to wish to ridicule him and make him look ignominious in the eyes of everybody» (WL, p. 139). When Birkin refuses to participate with the other visitors in a walk in the park, Hermione insults him: «Then we'll leave a little boy behind, if he's sulky» (WL, p. 143). The next day Birkin violently contradicts Hermione when she declares that «in the *spirit* we are all one...» (WL, p. 161). Hermione realizes that, «She must break him down before her, the awful obstruction of him who obstructed her life to the last» (WL, 162). She crashes a ball of lapis lazuli on his head; he can repel a second blow by covering his head with a book. He goes out of the house across the park to the open country. Afterwards he sends a note to Hermione:

«I don't want you to mind having biffed me, in the least. Tell the others it is just one of my moods. You were quite right, to biff me – because I know you wanted to. So there's the end of it» (p. 167).

It's at typical illustration of the mechanism of projective identification as described by Klein (1946, 1955). He identifies with Hermione into whom he has projected the destructive aggressive part of himself.

The clash with Hermione does not prevent him from letting her furnish the rooms he hired at the mill-house and when he meets her there, «her mind remained unbroken, her will was still perfect. It almost sent Birkin mad... Yet he was always striking at her» (WL, p. 202). In the meantime some attraction between Birkin and Ursula is effected. But «he mistrusted her, he was afraid of a woman capable of such abandon, such dangerous thoroughness of destructivity» (WL, p. 217).

After a stay in the south of France, Birkin is back home, and Ursula looks for him at the mill-house. She finds him stoning the image of the moon in the pond and cursing Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods. It is the Magna Mater he wants to destroy to liberate himself.

«He got large stones, and threw them, one after the other, at the white-burning centre of the moon, till there was nothing but a rocking of hollow noise, and a pond surged up, no moon any more... Birkin stood and listened, and was satisfied» (WL, p. 324).

But the fragments reunite and the moon gathers itself together. The next day Birkin rushes to Ursula's home with his theory of freedom.

«There was another way, the way of freedom. There was the paradisaal entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and desire for union, stronger

than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free-proud singleness, which accepted the obligation of the permanent connection with others and with the others, submits to the yoke and leash of love, but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields.» (WL, pp. 331-332).

Fantasies of aggression against the mother figure have been mentioned by many psychoanalytic authors. They are conceived as originating from an innate aggressiveness (or death instinct) or/and as a result of the frustration of instinctive needs. For Klein (1948) the infantile ego turns its innate destructive impulses against the first external object. Bion (1957) discussed «phantasied attacks on the breast as the prototype of all attacks on objects that serve as a link...» (p. 87). Later Klein (1959) also recognized that the innate aggressiveness gets increased by unfavourable circumstances. Other authors (Spitz, 1953; Fromm, 1964) stressed the reactive nature of infantile aggressiveness against the mother. For Rheingold (1967) the infant is aware of hostile impulses in the mother. «Rage, then, is a defensive reaction, a primitive assertion of the will to live» (p. 80). More specifically in connection with the separation-individuation process, Mahler *et al.* (1975) described the possible aggressive reactions of boys in the rapprochement subphase in cases in which the mother has been interfering with the boy's autonomy. Then the boy struggles «to ward off the dangerous “mother after separation”. We cannot help but speculate that the fear of reengulfment by the dangerous “mother after separation”, the fear of merging that we sometimes see as a central resistance in our adult male patients, has its inception at this very early period of life» (p. 215). In this perspective we can assume that Lawrence's representation of Birkin's attacks against a devouring mother image refers to fantasies related to the experience of an engulfing mother in the rapprochement subphase of infancy.

THE ANAL EROTIC SELF-ASSURANCE

In the chapter «Excuse» Birkin finally experiences the separateness enabling a star equilibrium with Ursula. But this is preceded by two important scenes: the offering of three rings and the mysterious embrace in the parlour of an inn. Birkin has invited Ursula for a drive in the country and offers her three rings as a present. At first she hesitates and says that he should have given the rings to Hermione but then she is happy to accept them. When she proposes to go home in the dark, he tells her that he ought to say good-bye in the evening to Hermione. Then a violent quarrel erupts. Ursula reproaches him:

«You and love! You may well say, you don't want love. No, you want *yourself* and dirt and death - that's what you want. You are so *perverse*, so death-eating» (WL, p. 389).

She throws the rings at his face, and they scatter in the mud. «He could not bear to see the rings lying in the pale mud of the road. He picked them up, and wiped them unconsciously on his hands... But he had made his hands all dirty and gritty» (WL, p. 391). When she walks away he is relieved. But she comes back and one of her first questions is: «Did you find the rings?» (WL, p. 393). When he answers that they are in his pocket, she puts her hand into his pocket and takes them back.

The question arises if we should look for some anal symbolism in the story of the rings, preceding the scene at the inn. According to Shengold (1995) rings can be used as «magical narcissistic symbols – part subject and part object – derived developmentally from the body ego and ultimately from the body sphincters» (p. 1205). The association of gifts with faeces and the anal sphincter with a ring suggests itself. If we consider the whole story of giving, taking, rejecting and taking back of the rings and the allusions to dirtiness and perversion as a prelude to the next scene at the inn, its meaning should be clarified by the events happening there.

After Ursula's return, they drive to an inn and there, in the parlour, the experience happens by which their union in separateness seems to get realized.

«She traced with her hands the line of his loins and thighs, at the back, and a living fire ran through her, from him, darkly... She had thought there was no source deeper than the phallic source. And now, behold, from the smitten rock of the man's body, from the strange marvellous flanks and thighs, deeper, further in mystery than the phallic source, came the floods of ineffable darkness and ineffable riches» (WL, pp. 396-397).

We think that in order to elucidate what Lawrence had in mind when he wrote these passages, it is necessary to take into account his essays on the unconscious. First there is the mysterious connection between the caressing of the loins and back of the thighs and the experience of separateness. We assume that the author already cherished the fantasies he published a few years later in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, where we read:

«And it is from the great voluntary centre of the lumbar ganglion that the child asserts its distinction from the mother, the single identity of its own existence and its power over its surroundings...» (p. 36).

Moreover the «back of the thighs», the repeated emphasizing of darkness, («mystery of darkness», «floods of ineffable darkness») and the reference to a source, «deeper in mystery than the phallic source» suggest some connection with anality. If we assume that, in his description of the scene at the inn and in his later theorizing on the mysterious flashes emanating from the lumbar ganglion, Lawrence symbolized anal-erotic fantasies, the link with separation and individuation experiences becomes more comprehensible.

Since the contributions of Freud (1905, 1908, 1917), and Abraham (1921, 1924) the relation between anal functions and the experience of mastery and control is commonly accepted in psychoanalytic theories. Grunberger (1971) extensively elaborated the relation between anality and the experience of autonomy. Shengold (1988) stresses the contribution to the sense of separateness:

«The registration of the transient experience of the anus holding on and closing down makes the registration of a closed (or a closable) system possible; the child can now know what it is like to feel his body as an entity, with boundaries and with “doors” that shut. Concurrent psychic ego development has made registration possible by the time of anal predominance – and this registration of controllable closure and opening makes subsequent (body and psychic) ego development possible: Being able to feel that one has boundaries is necessary for achieving separation from the parent and for acquiring full individuation, which involves attaining the working concept of “self” and the spontaneous feeling of “I”» (pp. 27-28).

Mahler (1968) pointed out the importance of «the negativistic behavior of the anal phase» (p. 20) for intrapsychic separation and self boundary formation. Thus if we assume that Ursula's caressing of his loins and back of his thighs means for Birkin an acceptance of his anal erotic self-assurance the important contribution of this scene to his sense of separateness can be understood.

THE PROBLEMATIC FULFILMENT

If we understand why the caressing of his loins and back of the thighs can mean for Birkin that Ursula accepts his separateness, it is not at all clear why she suddenly comes to this acceptance. The explanation must be sought in the portraying of Ursula in the previous novel, *The Rainbow*. There we learn about her early fantasies of grandiosity, her need to be exceptional and her rejection of Skrebensky because he did not meet these ambitions. In the passage preceding the caressing of the loins, she looks at Birkin. «And he was one of these, one of these strange creatures from the beyond, looking down at her, and seeing she was fair» (WL, p. 395). During her caressing of the loins, the image of the sons of God resurges three times. It seems likely that the gratification of her

narcissistic aspirations by a partner, experienced as a grandiose self-object, determines her acceptance of his claims. Birkin's sense of separateness, based on Ursula's acceptance of his anal erotism, is in itself intriguing. When, after leaving the inn, they drive into the country:

«He sat still like an Egyptian Pharaoh, driving the car. He felt as if he were seated in immemorial potency, like the great carven statues of real Egypt, as real and fulfilled with subtle strength, as these are, with a vague inscrutable smile on the lips» (p. 400).

This sounds more like an egocentric narcissistic exaltation than a disposition to a union based on object love. Isn't it, as described by Freud (1917) a «narcissistic clinging to anal erotism» (p. 130)? In Birkin's separateness «the (intrapsychic) relatedness to the object is only a means to the consolidation of the self as separate... What is sought is an experience of the self as a monad... What is lacking is the experience of "true attachment" to the object» (Blass & Blatt, 1996, p. 728).

One can also wonder about the meaning of the couple's need to isolate themselves from society. First they write their resignation from their work. Later they decide that they don't even want a home. At the end, Ursula states to Gudrun:

«One has no more connections here. One has a sort of other self, that belongs to a new planet, not to this – You've got to hop off... Love is too human and little. I believe in something inhuman, of which love is only a little part. I believe what we must fulfil comes out of the unknown to us, and it is something infinitely more than love. It isn't so merely *human*» (WL, p. 534).

Only isolation from the world seems a necessary guarantee as well for Ursula's as for Birkin's narcissistic exaltation.

If we take into account these different elements in the relationship between Birkin and Ursula, we are inclined to conclude that the fulfilment for both of them means a satisfaction of their narcissistic cravings rather than a real union in separateness. Lawrence's representation of the achievement of separateness from a devouring mother image by strategies of homoerotic escape, attacking of the mother figure and anal erotic self-assurance, links up with psychoanalytic formulations of relations and fantasies concerning the separation-individuation process in infancy and early childhood. It is very doubtful, however, that the separateness, achieved by Birkin in *Women in Love*, is integrated with a development of attachment, necessary for a mature sexual love relation. His eventual fulfilment appears rather as a narcissistic relationship, as defined by Blass and Blatt (1996): «When the separation aim predominates, the relationship is marked by a functional use of the object in the service or gratification of the sense of self as separate; the object is recognized insofar as it contributes to this aim» (p. 720). Also Ursula's fulfilment looks largely a narcissistic gratification. She has found «one of the sons of God», an idealized selfobject.

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Kafka's erotic myth? On the «America» novel («Der Verschollene»)

CLAUDIA LIEBRAND (*)

Female and male figures in Kafka's unfinished novels, in «Der Verschollene» in particular, which that which follows will deal with, have - according to the *communis opinio* of the research - not got much in common. The former, mostly serving girls, kitchen girls, cooks, precocious brats, chambermaids, or even office-housekeepers, shock the somewhat dumb but fighting innocent-guilty protagonists with their constant, occasionally aggressive, always "dirty" sexual readiness; the latter, mostly functionaries tied to service organizations - or those who want to be - cannot evade the suction of the women, even when they feel repelled by their exceedingly physical nature. The research appears to be agreed that gender difference in Kafka's texts is super-clearly and unequivocally marked; womanliness is exhibited as the terrifying counterpart of manliness. Controversies, as far as they exist at all, become inflamed at best on the question of valuation: a figure like that of Brunelda, for example, in whose - I formulate it cautiously - strongly improvised household there is no way to get through, what with the mess and filth, is either considered by the literary critics as a "monster" (so Stach¹ formulates it), or rather celebrated - e.g. by Peter von Matt - as the representative of an opposing female realm, that stands opposite the male-rational world of organizations as «the completely other»². The jiggling, slopping-over female *physis*, which brings all systems of order to collapse, (and that is no metaphorical language: Brunelda is really quite unbelievably fat) appears thus on the one hand as the triumphal return of a matriarchal myth, as a Venus (of Willendorf) *rediviva*. Or the figure appears as a man-eating she-devil, from whom Karl Rossmann, the protagonist of the America novel, can only escape into either death or art (both converge in the «Teater of Oklahama»).

Now whether one considers Brunelda as a monster like Stach or as a new Venus like von Matt - it remains to be stated that even such differently judging interpreters draw the same sharp

(*) Albert-Ludwigs-Universitaet Freiburg, Deutsches Seminar II, Institut fuer Neuere Deutsche Literatur, Postfach, D-79085 Freiburg, Germany.

¹ Reiner Stach: Kafkas erotischer Mythos. Eine ästhetische Konstruktion des Weiblichen. Frankfurt 1987, p. 70.

² Peter von Matt: Kafkas Venus. Über den Roman «Der Verschollene». In: the same: Das Schicksal der Phantasie. Studien zur deutschen Literatur. Munich, Vienna 1994, pp. 292-296, here p. 294.

dividing line between the sexes. On one side they see placed male rationality, technology, and the will to transcendence; on the other side (and Christa Rohde-Dachser has described how these exclusion and ascription mechanisms psycho-analytically function³) sheer vastness, naked *physis*, and carnal sexuality – as the central insignia of femininity that ground Kafka's erotic myth. And so Reiner Stach also found, then, that Kafka, in his «aesthetic construction of the feminine», was obligated to Otto Weininger's theorems. «Kafka's images and projections [concerning women]» – so says Stach – are related «to the logical steps of that systematized myth»⁴ – a myth whose central axiom must be viewed as the statement that Woman is sexuality itself. The female – so Weininger maintains, and, as Stach sees it, Kafka adopts Weininger's position – the female is a non-person, ego-less, and passive. She is amoral, deceitful, property-less, and only interested in two (only ostensibly divergent) forms of social interaction: motherhood and prostitution.

I do not at all dispute that Kafka's texts are written along the lines of those femininity mythologies that Weininger so powerfully propagates. Nevertheless, the reading project carried out by Stach, which aims toward the proof that Kafka's images of femininity stand in a relation of congruence to those of Weininger, is to be met with reservation, I think – due to fundamental considerations of literary theory. Such a reading project compels me as an interpretress, however, to a (re-)construction of the ideologies that the text as a complex self-contradictory construct not only constitutes, but also even de-constructs. Especially in Kafka texts, whose highly complex, self-contradictory, paradoxical composition is indisputable, proceeding in this manner is disastrous. The construction of the gender difference also goes along – this will have to be shown by me – with the deconstruction of the very line that allegedly so sharply divides the sexes. Women and men (as well as the spaces – even the semantic ones – that they occupy) do not stand in a clear relationship of opposition and mutual exclusion to one another; the text rather – this is my thesis – subverts the dividing line that separates the feminine from the masculine. Thus the text subverts the phallic monism, from which the binary gender oppositions are then produced.

In what follows I will go into one gender-difference subverting strategy of the text that seems to me to be of primary interest. This is the “feminization” of *the* domain that is traditionally the most exclusively masculine – the domain of artistic production. I will also show that Kafka subverts the traditional philosophy of the sexes, which Weininger also answers for, through the inscription of the institution of authorship in *female* characters.

That Kafka's writing is marked in an especially high degree by self-referentiality, and by a self-commentary on literature and the media in general, that the author writes himself downright manically into his texts – all this has been seen and represented by the research time and again. The heroes stumble through a world that simply teems with typewriters, desks, telephones, and offices – that is also the case for Karl Rossmann, the protagonist of the *America* novel: «Regardless of which room Rossmann entered on his America trip, Kafka confronted him immediately with books, letters or telephone calls, with typewriters or writing people.»⁵ Thus Karl Rossmann's labyrinthal walk through the hull of the overseas steamer leads him first of all into an empty room with an abandoned desk, then into the captain's cabin, which is full of written documents that are being read and excerpted – and in which naturally a desk stands, at which a small gentleman is struggling with heavy tomes.

Later, it is also a letter that unexpectedly changes the fate of the hero for the better. The stoker whom Karl meets in the first chapter has, on the other hand, no chance for an improvement of his situation because his superior Schubal, whom he accuses of *mobbing*, announces he will «refute ...

³ Christa Rohde-Dachser: *Expedition in den dunklen Kontinent. Weiblichkeit im Diskurs der Psychoanalyse*. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York 1992.

⁴ Stach, *ibid.*, S. 67.

⁵ Detlef Kremer: *Verschollen. Gegenwärtig. Franz Kafkas Roman «Der Verschollene»*. In: *Franz Kafka. Sonderband Text und Kritik*. Ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Munich 1994, pp. 238-253, here p. 240.

every accusation by means of my writings»⁶ In his uncle's house Karl pursues his English studies at one of the most modern desks existent; in the Hotel Occidental, Karl, who has become an elevator boy, devotes his scanty free time to the learning of commercial correspondence. During his stay at Brunelda's, Karl Rossmann gets to know her neighbor Josef Mendel, who like his author, like Kafka, is occupied with reading and writing in a kind of second nocturnal existence while he attends to his livelihood during the day. This series of allusions could be continued almost indefinitely. And these semi-private inscription games of Kafka's are also noted and described in the research – in cases where the self-referential inscriptions are related to the masculine cast of characters or stand in connection to female figures of the "Felice Bauer" type – that is, to secretaries or typists. A figure like Therese in *Der Verschollene*, who as a typist is removed from the "dirty" domain of the kitchen and sexuality, seems – as Detlef Kremer formulated it – to approximate a «spiritual, mystical female body».⁷ The model that Therese is copied from is quite obviously Theresa of Avila, who is frequently represented in illustrations with a book and writing materials. When the text deals with women that, unlike Therese, are not de-sexualized, the research pays no attention to them with regard to the writing sujet, and ignores self-inscriptions of Kafka in the female cast.

This holds for example for the figure of Johanna Brummer. The maid-servant receives no good press in Kafka research; even her name marks her as the blowfly – the "buzzer" that sits atop Rossmann ("horse-man"). It is she who "robs" Karl of his virginity, she who sexually initiates him.

There is a small excerpt from the preludes to the seduction that is of interest with regard to author-inscriptions. Johanna and Karl occasionally hang out together in the kitchen: «Sometimes she wrote a letter in the confounded position to the side of the kitchen cabinet and got her inspiration from Karl's face.»⁸ This scene is of eminent importance because it re-enacts with inverted gender roles a poetological "Urszene" ("original scene") that is datable to the 13th of August, 1912. On this day Kafka got to know the Berlin signing clerk Felice Bauer in Max Brod's house. He noted a few days later in his diary: «Miss F. B.: When I came to Brod's on the 13th of August she sat at table and seemed to me like a serving-maid. I was not at all curious to know who she was, but resigned myself to her right away. Bony, empty face, that wore its emptiness openly.»⁹ The projection screen, the *screen-woman* was found. A few weeks after Kafka had gotten to know Felice Bauer, exactly two days after he had written her his first letter (the begin of a years-long letter *bombardment*), he succeeded in making his literary breakthrough with the short story *The Judgement*. Henceforth he could describe with his texts the emptiness of her face – she became a projection surface upon which he could cast the «monstrous world»¹⁰ that he had in his head.

The text of the novel is silent about Johanna Brummer's world, but even with her, sight and writing process are related to one another. The serving-maid does not, in fact, compose herself – to take up a Kierkegaardian formulation – into her masculine muse, but she gets the inspirations for her letter-writing from Karl's face. The novel thus calls up in this episode, slightly distorted and *gender-reversed*, an "Urszene" ("original scene") of Kafka's artistic productivity. And this is especially instructive because the functional mechanism of the relationship between the sexes, in which women are projection and protection screens for men, even for artist-men, is simply turned around and seems to be parodied. This reversed staging ironizes the original scene of artistic production, to which it refers and which yet represents something like a fundamental and basic story about occidental masculine creativity and female muse-existence.

⁶ Franz Kafka: *Der Verschollene*. Ed. by Horst Schillemeit. Vol. 1: Text. Frankfurt 1983 (=critical edition: writings, diaries, letters), p. 34. «Der Verschollene» is quoted from this edition in the following, abbreviated as "KKV".

⁷ Kremer, *ibid.*, p. 245.

⁸ KKV, S. 41.

⁹ Franz Kafka: *Tagebücher. 1910-1923*. Frankfurt 1976, p. 208; Entry from August 20th, 1912.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224; Diary entry from June 1913.

I am now going to speak of the central figure of the last chapter, Brunelda – the figure from whom most interpreters (and one can by all means speak here of uncontrolled counter-transference) turn away with disgust. Politzer sees in her a Circe who transforms men into swine – a woman who rests «in the voluptuousness of her excrescent flesh, which she lavishes care on, bathes and perfumes, nourishes and dresses, a piece of tropical primitivity in the middle of the spoiled civilization of a suburban quarter».¹¹ Around Brunelda reigns chaos and filth; one nourishes oneself with refuse. In spite of this, the divorced spouse of a cacao manufacturer is of overwhelming corpulence – a mountain of flesh, formless matter; she is an early testimony of that “stout type” in America (described by Baudrillard) that breaks every order and disciplining system. Brunelda makes it easy for her interpreters to not like her. She carries herself as a tricky diva, a nagging nerve-wracker, as a sadistic tormenter. To be sure she is an artist, a (probably opera) singer; her status as a singer, when it is not totally ignored, is evaluated only as an allusion to her unbridled sexuality by the criticism. But instead of discrediting Brunelda from the first as a «caricature of the Dionysian»,¹² as Sokel does, it is worth the attempt to take a look at her status as an artist. She is the only female representative of art that is found at all, refraining from the «Teater in Oklahama», in the novel. Hitherto only Astrid Lange-Kirchheim has done that – as far as I see – in a study dedicated to Brunelda. Lange-Kirchheim sets the fat singer in relation to the little mouse in Kafka’s last short story «Josephine, the Singer, or the Mice-folk» and points out that the phallic characteristics of Josephine and Brunelda allow us to read the artists as identification figures of their author.¹³ Like him, the colossal female Brunelda also spends a large portion of her time on the settee. When she has her male servants search for her *perfume*, they do not indeed find that bottle, but rather «old English novels, periodicals and musical notes»,¹⁴ «sewing things»¹⁵ and run into «many matted and stuck-together small things» in the middle of old «powder puffs, make-up jars, hair brushes and ringlets».¹⁶ – thus Kafka hides in Brunelda’s drawers the fragments that are characteristic for his writing act. And Brunelda is also hit by those headaches that were a harbinger of and accompaniment to artistic production for him. When she is overcome by heat flushes and cries: «Delamarche, I can’t stand the heat, I’m burning up»,¹⁷ it signalizes not only her erotic fire: Brunelda’s inner fire can also be related to the metaphor of artistic production of her author, who said about himself that he kindles «a great fire» inside himself by the writing of the «strangest ideas»¹⁸ to the point of melt down. Here a singer is stamped with this artistic suffering, though, who is not allowed to practice her art – whom the neighbors have forbidden to sing, and who must therefore switch over to another occupation: «to scream... like a man».¹⁹ The singing of Brunelda has the status of a phantasm; no one has ever heard her sing; only her non-singing is audible, her screaming – nonetheless, Robinson “knows”: «Sure she’s a singer – a great singer».²⁰ The song of this singer is one that belongs to the past, “lost and never heard of again” – as “lost and unheard of” (“verschollen”) as Karl Rossmann is in the expanse of America.

¹¹ Heinz Politzer: Franz Kafka. Der Kuenstler. Frankfurt 1965, p. 225.

¹² Walter H. Sokel: Zwischen Drohung und Errettung. Zur Funktion Amerikas in Kafkas Roman *Der Verschollene*. In: Sigrid Bauschinger et al. (ed.): Amerika in der deutschen Literatur. Neue Welt – Nordamerika – USA. Stuttgart 1975, pp. 246-271, here p. 261.

¹³ Astrid Lange-Kirchheim: Gesang und Geschlecht. Die Figur der Brunelda in Franz Kafkas Amerika-Roman *Der Verschollene*. In: Literarische Entwürfe weiblicher Sexualität. Ed. by Johannes Cremerius et al. Würzburg 1993, p. 236, Note 6.

¹⁴ KKV, p. 361.

¹⁵ KKV, p. 362.

¹⁶ KKV, p. 362.

¹⁷ KKV, p. 295.

¹⁸ Kafka, Tagebücher, *ibid.*, p. 214; Entry from September 23, 1912.

¹⁹ KKV, p. 318.

²⁰ KKV, p. 304.

If we examine the romantic tradition, feminine song, that song which is “lost and unheard of” in the novel, opens up a (musical) space in which “art” and “nature” converge, in which the musical symbol and the human voice, body and musical notation are conveyed with one another. Now, the representation of Brunelda breaks with this conception. No reconciliation takes place between body and symbol; the authentic expression of subjectivity is not even brought forward anymore in the realm of art. Kafka calls once more upon the linking – topical since Homer – of musical and feminine (and also the traditional allegorization of art as feminine) in the figure of Brunelda; this specific musicalization of the feminine, though, seems stripped of every secret and appears in a vulgar shape.

The suggestive, erotic element that – according to the traditional idea – is a thoroughly essential constitutive element of that *quite different* realm of the musical, is forced by Kafka and rewritten: there exists a novel fragment, entitled «Brunelda’s Excursion», in which Brunelda goes into service as a whore. Karl Rossmann takes her in a wheel-cart to a brothel, in which it is as “dirty” as it already had been in Brunelda’s hole in the wall.

I will come to speak of this hole in the wall once again. Peter von Matt (I mentioned this once already at the beginning) characterized Brunelda’s sphere of life as a female realm opposed to masculine rationality. «Whereas in the hotel everything is in order, rational and rationalized, an illogical chaos reigns around her. Where everything sparkles there of glass and metal, here it all fades in the half darkness of dragging towels and curtains. There people work as if in a final spurt without end, here they stir and writhe around with the primeval laziness of well-fed cave-dwellers.»²¹ Kafka sets – according to the résumé from von Matt – a feminine «picturesque biotope»²² against the technical organizations, the «clocks and uniforms»²³ of the world of men.

That is indeed nicely formulated, but certainly not completely right. Especially because it is questionable whether the picturesque biotope has to do with a feminine realm at all or whether she is not rather a giant infant with polymorph-perverse cravings and a childlike-archaic delight in filth and chaos. But even when one accepts von Matt’s categorization into feminine and masculine realms, it must be stated that the “feminine” and “masculine” realms do not stand in each case in opposition as the “completely other”, but are always already characterized by warpings and interferences. Rationalization turns into disorganization, order into chaos. Disorganized, chaotic, filthy: not only is Brunelda’s apartment so, but – at a second glance – also the *Hotel occidental* (whose allegedly so smart glitter-world, devoted to masculine rationality, is – on closer inspection – rather sloppy). And also those appliances which von Matt apostrophizes as the technical heart of the world of men are in use at Brunelda’s in their simple versions: table bell and opera glass. In the realm of the great mother, this new Venus of Willendorf, communication with others or with the external world is also always already mediated. Brunelda takes up contact with Robinson and Karl, whom she bans to the balcony, by means of the table bell’s signal tone, thus operating a primitive, but functioning Morse code device. She uses the opera glass for visual excursions out onto the street. Thus Brunelda’s body is one that is already supplemented and extended by instruments. That human “cyborgization” is already laid out in her, which is presented as almost complete in the “media center” in the Hotel occidental and in the uncle’s firm, in which scenarios are then built up that make the participating humans appear as only extensions, as mechanical “outgrowths” of machines.²⁴

Even Brunelda, the figure who embodies the pure *physis* for von Matt, is equipped therefore with technical apparatuses. The text thus subverts von Matt’s finding that the appliances are attached to the world of men. That is not so – especially because Brunelda is a figure in which the author Kafka inscribes himself and whom he does *not* shift into a complementary narcissistic

²¹ Matt, *ibid.*, p. 294.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 295.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

²⁴ KKV, p. 66.

position, that is, does not pin down to being his *other*, a *container* for everything that has split off from himself, but whom he rather makes into his double. But representations of the author and his writing always stand in close connection to technique with Kafka, to *writing* technique; therefore even Brunelda makes use of technical apparatuses, too.

Thus Kafka inscribes author representation and writing *sujet* also in those female figures whose intimidating *physis* and overwhelming sexuality rather suggest considering them as the *opposite* to spirit, transcendence and writing, to every form of cultivation even. The traditionally – not only since Weininger – “femininely” connoted elements (body, sexuality, “natural instinctiveness”) and the “masculinely” connoted elements (“culture”, spiritualization, transcendence) seem therefore to be only *ostensibly* sharply reproduced in Kafka’s *Der Verschollene*. These *clichés* are in fact called up in the text, and are even overdone to the extent of the grotesque and the absurd (but are without a doubt therefore also ironized). And inscriptions are found which subvert the stereotyped oppositions. The fat woman advances to the mask of her thin author; Kafka emerges behind the serving-maid fury, as he describes the projection surface of the “empty face” of Felice Bauer. One can already read off in these two text stagings of women characters that Kafka subverts traditional gender ascriptions and produces *gender trouble*.

Franz Kafka «Der Verschollene» («America») – *Gender Trouble* (*)

ASTRID LANGE-KIRCHHEIM (**)

Kafka and the father problem were synonymous in the psychoanalytically oriented Kafka research for a long time.¹ Not until 1976 did someone – and it's telling that this was a woman, Margarete Mitscherlich-Nielsen² – take a look at Kafka's mother and diagnose the – paradigmatically feminine – disorder of depression. Taking leave of a one-person psychology, narcissism theory, object relations theory and communication theory oriented schizophrenia research increasingly made pairs of persons their focus, whether it was the mother-child pair, the collusive couple relationship³ or pathological – schizophrenia generating – symbioses.⁴ The material that Kafka's texts offer for the study of such dependency relationships is not yet exhausted by far. The power/powerlessness or master/slave dyads revealed more and more the Oedipal triangle as a pseudo-Oedipal one. With the case of the third in the triangle, generational as well as gender differences collapsed – development was dampened to an always possible sudden change from the power position into that of weakness and vice versa.⁵ That corresponds to the fact that Kafka's authority figures oscillate between feminine and masculine outfitting, and non-authority figures, such as children and adolescents, are «parentified» into adult helpers. To an empathetic

(*) With this title I make reference to Judith Butler's pioneering analysis *Gender trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990 (in German: *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991).

(**) Albert-Ludwigs-Universitaet Freiburg, Deutsches Seminar II, Institut fuer Neuere Deutsche Literatur, Postfach, D-79085 Freiburg, Germany.

¹ Cf. Josef Rattner: *Kafka und das Vater-Problem. Ein Beitrag zum tiefenpsychologischen Problem der Kindererziehung. Interpretation von Kafkas «Brief an den Vater»*. Munich, Basle: Ernst Reinhardt, 1964.

² Margarete Mitscherlich-Nielsen, «Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen zu Franz Kafka». In: *Psyche* 31. 1977. pp. 60-83.

³ Cf. Jörg Willi: *Die Zweierbeziehung*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975.

⁴ E.g. Gregory Bateson et al. (Eds.): *Schizophrenie und Familie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978.

⁵ I have tried to represent this in an earlier article on *Der Verschollene*: «Gesang und Geschlecht. Die Figur der Brunelda in Franz Kafkas Amerika-Roman *Der Verschollene*». In Johannes Cremerius, Wolfram Mauser et al. (Eds.): *Literarische Entwürfe weiblicher Sexualität*. Würzburg: Koenigshausen und Neumann, 1993 (= *Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche*. 12. 1993), pp. 231-263.

psychoanalytic reading, the fate of the individual, Karl Rossmann, who is «verschollen», i. e. lost and unheard of in the expanse of America, presents itself as a function and consequence of the «lost and unheard of difference», as Claudia Liebrand names it in her article about «Kafka's Erotic Myth».⁶

A feminist reading can take up this finding and derive its state of being lost and unheard of from the specific mode of this difference: it does not separate things that are different, but rather splits a unity; it builds up contradictory, binary oppositions and does not contrast things that are irreducibly different; in short, it is a difference which rests upon monism; this it splits up into the one and into the other of the same with plus and minus.⁷ A critical reading invites one to correlate the suffering of Kafka's characters with compulsory heterosexuality and phallic monism and thus at the same time to transcend it and even develop a comic and occasionally even diabolic pleasure from the permanent «confusion» («Verwechslung», 233) – this being a key word of the «America» novel itself.⁸ The following can pass for mottoes of this comedy: «Out of one make two, out of two make one» and «little tree, little tree, change!» I thus hope to combine a poststructuralist feminist approach and a psychoanalytical one in the following, and to point out in this manner the potential for change mobilized in Kafka's text. I orient myself in this process on Judith Butler and, in the German language area, on Christa Rohde-Dachser.⁹ I will examine gender trouble on the level of character description (I.) and with examples of the meeting of the sexes (II.), then on the level of rhetoric, i. e. in the individual linguistic expression (III.), and finally on Kafka's usage of metaphor, here allegory (IV.).

I

Series production and displacement of attributes are the strategies with which Kafka's character depiction downright systematically subverts the border between the sexes. The pattern of acceptance and rejection which Karl runs through at least six times, regularly makes him intensively dependent on a – usually also bodily – gigantically dimensioned figure. This position is taken up subsequently by: the stoker, the uncle, Mr. Pollunder, the head cook Grete Mitzelbach, Brunelda and, if one counts what happens before the beginning of the novel as well, Johanna Brummer. In order to accentuate the series, as it were, all of them are assigned mega-spaces, that are traditionally semanticized as feminine: the ship of the stoker, the gigantic house and (economic) empire of the uncle, the country house of Pollunder, the Hotel Occidental, the tenement house of Brunelda, the kitchen of Johanna. In direct opposition to this series and to the space semantics stands the alternating sex of the dependency initiating figures, such that they cannot be unequivocally booked either as father or as mother figures, as masculine or feminine. The text strategy of phallicizing female characters while conversely de-potencifying male ones additionally undermines the sex category. Pencil, knife, whip, trumpet and other long, pointed elements out of Freud's dream symbolism are found on the woman characters so excessively that they even recur in the

⁶ Cf. in this volume.

⁷ Cf. the philosophical discussion of gender dichotomy by Cornelia Klinger: «Beredtes Schweigen und verschwiegenes Sprechen: Genus im Diskurs der Philosophie». In Hadumod Bußmann/Renate Hof (Eds.): *Genus. Zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Stuttgart: Kroener, 1995. pp. 34-59.

⁸ Cf. Heinrich P. Delfosse: *Synoptische Konkordanz zu Franz Kafkas Romanen. «Der Verschollene» – «Der Proceß» – «Das Schloß»*. 3 Vols. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993 (Indices zur deutschen Literatur). See Vol. 3: «Verwechslung» (a mistake, confusion) and «verwechseln» (to confound, mistake) occur significantly concentrated in *Der Verschollene*, i.e. 12 times as opposed to once in *The Trial* and four times in *The Castle*.

⁹ Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Christa Rohde-Dachser: *Expedition in den dunklen Kontinent. Weiblichkeit im Diskurs der Psychoanalyse*. Berlin, New York et al.: Springer, 1991.

«Spitzenkragen» («the lace [word play on «pointed»] collar», 242)¹⁰ of the head cook Grete Mittelbach. An exponent of this phallicizing marking is the «Statue of the Goddess of Liberty» given prominence to in the first paragraph, which Kafka equips with a sword contrary to reality as everybody knows. Transvesting and travesty manipulations to the character surface, to clothing, attributes, gesture, and facial expression defigure the masculine gender in a complementary way. The thrice repeated thin bamboo cane of the uncle, of the powerful Senator Edward Jakob, exhibits, although it is compared with an épée, impotence just as scornfully as the obesity of Mr. Pollunder, doubled by the obesity of his partner, Mr. Green: two men as fat - pregnant (?) - women! Characteristically, all three men are either bachelors or widowers, i.e. they lack the women and thus literally the «screens»,¹¹ the screens for projection and protection, so that the feared phenomena that are attributed to the female sex, castratedness and devouring greed, turn back on themselves like a boomerang. «Green took on [...] an already ridiculous size and Karl, just for fun, asked himself the question whether he had not perhaps eaten up the good Mr. Pollunder» (121). Kafka demonstrates in a grotesque manner that the gender difference only functions in a hierarchizing binarity: take away from the men their women, and the averted «fact of castration», in its double relation to gender and death, will turn up once again on their own side.

Defiguration of masculinity is, last not least, accomplished via the sign of language mastery, which is *the medium* of the masculine power to define. The stoker disqualifies himself as a man *inter alia* in that he cannot «say yes and no» (33, 49), and is thus not fit for the orderly succession of the no-saying father, i. e. of the triangulating third person (the «non[m] du père»). The idea that such feminizing is synonymous with homosexual marking is introduced by Kafka via the clothing as well as scenically: a somewhat run-wild sailor appears «and had a girl's apron put on» (that of the kitchen girl Line, 50).¹² Consequently, this sailor from the row-boat who metonymically refers to both the stoker, from whom he separates Karl, as well as to the uncle, to whom he leads Karl, repudiates this transfer of gender *qua* apron with protest and disgust. Kafka thus deconstructs the gender difference in a doubly allegorical process: already existing images of masculinity and femininity are defigured and refigured in an irritating way through displacement of signifiers. Both strategies have the detailistic, fragmenting and collaging process of allegory in common. Said with Judith Butler, we are talking about citation, iteration and reversal. The results of this gender crossing are patchwork figures, which lead the gender opposition *ad absurdum*, unmask it as a construction, and bring the excluded with the excluding back in connection. «Screens» are, as it were, folded closed, «veils» pulled away, in short, the exclusion mechanisms such as projection and splitting are made visible.¹³

II

This unmasking impetus of Kafka's is also effective in scenes involving the meeting of the sexes, i.e. he demonstrates, to say it with his own key words, the «confusion» («Verwechslung») in

¹⁰ Page numbers in parentheses in the running text refer to the critical Kafka edition: Franz Kafka: *Der Verschollene*. Ed. Jost Schillemeit. Vol. 1: Text. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1983.

¹¹ I take this designation for the woman as «screen» or as metaphor of man from Shoshana Felman, cf. her exceedingly elucidating Balzac interpretation: «Re-reading Femininity». *Yale French Studies*. 62. 1981. pp. 19-44.

¹² If one takes the gender symbolism of our patriarchally stamped language as a basis, then the attribute «wild» in the sense of disorder, of being debarred from culture, all by itself corresponds to the status of woman; Kafka additionally emphasizes this «reversal» in the gender of the sailor through the feminine piece of clothing. Thus a subversive intention on Kafka's part meets the eye here. On gender symbolism cf. Klinger: «Beredtes Schweigen und verschwiegenes Sprechen».

¹³ Gender is thus featured as an effect, with which every substantialization of sex, whether biological or anatomical, in the sense of *sexus*, is prohibited.

«intercourse» («Verkehr»),¹⁴ When the 35 year-old Johanna Brummer «seduces» the 17 year-old Karl Rossmann, then not only does Kafka make this act readable as rape and child abuse on the side of a female/a mother figure; he transcends rather the gender border and makes Johanna act out the male part in shocking precision, from the game of seduction through the undressing ritual up to the masculine copulatory motions. She «pressed her naked belly against his body, searched with her hand [...] between his legs, then thrust her belly several times against him» (43). To say it with Lacan, Kafka here assigns the *woman* the position of *him*, *who has* the phallus: «"Karl, O you my Karl", she called as if she saw him and confirmed for herself his possession, while he did not see the least bit and felt ill-at-ease in the masses of bedding, that she had apparently stacked up expressly for him» (42). *Karl*, however, is in the position of *her*, *who* has to be the phallus – both positions of the imaginary and here a doubled gender masquerade: Johanna/he pretends to see, thus lays claim to the masculine view, Karl/she «did not see the least bit». With this consternating reversal of gender Kafka reveals the following about the existing patriarchal gender opposition: 1. It is a master-slave relationship; the serving girl, the *female* slave wants to be master, raises claim – not only via letters and writing – to the subject status that is withheld from her. 2. In the mother-son constellation Johanna and Karl mirror the relationship of man and woman in the patriarchy as a father-daughter relation, the existence of the woman as a «daughterly way of existence».¹⁵ 3. Furthermore, the pair Johanna-Karl mirrors as a mother-child pair the abuse relationship, that woman – and through her the children – is generally exposed to in the phallogocentric order, for the woman appears here not only as degraded (namely serving girl) and abused (namely cook and whore), but also as she who is made into a seductress and an incestuous mother: victims become perpetrators. The relation of the mother to the child is therefore a phallic-incestuous one in a fundamental sense, inherent as it were in the symbolic order, and becomes that not only on the basis of an undissolved Oedipus complex. Here Kafka puts literally – and partially *avant la lettre* – those designations on the stage, which psychoanalysis coined for non-normal women, such as «the woman with the penis», «the phallic woman», «the castrated woman»,¹⁶ «the phallic mother»,¹⁷ «the revenge-type».¹⁸ He attests to these theorems on the one hand their performative, reality-generating power, but convicts them on the other hand also of their «screen» status, that blocks the perception of reality. 4. In the pair arrangement Johanna-Karl, the sexual initiation of an adolescent (which assigns him the passive position and is seemingly equivalent to feminizing) is after all delegated to a 35 year-old woman; that makes it abruptly clear that the heterosexual order of the sexes can allow no adolescence in the sense of a sexual moratorium and not at all an initiation by a partner of the same sex (say in the case of Karl by a 35 year-old man, which to be sure would exclude the risk of an illegitimate birth); the homosexuality taboo is practically synonymous with an adolescence taboo: the child Karl is catapulted into the father role per – phallic – rape. With such «misplaced youth» Kafka points out the prime cost of phallic monism, as there is abuse, rape, sexual fixation,

¹⁴ «Verkehr» (intercourse) is – next to «Verwechslung» (cf. note 8) – a pronounced theme word in *Der Verschollene*; it occurs 13 times compared to 7 times in *The Trial* and 8 times in *The Castle*, cf. Delfosse: *Synoptische Konkordanz zu Franz Kafkas Romanen*, Vol. 3.

¹⁵ As an effect of the phallicizing of woman, the pair Johanna: Karl enters into the following series of pairs: mother: son, man: woman, father: daughter. Through this continued mirroring, a playing to pieces of the gender roles is reached, as well as an uncovering of their share of ideology: the asymmetry of the generations mirrors the asymmetry of the gender roles, the hegemony of the man that of the father, the dependency of the son that of the wife and the daughter, etc.

¹⁶ Cf. for these catchwords the «Gesamtregister» for Sigmund Freud: *Gesammelte Werke* (18 Vols.) Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1960. Here: Vol. 18.

¹⁷ Cf. in addition to this J. Laplanche/J.-B. Pontalis (Eds.): *Das Vokabular der Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972. Entry: «Phallische Frau (oder Mutter)». p. 382f.

¹⁸ See in addition to this Karl Abraham: «Über den weiblichen Kastrationskomplex». In *Psychoanalytische Studien I und II. Gesammelte Werke* in 2 Bänden. Ed. Johannes Cremerius. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969 and 1970. Vol. 2. p. 69ff.

illegitimate birth, scandal and rejection. Kafka's crude gender parody in the form of his hardly bearable fat women is thus an exceedingly serious game, «the axe for the frozen sea within us», to use his own words. This politics of parody convicts anew phallic monism of its incongruity to time, to growth and death, which it, as is well known, all together denies in the shape of the virginal-beautiful dead woman. Her uglifying, her embodying as a giant and her aggressive-sexual animation in Johanna Brummer and Brunelda is Kafka's method of restraining such habitual denial, of making it painfully visible and of pushing change.

III

Kafka's strategy of exhibiting gender difference in phallocentrism as a compulsion to heterosexuality and a taboo on homosexuality regulates not only character sketching and scene conceptions, but stipulates even the way of dealing with the individual linguistic expression as a literarization. Kafka's famous «taking it literally» on the one hand locates gender difference in the single word or plays out word pairs against one another in the sense of gender opposition. Perhaps the most beautiful example for this is the *uniform* that Karl gets fitted for at his entering upon service as an elevator boy. Here Kafka literarizes/translates right away full of allusions with «einförmiger Dienst [i.e. monotonous service]» (186) and makes the events in the Hotel occidental readable as a discourse on homosexuality. This end is served by the amplifying opposition «service suit»: «private suit», which is unfolded in the sense of homosexuality: heterosexuality, day: night, order: chaos, cleanliness: dirt, etc. The point of this setting in opposition is, for one, that it makes the very heterosexual orientation appear as the stigma – «No other [than the American Renell going out to visit women in his elegant private suit] had so completely excluded himself from the community of elevator boys» (206) –, and for another, that the gender opposition itself is brought to disappearance. For the private suit is only another form of uniform, the other of the same: in abysmal self-stigmatization, Kafka establishes here this uniforming by means of the «stain», the dirtiness, the «shameful spattering» – which in addition occurs during a cleaning process, the dormitory (!) cleaning (206 f.). «But even on Renell's garment [i.e. the private suit] there was a circular reddish [!] oil stain on the middle of the back, and in the city an expert [!] could have identified from this same stain the elevator boy [the homosexual?] in this elegant young man [the heterosexual?]» (264).¹⁹ The gender difference collapses, included and excluded become undecidable, on this side and on that side of the border become identical; heterosexuality camouflages homosexuality and vice versa, both stabilize phallic monism. Finally, it is not the in- or the excluded that is of prime importance, but rather the demarcation as a strategy of exclusion itself, which guarantees the preservation of power according to the motto: «*Divide et impera!*» The *elevator-service* becomes readable as a literal and at the same time un-masked *elevation* of the penis to the phallus and its quasi-ritual privileging to the differential element that constitutes the symbolic order.

The compound «uni-form» supplies Kafka with an additional instrument to expose such privileging of the one, the male, as a defense against irreducible heterogeneity.

At the hotel tailor's [Karl] tried on the elevator boy's uniform, which was externally fitted out very splendidly with gold buttons and gold laces, but when put on made Karl shiver a

¹⁹ In her book *Vested Interests. Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Marjorie Garber points out in the chapter on «Jew, Woman, Homosexual» that, in the Renaissance in the Italian city-states, the wearing of red or yellow distinguishing marks on the clothing was required of the Jews, e. g. yellow circles made of cord or an «O of red cloth» (p. 224).

In the conspicuously femininely connoted description of the uniform by means of little coat, little jacket, pleats, ornament and tightness over the breast (a female one?),²⁰ Kafka already pursues a “return of the repressed”; it is fully manifest in the divisibility of the body of the word «uniform» into «uni(o)» and «form» – at the same time a semantic opposition, which can be construed as follows from the context:

hence an oppositional series that corresponds to the opposition of feminine: masculine.

IV

²⁰ Viewed biographically, Kafka's obsession with the breast and breathing thus becomes manifest here long before the outbreak of the TB, whose female connotation is confirmed when Kafka later reflects on whether «the tuberculosis (comes) from the mother» (Franz Kafka: *Briefe 1902-1924 (Gesammelte Werke* Ed. by Max Brod). Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1958, p. 161).

The above-mentioned strategies of Kafka's for the unmasking and subverting of gender difference are all to be found in this famous first paragraph of the unfinished novel, which can therefore be regarded as a *legend*, a reading direction for the whole of the novel. The opposition of serving girl and goddess of liberty is for one responsible for this, but above all it is the defiguration of the femininity of the statue by means of the sword. As a sign of power, the sword extinguishes the torch of truth – accordingly the uncovering of the truth does not play a role anymore in Karl's conflicts with the authorities. With this substitution of attributes, Kafka continues with great consequence that which can be observed already iconographically in Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi's conception of the statue: namely the phallicizing of the allegory of freedom.²¹ Bartholdi expunged everything from the traditional sign arsenal that referred too much to womanliness/unmanliness and enriched the statue with attributes signifying manliness. In the place of the soft Phrygian cloth cap on the flowing hair of Delacroix's (and likewise of Böcklin's²²) he puts the hard diadem armed with points, the beaming garland of truth; the abundance of hair is disciplined into a knot, the bare breast is concealed with drapery and heavy garment. The allegorical conception has changed, compared to say Delacroix, from the Dionysian into the Apollonian. As prototypes of the Statue of Liberty can be recognized: the colossus of Rhodes – a statue of the sun god Helios – and the old testament patriarchs, for the tablet in the left hand, which is meant to symbolize the declaration of independence, reminds one of the tables of divine law which Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. A «decidedly phallocentric transformation»²³ of the allegory of freedom has therefore been attested to Bartholdi. Its refiguration by Kafka thus represents only the consistent closing point in this iconographic development. The stiffly raised arm with the sword is found on countless monuments of victorious generals. Its propping up on the female figure functions as phallic marker and opens the view to analogous disfigurements of the feminine in the masculine signification practice.

So the feminists gave prominence to the predominantly female nature of allegorical personifications in general.²⁴ One can speak here of a multiple disembodiment process. The definition of woman as a metaphor of man represents a first act of killing, as it were, the framing of woman into a work of art, i. e. her presentation as «literary character, painted female body or sculpture – as “cold statue of the body”»²⁵ – a second. By laying claim to the beautiful female body as sign for another meaning – an abstract concept, here freedom – is abstracted a third time from the body of the woman. In the allegorical personification the female body is thus desensualized and inanimated in an excessive way, for this body deliberately does not refer to a concrete woman, but rather to something else, to which it is meant to lend attractivity by means of its beauty. This instrumentalization of the female body presupposes the negation of woman as subject.²⁶ The female

²¹ I refer in what follows to the iconographical researches of Margaret Iversen: «Monuments, maidens and memory. Der Fall der Freiheitsstatue». In Sigrid Schade *et al.* (Eds.): *Allegorien der Geschlechterdifferenz*. Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Bohlau, 1994. pp. 127-135. Here pp. 131-135.

²² Arnold Böcklin: «Die Freiheit» (1881), cf. e. g. the representation by Sigrid Weigel: *Topographien der Geschlechter. Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Literatur*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990. p. 170.

²³ Iversen: «Monuments, maidens and memory». p. 133.

²⁴ Fundamental to them: Marina Warner: *In weiblicher Gestalt. Die Verkörperung des Wahren, Guten und Schoenen*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989 (Original: *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*. London 1985).

²⁵ I. e. «Textfigur, gemalter Frauenkörper oder Skulptur - als “Kaltstatue des Leibes”», cf. S. Weigel: «Exkurs ueber die weibliche Form der Allegorie». In: *Topographien der Geschlechter*. pp. 167-172. Here: p. 170.

²⁶ Nevertheless, it seems to me that the violence that manifests itself in the phallicizing of the statue by Bartholdi already displays a brittleness in the allegorization process, such as if the female body were no longer suited without further ado for putting into service, and even opposed to the purposes of illustration. One could evaluate this process of the clearly visible immigration of the phallic elements into the female image as an answer to the return of the repressed, as a strengthening of the defense that is typical of phallic monism. This return would then be tantamount to an irritation, to a softening of the rigid binary gender opposition, and with it – possibly – to the beginning process of subjectivization on the part of women.

Statue of Liberty – Kafka also has two gilded caryatids appear as her sisters in the stoker chapter (16) – is thus also an image of the «petrification of woman into the mute support of the system».²⁷ This way of putting into service now surprisingly makes the sublime goddess of liberty up in the breezes into the sister of the degraded serving girl down below: the dependency of them both is exposed by the sign of the sword. Once again Kafka reduces (seeming) oppositions to their common nucleus, like he unfolds on the other hand the splitting of the female image from the (pseudo) unity of the allegorical gestalt, a splitting that has as its corresponding counterparts the masculine attitudes of idealization – «So high» (7) – and depreciation, «gallantry and contempt».²⁸ By means of the substitution of the sword for the torch Kafka carries out a deconstruction of the allegory of the female form. The attribute of the sword, which contaminates justitia and liberté in an irritating way, refers thus at the same time to the process of how allegories are constituted as well as – self-referentially – to its subversion by the author. The sword – signaling pencil or pen – is finally also Kafka’s cryptic self-inscription.²⁹ This manifests the writing and speaking monopoly of the hegemonial gender at the same time as its suspension. For the self-inscription is not to be evaluated here as a claim to hegemony, since Kafka’s game with the attributes, the demonstrated iterability and citability of the sign, transcends the gender border and generates new contexts, e.g., as the study by Claudia Liebrand – in this volume – shows, artist’s concepts in the realm of those cast-out, threatening beings – Brunelda –, which during Kafka’s time besides Jews and homosexuals also women had to rank as. Contrary to the blind performance of his «hero» Karl Rossmann, *his author* Kafka pursues subversive travesty, i. e. «performance as resignification».³⁰ Quotation, repetition, reversal into the opposite are, to consult Judith Butler, a working-through of the habits that determine us.³¹ In this performance as resignification Kafka makes sure of his capacity to act, and constitutes himself time and again anew as subject. The apparently «manic» practice of Kafka’s of inscribing himself into his texts, seems to me to follow from this very process of subject constitution via writing-resignifying and its radical perspectivism. Kafka’s self-inscriptions represent therefore, as the inscriptions into his female figures show, an individual working-through without any claim to hegemony.

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²⁷ I. e. «Die Versteinerung der Frau zur stummen Stuetze des Systems», cf. S. Weigel: «Exkurs ueber die weibliche Form der Allegorie». In: *Topographien der Geschlechter*. pp. 167-172. Here: p. 170.

²⁸ Cf. Heidemarie Bennent: *Galanterie und Verachtung: Eine philosophiegeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Stellung der Frau in Gesellschaft und Kultur*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1985.

²⁹ That «Schwert» (sword) and «Feder» (in the double meaning of writing instrument [=pen] and bird’s feather) in actuality converge – both signalize masculinity and autonomy – is demonstrated by the comparison with Boecklin’s painting «Liberty» (1891): to her, who is enthroned high up on a cliff, the painter presses an overdimensioned bird feather vertically in the hand: the similarity with the writing quill is unmistakable here. The elevation into «the airs», the freedom of spirit, via birdflight or the colossal height of the monument, this phallic privilege is clearly travestied by Kafka, by the way, in the progress of the novel by means of the multiple usage of the elevator, the «lift».

³⁰ Cf. in addition to this Judith Butler: «Fuer ein sorgfaeltiges Lesen». In Seyla Benhabib/Judith Butler et al. (Eds.): *Der Streit um die Differenz. Feminismus und Postmoderne in der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1993. pp. 122-132. Here: p. 125.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

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John Updike's literary returns to his mother's farm

DONALD VANOUSE (*)

Many of the stories are autobiographical and closely related, whether the hero is called Jack or Clyde, Allan or William, David or Robert. We see this hero as son, as husband, and as father.

Granville Hicks

The real point is almost always one man's psychic and spiritual dilemma, and we invariably feel that Updike is that man.

Sanford Schwartz

A recurring subject in John Updike's writings is the farm in Plowville, Pennsylvania to which his family moved in 1945 when he was thirteen years old. The farm appears in the early stories of *Pigeon Feathers* (1962), the novels *The Centaur* (1963) and *Of the Farm* (1965), the poems of *Midpoint* (1969) and *Facing Nature* (1985), and in the stories recently collected in *The Afterlife* (1994). In the past few months, Updike has returned to the family farm in two *New Yorker* stories: «The Cats» (December, 1996) and «My Father on the Verge of Disgrace» ((March, 1997). Updike's mother had been born and raised in the sandstone farmhouse in Plowville, and she loved the land and the creatures of the farm. She brought her husband and child to live there with her parents. Although the stories, poems, and novels include recollections of Updike's father and his maternal grandparents, these works are most sustained in their focus upon his relationship to his mother and her role in his responses to nature, to his body and to his art.

Updike's recurrent writings about the farm might be seen as a compulsive returning to a place of unresolved emotional conflicts, but I see these literary returns to the farm in Plowville as his continuing engagement with what Christopher Bollas defines as the objects and events of «Self Experiencing»:

(*) State University of New York, English Department, Oswego, New York 13126, USA.

Those objects and experiences, keys to the releasing of our idiom, free us to experience the depth of our being and to re-experience the private logic of that culture created out of the interplay between our idiom, driven by the force of our instincts, and the unconscious system of care provided by our mother and father (*Being a Character*, 17).

Bollas examines the process by which «we consecrate the world with our own subjectivity, investing people, places, things and events with a kind of idiomatic significance» (3). This process seems to me directly pertinent to Updike's «returns» to the objects and experiences of the farm. Updike's writings about the farm in Plowville provide a valuable instance of autobiographical writings which record a continuing process of emerging self-awareness.

The early novel, *The Centaur* is an important expression of Updike's desire for a «consecration» of the objects of his childhood. The novel combines a «realistic» rendering of the events of three days in his adolescence with a sustained, parallel mythological depiction of the qualities of the characters. The title figure, the centaur, for example, is Peter's father, George, a high school teacher who is worried about his health; but, at the mythological level, he is Chiron, the centaur who is the teacher of the Gods and is suffering from a wound from a poisoned arrow. Peter's mother is both Cassie Caldwell, who has brought her family to live on a remote farm in Firetown and also the nature Goddess, Ceres. These mythological parallels express Updike's awareness or his desire to see that he and his family «moved on a firm stage resonant with metaphor...» (57).

Updike's uncertainty about the effectiveness of this version of Magic Realism, seems to be expressed in the character Peter's description of his paintings: «great streaks straining to say what even I am beginning to suspect is the unsayable thing» (201). Updike's novel is not a literary version of abstract expressionism, but a «brilliant and bold» adaptation of the pastoral elegy (Taylor, 95). It consecrates a world of adolescence as well as mourning the death of his father.

I respond to Updike's dream-like reflections upon nature, the family and the childhood encounter with the fear of death. Furthermore, I am pleased that Updike's narrator connects his adolescent fantasies to his troubled uncertainty about his art and to the «rather wistful, half-Freudian, half Oriental sex mysticism» (201) of his current love affair. In the parallels to the sacrifice which freed Prometheus, he is able to articulate an urgent oedipal question which informs the entire novel: «Was it for this that my father gave up his life?» (201). The narrator, Peter-Prometheus, questions his worthiness of the sacrifice made by Chiron, the Centaur (accepting death so that Prometheus could be freed); and Updike's novel becomes, finally, both a eulogy for his dead father and a celebration of the gifts he derived from their relationship.

Twenty-four years later, in a story published in 1967, «My Father on the Verge of Disaster», Updike returns to discuss his relationship to his father. He describes their ten-mile commute to the Shillington high school from the Plowville farm as time of becoming «a kind of team-partners in peril, fellow sufferers on the edge of disaster» (84). In this recent narrative, the father is not a figure of mythic sacrifice. The father and son are seen to have shared threats of social disaster which enabled the boy to learn that «part of being human is being on the verge of disgrace» (85). The father's comic knit cap, bizarre conversations with strangers, and startling actions become visible (to me) as shamanic performances of rites of initiation.

Updike's literary inquiry into his relationship to his mother is sustained over a larger number of works about the farm, and he addresses a wider variety of the issues of his identity. Perhaps the elusive retreat of this topic in my writing of this paper parallels Updike's own experiences as he repeatedly explores and returns to define that which is «unsayable» in his relationship to his mother. Once, when he asks his aging mother what exactly she hadn't liked about his father, she herself retreats beyond the edge of language. She answers, «Don't ask. It was unspeakable» (*Afterlife*, 136).

Bollas argues that the reader and the writer «intercommunicate» in a way which opens the reader toward the experience of his own identity:

To be touched by the other's unconscious is to be scattered by the wind of the primary process to faraway associations and elaborations, reached through the private links of one's own subjectivity (45).

Bollas says that he himself wrote a Ph. D. dissertation on *Moby Dick* because Melville's novel enabled him to «experience and articulate» his repressed memories of an encounter with a bloated corpse when he was nine years old (57-8). Updike's experiences at the farm in Plowville, Pennsylvania awaken associations in my own subjectivity, although they are rather less melodramatic than Bollas' encounter with the bloated corpse. Like Updike, when I was thirteen I also moved from a timeless childhood in a cozy urban neighborhood to what seemed an isolated rural entrapment. Mysterious adult decisions forced us to pack our beds and tables and chairs, to look for the last times through familiar windows, and move ten miles to a house on the crest of a hill overlooking a small Minnesota lake. Our only neighbors, we learned after a few months, were heavy drinkers who sometimes, in the middle of the night, became loud and violent. Such glimpses of the demonic are not a part of the mythic intensity reported in *The Centaur*. Updike expresses surprise, however, that he lived on the farm for only five years before going to college (*Afterlife*, 113). When I have talked with my sister – who is a year older – about our three years at the lake, we have shared a parallel amazement at the life-changing vastness of that brief time. Perhaps all adolescent displacements have a mythic intensity whatever the particulars. It is not, however, merely the images of rural harshness and beauty or the recollections of dismay and dislocation, but Updike's developing inquiry into the significance of his memories to growth and change, marriage and divorce, aging and death that triggers my recognitions. That «development» is the structure I now find – or perhaps I need to find – in the memories and the experiences addressed recurrently in more than 30 years of Updike's writings. More than a report upon the conflicts of his adolescence and maturity, these works seem to express the deepening of his relationships and his slow unfoldings of recognition.

The move to the farm, for young Updike, was not an easy transition. The issues of his discomfort and resentment, appear repeatedly. In *The Centaur*, for example, his sense of powerlessness and confusion is expressed in a reference to «the rural darkness that by some mistake had become our home» (210). In a sense, the entire series of «Plowville» writings explores the issues which enable him to see the move to the farm as more than an undefinable «mistake». In a story published in 1996, Updike identifies the primitive discomforts of the farm and recalls his certainty concerning his ultimate escape.

Moving [to the farm] when I was a boy had indeed felt like the loss of civilization. No phone, no electricity, no plumbing, a terrible regress.... In time plumbers came and rendered the outhouse obsolete, and the electric company marched tall, creosoted poles down through the orchard.... But I could never shake the impression that the farm was a trap from which my clear duty was to escape («Cats», 93).

In American literature, «escapes» tend to be the responses of runaways like Huck Finn who are in flight from the Widow Douglas and the burdens of civilization. Updike's «duty» to escape is not that of Huck, nor is it Rabbit Angstrom's flight from Janice and maturity in the novel *Rabbit Run*. In fact, Updike repeatedly identifies his mother – who brought him to the farm – as the source of his «duty» to escape. He expresses this awareness, for example, in the richly textured story «His Mother Inside Him»:

... all of Allen's ideas came from her, save the male, boyish idea of getting away.... Even that, in truth, had been her idea; she had once taken him up on the little hill, Shale Hill... and told him that he would leave all this, he would fly free (*Afterlife*, 245-6).

In an explicitly «layered» reference to this topic in his memoir entitled *Self-Consciousness* (1989), Updike notes vaguely that in Shillington «the assumption was in the air» that he would «get out». Then he annotates the comment with a passage from his own story «Flight» published in 1959: «The entire town seemed ensnared in my mother's myth, that escape was my proper fate» (*PF*, 52; *SC*, 110; see also *Afterlife*, 116). Was the assumption that he would get out largely «in the air» to Updike himself? Or is he – even in his flight from his mother and the farm – fulfilling his «duty» to her or to her «myth» of him? In *The Centaur* Peter is said to encounter the «luxurious space of freedom» in the

town, but Updike adds that he also is is frightened and resentful: «he could not go to his mother because she had placed ten miles between us; and this rejection... made me vengeful, proud, indifferent» (107). In this instance, the mother's decision to move to the farm is experienced as a forced separation, a form of maternal rejection. In the story «A Sandstone Farmhouse» this sense of displacement is more explicit: «on this farm he for the first time encountered something she apparently loved as much as she loved him» (*Afterlife*, 115). Perhaps we should see Updike's use of various names and narrative techniques for approaching such autobiographical information as experimental displacements, as testings of fantasies, guilts, and fears.

His mother's love of nature and her involvement with her own childhood losses made the farm into «the private paradise... to which she attempted to return» (*Afterlife*, 110). In the recent story «Cats», about the period after her death, he writes that his «mother had believed [the farm] to be a piece of lost Eden and wanted me to be a part of it for my own good» (101). The counter claims of his relationship to nature are identified in «His Mother inside Him»:

... he hated land - its weediness, its erosiveness, its taxability. Or rather he felt about land as about his mother, ambivalent, she having planted in him the idea that land was sacred (*After*, 244).

Updike's need to escape the farm is not, then, simply a rejection of primitive living conditions or a fulfillment of his mother's dreams, or even a desire to pursue the «modern» girls of Shillington (*Afterlife*, 112). The land was her pastoral landscape where he experienced deep conflicts between nature's demands and disorders and its sacredness.

In a number of works, for example, his hay fever and asthma are said to be triggered by the pollens of the weedy countryside and the dampness and the «allergen rich dust» of the sandstone farmhouse (*Afterlife*, 134). When he returns to the farm from England with his wife, for example, his mother hears him sneeze and says, «I bet he hasn't had hayfever since the last time he was home» (*Pigeon Feathers*, 113). In *Self-Consciousness*, Updike reports on the long history of his asthma attacks, including even the triggering of his separation from his wife and their four children by is allergic response to their cats (92-102). His mother even provides a psychologically-diagnostic passage concerning his hayfever in *Of the Farm*. During his visit to introduce his mother to his second wife and her son by an earlier marriage, the narrator is on a tractor mowing an overgrown hay field. Then he sees his mother and his new wife walking toward him:

The hair on the top of my head felt like hay, and I began to sneeze, suddenly, unstopably; every cubic inch of atmosphere seemed transparently crammed with pollen and, my vision choked, I nearly destroyed two quail....

«You poor child, has it been this bad all morning?»

«Has what been bad?»

«Your hayfever»

«It just started when I saw you.»

When you saw us? «She turned to Peggy [the wife] and said, «He says it's psychosomatic» (59-60).

That evening, his mother says, «Your eyes have that puffy look they used to get in goldenrod season» (*Farm*, 142-3). Her suggestion that he has psychosomatic symptoms is not repeated. But in *The Afterlife*, Updike's narrator identifies an emotional response to his mother and lists a variety of physical symptoms:

She made him nervous and nervousness became his mode. All the complaints of nervousness – skin rashes, stammering, asthma, insomnia – were his. It took him decades of living hundreds of miles beyond her reach to begin to breathe, to sleep, and to speak normally. (241)

It is not, then, simply the presence of dust, pollens and spores which has made Updike uncomfortable on the farm. His emotional bond to his mother seems to include a variety of anxiety-responses which

have made him uncomfortable in the sacred landscape and in his own body. Updike's essay on his stuttering links that problem of verbal expression to choking and to breathlessness when he feels the «pressure of perfectionism» [(*Granta*, «The Words», 155). In the book *Self-Consciousness* he says simply «pressure» (85)]. During a visit to his mother at the farm when she is in her eighties, he lies sleepless in his bed, however, and he discovers that they both now «had breathing problems» (*Afterlife*, 120). At this point, he recognizes that he and his mother share the symptoms of their imperfections.

His reference to «skin rashes» as expressions of nervousness points toward another aspect of Updike's identity which connects him deeply to his mother, as well as alienating him from nature and, in adolescence at least, making him ashamed of his own body. There are references to his psoriasis in *The Centaur*, «The Journal of a Leper», and his volume of memoirs. Peter Caldwell in *The Centaur* feels anxiety about the flakes of skin on his shirt, for example, and he struggles to tell his «secret» to his girlfriend (see 183-4). In that novel and in the chapter of his memoir entitled «At War With My Skin» (42-78) Updike notes that the disease is passed from mother to son. It is, then, one of the curses intrinsic to nature, but he adds that only nature, «the sun, that living god, had real power» to heal psoriasis (*Self-Consciousness*, 45). In the Whitman-butressed celebration and anguish of his collage-poem «The Play of Memory», however, he notes, with sympathy, that his mother expressed responsibility for his physical and emotional problems: «... you blamed yourself for my colds/ and my skin and my gnawing panic to excel» (*Midpoint*, 27). Later, in his memoir, however he recognizes that his psoriasis was not simply a grief inherited from his mother. He says that his psoriasis has forced him toward valuable compensations: «whenever in my timid life I have shown some courage and originality it has been because of my skin» (*Self-Consciousness*, 48). His mother's «gift» is a source of personal and creative power. After a long report on sunbathing and medicinal treatments for his skin, however, he concludes with a fierce, disturbing image which is reminiscent of *Dorian Gray*. When he becomes too old and ill to medicate his skin, he says, the psoriasis «will break out and spread triumphantly; in my dying I will become hideous, I will become what I am» (78).

In the works which emerge from the period around his mother's death, there are many references to nature as a teeming and even vile encroachment. Although he had earlier expressed personal discomfort in nature as a result of his hayfever and psoriasis, these recent examples contrast to numerous, earlier descriptions of vivid beauty and even of dithyrambic pastoralism such as the mowing scene in *Of the Farm* (see 58-9). In his recent story «Wildlife», for example, Updike presents a teeming landscape in Massachusetts where «natural beauty had verged on wildness and could overflow into violence» (*Afterlife*, 20). Not only is the «forest taller and coming closer» (25), but the «deer in their delicate and heraldic beauty had become as pestilential as rats» (22). The human species, itself, is said to «[cover] the earth like scum» (23). The story ends with the narrator's discovery that his son has the symptoms of Lyme disease, a plague resulting from the excesses of fecundity in nature – the multiplying deer herds of the late twentieth century. Similarly, in «Cats», Updike confronts a pestilential excess in nature. In this instance, the pestilential is a result of his mother's love of birds. She began to feed the cats on the farm so they wouldn't eat the birds, but then the cats multiplied into a ravenous pack of half-wild animals which obliged her to build a rubbish mountain with empty catfood cans. She had named many of the cats, and she remained attentive to the birds which had survived (92), but the narrator of the story is shown struggling to find a trapper from the humane society or a farmer with a gun who will get rid of the fecund felines. The owner of the local grocery says, «It was just nature kept getting ahead of her» (95).

In addition to reporting on the cats, Updike's stories written after his mother's death also include engagements with household objects which she cherished and he inherits. «The Brown Chest» includes documents, photos and other memorabilia, including some photos which Updike has already reprinted in *Midpoint* and discussed in *Self-Consciousness*. In the story «The Sandstone

Farmhouse» Joey, Updike's narrator, says that his mother's accumulations of plastic bags, tin cans, newspapers and balls of twine expresses

... a superstition that he had to fight within himself - the belief that everything had value. The birds in the trees, the sunflower at the edge of the orchard, the clumsily pasted-up valentine... from a distant grandchild - all have worth which might at any moment be called into account. It was a way of advertising that one's own life was infinitely precious.

This comment upon the mother appears to be a quite precise description of the texture of «particularizing» in Updike's style and even his returns to «save» the objects of his world. He does not directly comment upon his mother's own efforts or accomplishments as a writer, but in discussing her affirmations of the preciousness of the world – including the farm of her childhood – Updike seems to have defined his mother's contribution his literary style and many of his thematic concerns.

In his poem «Plow Cemetery», Updike says that he, at first, resented his mother's «heavy gift» of a plot in the Cemetery near the Plowville farm. At the end of the poem, however, he asks, «Why not? Where else? I will/ have been away for fifty years, perhaps,/ but have forever to make my absence up» (*Nature*, 13-4). In addition to this poem accepting a final gift of land, Updike's memoirs in *Self-Consciousness* include a chapter of genealogy addressed to his grandchildren and an essay on his response to the Vietnam War. In each of these works, Updike seems to identify the elements of what Christopher Bollas discusses as a «Generational Consciousness» (247-76). His exploration of his relationship to his mother's farm leads him to define a complex and richly textured acquiescence to his biological, emotional, and historical identity. In his «letter» to his grandsons, for example, Updike identifies «a» long family journey toward the Plowville community in the migrations of his mother and father's ancestors. Noting the grandchildren's European and African heritages and asserting that «we are all of mixed blood», Updike steps beyond personal history to affirm a deep and sensitive connection with broad issues of race and history (*Self-consciousness*, 211). Mary O'Connell might have usefully discussed this genealogy in her study of «patriarchy» in Updike. Such a linking of personal and political issues indicates that Updike now sees the Plowville farm in the sweep of a vast history. My response to Updike's writings about his mother's farm appears in the broad contours of this appreciation. I am pleased by his insights and his efforts toward acceptance of joy and pain and uncertainty in his continuing and deepening involvement with the objects of primary emotion. I seem to need such demonstrations of endurance and growth.

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Sir Gawain's mentors

FRANCES VARGAS GIBBONS (*)

Examined from the perspective of the Psychology of Adult Development,¹ the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* yields some interesting and useful insights. Variouslly interpreted as a vegetation deity, a fiend-like creature and even death itself,² the Green Knight is, in fact, one of literature's greatest mentors. He is a mentor in advance of his times, who is so intuitively in tune with the nature of his role, that he functions, not alone, but in conjunction with his wife³ to assist and guide the young Sir Gawain during his Early Adult Transition.⁴ The Green Knight and his wife,

(*) Universidad de Oriente, Cuman, Sucre, Venezuela.

¹ Adult development psychology began with Carl Jung and his interest in the entire life-cycle. In the 1950s, the psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson became the most influential theorist when he divided the life-cycle into eight stages of ego development. Roger L. Gould, Daniel J. Levinson, and Bernice Neugarten have continued working in this area, finding nothing which contradicts Erikson's theories and much that supports them. Daniel J. Levinson conducted extensive research, with both men and women which he reported in his books *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978) and *The Seasons of a Woman's Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996). He found that development continues throughout the life span, that developmental periods are linked to chronological age, that they occur in a fixed sequence, and that the sequence is not qualitatively hierarchical (one period is not higher or better than the preceding ones). The present study is Levinsonian particularly in spirit. Levinson believed (he died in 1994) that a greater understanding of the developmental needs of adults would force society to be more responsive and responsible in this respect. And he was a believer in the importance of good mentoring as well as a superb mentor himself.

² John Speirs, *Medieval English Poetry The New Chaucerian Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957). Speirs sees the Green Knight as «a recrudescence in poetry of the Green Man» who in turn is «a descendant of the Vegetation god of almost universal and immemorial tradition» p. 219. H. A. Krappe, «Who Was the Green Knight?» *Speculum* 206-15, considers the Green Knight «death itself... the Lord of Hades» p. 208, 215, while Dale B. J. Randall, «Was the Green Knight a Fiend?» *Studies in Philology* 57 (1960), 479-191, maintains that the Knight's behavior is «fiend-like».

³ The original mentor comes from Homer's *The Odyssey*, in two volumes, Trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984). And HE is initially a SHE. The Goddess Athena appears to Telemachus «in the likeness of a stranger, Mentès,» (Book I, L. 106-07) leaving him so transformed that he goes «among the wooers, a godlike man» (Book I, L. 324-325), and provokes this response from Antinous: «Telemachus, verily the gods themselves are teaching thee to be a man of vaunting tongue, and to speak with boldness» (Book I, L. 384-386). Athena reappears in Book II, L. 268, this time «in the likeness of Mentor», once more to address Telemachus with the «winged words» of mature and encouraging advice. The Green Knight seems to intuit that mentoring, like parenting, is best when done by both female and male.

⁴ Daniel J. Levinson (1978), and Peter M. Newton, «Daniel Levinson and His Theory of Adult Development: A Reminiscence and Some Clarifications», *Journal of Adult Development*, 1, 3, 1994: 135-47. In Levinson's theory, the human life cycle, is a skeletal structure formed by eras of approximately 25 years each. These eras are composed of periods through which the individual life structure evolves, and they are: the Early Adulthood Era, the Middle Adult Era and the Late Adult Era. Here we are concerned only with the Early Adult Era (20-40), specifically with the Early Adult Transition (17-22), a time in which the assistance of a mentor is crucial.

the Lady, succeed in helping Gawain move from complete dependence on his original group, to a stage where the apprentice adult can begin to build a Life Structure for entering Early Adulthood. Through purposeful confinement and a well orchestrated reenactment of the oedipal situation, they help Gawain mature into adult acceptance of human imperfection, sinfulness and perishability; making him realize the impossibility of clinging to his Dream⁵ of perfect virtue and flawless knightly service to the pentangle. In addition, the couple's complicitous behavior on Gawain's behalf also offers a model of marital contentment and loyalty, as well as an example of adult generativity.⁶

MENTOR AND MENTEE

Marie Borroff, who sees maturation as the theme of the poem, regards the Green Knight, not as an educator, but as a judge who represents both absolute and temporal reality. She comments that the Knight undergoes a process of «demystification» which makes him less green and awesome as Gawain's development progresses.⁷ The Green Knight's dual nature is, of course, a requisite. As someone who «represents an illusory perception» of reality but who also «belongs to the real world as medieval human beings experienced it and as we experience it» (Borroff, 108), Bercilak/Green Knight is perfectly qualified to be a mentor because he offers a perfect surface for the projection of youthful fears and wishes. And indeed, when he «hurtles in at the hall-door» (136) of Arthur's court it is in response to their child-like («childgered») yearnings for «some far-born tale» (93). A giant all in green with red eyes and bristly green brows (304), he is an answer to their equally green desire for the extraordinary, the portentous, the magical.⁸ Marie Borroff has also called attention to the suspension of the passage of time which lasts for eighty-five lines while everybody within, and outside, the poem «is made to stare fixedly at the Green Knight in admiration and amazement for over four minutes» (Borroff p. 144). All very reminiscent of what still happens when teachers meet their classes for the first time and there is some version of a prolonged instant of staring «fixedly», in dread, «admiration and amazement». Educators both in their teaching and mentorial modes are

⁵ Peter Newton, *Freud: From Youthful Dream to Mid-Life Crisis* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1995). Newton refers to the dream as «the visions in which youths invest their most passionate wishes» p. 3. Levinson (1978), capitalizes the word and states that in «early adulthood a man has to form a Dream, create an initial structure in which the dream can be lived out, and attain goals through which it is in some measure fulfilled» p. 331.

⁶ Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1982) and «The Human Life Cycle» the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1968) 286-292. Erikson defined generativity as the human concern with guiding the next generation and proposed that it was psychological in nature since it went beyond mere procreativity, and included productivity and creativity. He theorized that the strength to care emerged from the crisis of generativity and that failure to be generative resulted in a sense of stagnation and boredom. Levinson (*The Seasons of a Man's Life*, pp. 322-23) says: «Erikson's ego stage of Identity vs. Identity Confusion reaches its culmination during the period we identify as the Early Adult Transition. His stage of Intimacy vs. Aloneness starts in the early twenties and runs through early adulthood. His next stage, Generativity vs. Stagnation, starts around forty and characterizes middle adulthood, while Integrity vs. Despair is the ego stage of late adulthood.»

⁷ Marie Borroff, «Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: The Passing of Judgement», in Christopher Baswell, William Sharpe, ed., *The passing of Arthur* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988) p. 107.

⁸ Richard Hamilton Green, «Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection», *Middle English Survey*, ed., Edward Vasta (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965) p. 75. Green refers to the Green Knight's presence as an ominous intrusion of a figure from another world who cannot be ignored, however much he offends against the social proprieties of the occasion. He claims that Arthur had not asked for anything «so mysterious, so fatal as this». Perhaps, but the results indicate that the Green Knight was neither mysterious nor fatal. Since I am reading the Green Knight's supernaturalness as mainly his audience's projection, I believe that Arthur and his court got what they needed. If this is «an ominous intrusion» it is only so in the sense that Arthur's desires were unconscious. In this case, the Green Knight is from another world and definitely «offends against the social proprieties of the occasion».

awesome, nearly supernatural creatures because on them the young project their larger-than-life aspirations complete with their concomitant fears.⁹

The Green Knight is a superb diagnostician and exemplifier. In his first encounter with the awe-stricken youths, the Green Knight tests the young men and discovers the conventionality and collective nature of their Dream as well as their hermeneutic shortcomings. He declares his peaceful purposes and calls attention to his soft attire, and his lack of metal (265-71) and, holding a holly bob in one hand and an ax in the other, offers the young men a choice. He discovers that when given ample opportunity to use ambiguity to interpret a situation to their advantage, the young men respond predictably. Arthur chooses the ax, which commits them to combat with the Green Knight, instead of the branch of peace.¹⁰ And Gawain, claiming to be dispensable, on the grounds that his being Arthur's nephew is his only merit, uses the weapon. The Green Knight then brutally demonstrates to them what they have done. By having his head removed, he impresses upon them the peril in which they have placed themselves. And by surviving decapitation he illustrates what they are not. They are not supernatural and cannot survive beheading. They are flesh and blood, not solely desire and aspiration. And though this all inheres a promise of their eventually attaining the ability to figuratively lose their heads in intellectual pursuits: of some day being able to play «head games» safely, the promise is obscured by the horror of the moment. The Knight's division into two parts, unlike that of Bertran de Born's in Dante's *Inferno*,¹¹ is not a punishment. Instead it is a metaphor for the youths' psychological state - for their superegos operating in separation from the rest of the psyche and in disregard of the body. It is the representation of their immaturity which makes them so recklessly idealistic. The Green Knight's messages are directed most forcefully to Gawain who has cut the Green Knight's head off and must risk losing his own a year hence.

Through the loss of a head and the imperilling of another, Gawain becomes the Green Knight's mentee, his «head son»,¹² and it is specifically for Gawain that the Green Knight designs his educational program. He brings Gawain out of his original milieu. He removes him from the rigidified realm of knightly service, and out of the wilderness of unexamined peer pressure and of prescribed Dreams and responses, and places him in a series of intelligently controlled, ever-narrowing enclosures, with the purpose of increasing the concentration that is to lead to greater awareness and development.

⁹ Daniel Levinson (1978) believes that a mentor «represents skill, knowledge, virtue, accomplishment - the superior qualities a young man hopes someday to acquire. He gives his blessing to the novice and his Dream. And yet with all this superiority, he conveys the promise that in time they will be peers» p. 333. We believe that the mentor's superiority can be variously perceived by the young, and that the mentee's ambitions and fears can also determine the young man's general reaction to the mentor. That is why we find the supernatural, shapeshifting nature of the mentors in this poem so metaphorically satisfying.

¹⁰ R. A. Shoaf, «The "Synge of Surfet" and the Surfeit of Signs in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*», in Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe, ed., *The Passing of Arthur* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988) p. 153. Shoaf examines the role of the surfeit of signs in the succession of crisis of interpretation which occur in the poem. He sees Gawain's judgement, and also the judgement of Arthur's entire court, as having been corrupted by too many signs. This excess does not just challenge everybody but also makes it difficult for any of them to come with adequately critical interpretations of the signs to which they are so relentlessly exposed, thus causing them to choose the ax instead of the seeing of «alternatives of interpretation and prevents the young men from being aware of «the plurality of codes at large in the world» (p. 165). Shoaf's work prompted me to approach the poem as the story of superb mentors who, aware of this situation, set out to, among other things, establish conditions more conducive to the development and practice of more refined interpretative skills, which are to lead to wiser choices and behaviors.

¹¹ *Dante's Inferno* Italian Text with English Translation and Comment by John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 353. «Verily I saw, and I seem to see it still, a trunk without a head... and it held the severed head by the hair swinging in its hand like a lantern... to bring its words nearer us and they were: "See now my grievous punishment... I am Bertran de Born,... I made rebellion between the father and the son."» Canto 28, 122-142.

¹² This is a good place to recall that Athena, the first mentor, was born out of Zeus's head.

THE CONFINEMENT

The castle which «loom[s] overhead» (788) and seems «cut of paper for a king's feast» (802) is offered to Gawain as a place «to have in [his] power» (836), but turns out to be the first of the confining structures in which all of his actions are meticulously prescribed by Bercilak. The castle is the place in which Gawain is invited to «Tarry till the fourth day» (1075), and then explicitly asked to obey Bercilak's instructions to spend time with the Lady, and to lie in bed late (1090-99).

Bercilak welcomes Gawain in line 834, and by line 853 he has already brought him to:

...a bower where bedding was noble,/
With heavy silk hangings hemmed all in gold,/
Coverlets and counterpanes curiously wrought/
A canopy over the couch, clad all with fur,/
Curtains running on cords, caught to gold rings, (853-57)

These lines teem with the imagery of sumptuous imprisonment. The hangings are of silk, but the main trait of the fabric is negated by the modifier «heavy». The proximity of «hangings» and «hemmed», and the phrase «caught to gold rings» imbue the lines with a measure of menace and claustrophobia. And gold lends luxuriousness to the setting, but it does so by hemming and by encircling. Canopy and curtains complete the setting destined to surround Sir Gawain.

To the encircling of the castle and of the bed, the Lady is added to provide the additional enclosure of the feminine. She very much resembles the bed in beauty and opulence, and she makes it clear that her function is similar. She jokingly – but rather firmly – exercises her role as confiner: «I shall bind you in your bed, of that be assured» (1211), «I shall hem and hold you on either hand,/ and keep company awhile with my captive knight» (1224-25). But it is clear that this imprisonment, whatever its potential dangers, is not to be permanent or harsh. He is to be captive only «awhile» and it is not really a captivity but a «hemming». He is to be «captivated» by the Lady's charm, «hemmed» by her beauty and assertiveness into a defined border, into a clearly delineated boundary where his exposure can be relevantly limited. Gawain's new milieu is to be a confined one, and it will be «con un fin», with a purpose.

REENACTING THE OEDIPAL SITUATION

The Lady's husband, whom we know to be Bercilak/Green Knight but whom Gawain knows simply as his host at the castle, sets further conditions for this confinement. The host will go hunting everyday while Gawain lies late and rests, and he bids the young man: «agree now to this:/ Whatever I win in the woods I will give to you at eve,/ And all you have earned you must offer to me;» (1105-07). This «Exchange of Winnings» agreement is a call to alertness. The sensuous seclusion in feminine company has been drastically modified by this clear delineation of boundaries. Confronted with such a potentially treacherous situation, which for us post-Freudians is an obvious replication of the oedipal triangle, Gawain begins to behave defensively.

During his first bedroom encounter with the Lady, Gawain immediately begins to put his mastery of «the pearls of impeccable speech» to superb use. Rather than continuing to feign sleep, he determines it wise «To try her intent by talking a little» (1199), and he emerges triumphant because «With feat words and fair he framed his defence» (1282). The substance of this defense was the concept of generosity. In reciprocation, and artful imitation, of Bercilak's benevolence, Gawain wilfully construes the Lady's words and actions as coming «of [her] courtesy and kindness of heart» (1267). This occurs in almost complete disregard of what appears to be happening. The Lady has made it clear that they have the perfect circumstances for adultery: «And lo! we are alone here, and left to ourselves» (1230) and has proclaimed: «My body is here at hand,/ Your each wish to fulfill» (1236-38). But to no avail, for Gawain acts as though «love-talking» is whatever allows

him to refrain from an act of perfidy against his host, which could result in his destruction.¹³ He replies by claiming to aspire to her praise (1247), and by humbly reiterating that she is acting according to her «beneficence noble» (1264). The Lady relents, she has no way of combating Gawain's tenacious insistence on her generosity.

The Lady's very acceptance of Gawain's cunning deflection implies that there was enough vagueness in the language, and in the situation, to warrant his interpretation.¹⁴ And, indeed, there is an abundance of ambiguity regarding Bercilak's wife and her role. During the second bedroom encounter «Thus she tested his temper and tried many a time,/ Whatever her true intent, to entice him to sin» (1549-50). Her true intent has not been directly revealed by anyone¹⁵ and can, therefore, be variously construed. This is precisely what Gawain is «intent» on doing. He claims, during the second bedroom meeting, that he cannot talk the language of love «And touch upon its texts, and treat of its themes/ To one who «wields more power/ In that art» (1541-42) than he can ever expect to. And he escalates this type of behavior during their last bedroom episode.

On the third meeting, the Lady's bosom is all but bare, and her back as well (1741), and Gawain experiences the peril of feeling his heart swell «swiftly with surging joys» (1762) at the sight of her beauty. The Lady «made so plain her meaning» (1771), that «the man must needs/ Either take her tendered love or distastefully refuse» (1770-71). But «With a little fond laughter he lightly let pass/ All the words of special weight that were sped his way» (1777-78). And he went on, once more, to emphasize her generosity and his inability to reciprocate: «For your deeds, beyond doubt, have often deserved/ A repayment far passing my powers to bestow» (1803-04).

MENTOR SEDUCTRESS AND MOTHER

Gawain successfully capitalizes on ambiguity to give the ostensibly sexual advances his own unique interpretation. The Lady, having failed to entice him to adultery and disloyalty, and having also failed to tempt him into a sin of greed (he turned down the costly ring), proves that interpretations can have constitutive powers and becomes truly generous. Shapeshifting, as she necessarily has to, she offers Gawain the ultimate gesture of generosity; she completely fulfills the meaning of «gen» by becoming generative and giving him the gift of life. She takes off her girdle, an item which was wrapped around her reproductive middle, and causes Gawain to accept it by pointing out that it will prevent his death.

The girdle emerges from beneath the Lady's cloak to replace the pentangle because, as R. A. Shoaf has demonstrated, it ties a knot that can be loosened, the girdle acquires meaning «only as you tie it and untie it».¹⁶ The girdle's ascendancy indicates that the rigid devotion to knightly service is being replaced by the more flexible and realistic behavior of a mortal.

It appears that Gawain has learned to be more discriminating in his reading of the world around him and that he has become very adept at using his interpretative powers advantageously.

¹³ Although, of course, Gawain is also a true practitioner of courtesy since courtesy «is not praised as a virtue it is without cleanness and loyalty» J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1966) p. 50.

¹⁴ I fear that I may be paralleling Gawain's willfulness when I insist on seeing him as a modern fellow capable of original insight and novel responses. For courage to continue, I will appeal to A. C. Spearing who says that: Gawain «is a thoroughly self-conscious and articulate hero whose self-awareness is an essential part of the poem» *The Gawain Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 173-74.

¹⁵ The Lady's intent is not clearly revealed, but Bercilak remarks «And the wooing of my wife – it was all my scheme» (2361). Her intent is mentorship, as is his.

¹⁶ R. A. Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercialism in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984) p. 75.

As soon as one construes the girdle as mainly a gift of life,¹⁷ it seems clear that Gawain has been cleverly reading more than one dimension of the Lady's femininity and that he has privileged the reading which offered him what he most needed. Indeed, the Lady adumbrates, from the very beginning, the mentorial surrogate mother of the final moments of the last bedroom scene. Before she ever appears, it has been made clear that her husband is of middle age (844) which could justify the guess that she is no longer «as the flowers of spring» (866). When she does make her entrance, we are not told her age, only that the old crone was «older than she – an ancient» (948). So, when her youth is emphasized, it is in contrast with extreme old age. She is said to be fair, her beauty excelling even Guenevere's, but her freshness is wintry «...as the first snow fallen upon hills» (956).

But the probable age difference is not the strongest indication of the preponderance of the maternal in the Lady. Her deportment with Gawain is consistently and genuinely kind, and she accepts all of Gawain's responses with very good humor and grace, almost with tenderness. On their last meeting, she is arrayed as if determined to see the sexual prevail, but she «Throws wide a window» (1743) to point out that «The morning is so clear!» (1747). Her providing this aperture into the world of light (the Spanish expression for giving birth, «dar a luz», comes to mind) is a summoning to a new life. As the first hint Gawain has had of the outdoors since he agreed to seclusion in the castle, this is also a reminder of the pleasures to be had if he averts the present peril. Gawain, in dread «Of that day when destiny shall deal him his doom» (1752), «Breaks from the black dreams, and blithely answers» (1756). Of course, he has to contend with the Lady's partially unclothed self as the greatest danger. But the nakedness also stresses the value of life and its potential for precious «bliss beyond telling» (1764). And, in the context of her providing the aperture to light, the naked breasts could be construed as tokens of her nurturing impulses. All together, it seems that the Lady's releasing of the knot (1830), in pointed echo of the untying (and re-tying) of connection which is birth, is the act for which she has been preparing herself and Gawain in the «confinement» of bed and of bedroom.

THE NEW GAWAIN

However, this is not a physical birth, but rather, an intellectual and psychological rebirth, what we now simply call an education. Throughout the mentoring process, the physical has been systematically and insistently stressed to help Gawain realize the limitations which mortality imposes on us, to make it impossible for him to forget the finite nature of all life on earth. After each day of exposure to the sexual and maternal aspects of femininity, Gawain exchanges the kisses, his partial gifts of life, for carcasses: a deer's «hewn ribs, heavy with fat» (1378), a boar's huge head (1633), and a «foul fox pelt» (1944), all grim reminders of his own impending assignation with the ax. The hunting of these animals is an activity that Gawain has been barred from, he sees only the results. And, as has been pointed out, he has been «the object of the love-hunt of Lady Bercilak» and can only expect to survive if he becomes «not the prey, but the hunter».¹⁸ The

¹⁷ A. C. Spearing, *Readings in Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 197-98. Spearing admits that «it has been shown convincingly that women's girdles in folklore and in medieval narrative have "clear sexual connotations"». But he goes on to point out that the «"love of live" that caused [Gawain] to accept [the girdle] and break the Exchange of Winnings is undoubtedly connected, at a deep level, with the sexual instinct – the urge to reproduce», for which, of course, he first has to survive.

¹⁸ Stephen Manning, «A Psychological Interpretation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*», *Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed., Donald R. Howard and Christian Zacher (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) p. 284.

slaughtered animals call attention to what happens to prey, they illustrate what can befall any living being as a result of insufficient skill and/or faculty.

Gawain's fighting skills have never been in question but during the period of secluded education he has learned, from his own reaction in accepting the girdle, that he wants to preserve his life. This is why «his shoulders shrank a little from the sharp iron» (2267), as he finally confronted the Green Knight's ax. This also brings him to the momentous admission «But if my head falls to the floor/ There is no mending me!» (2282-83). And it all leads to the confession (and acceptance) of his human limitations, to his acknowledgement of the fact that his desire to live led him to cowardice and other behavior not «belonging to knights» (2379-81).

No longer a mere knight but a complex and self-protective human being, Gawain has such a desire to live that, though he seems not to connect the green girdle with the Green Knight (and the Green Knight with Bercilak), he wears the green girdle in full view, «... so goodly to see,/ That against the gay red showed gorgeous bright» (2035-36)¹⁹ and the Green Knight sees it and declares it his property: «For that is my belt about you, that same girdle» (2358).

By the time of his assignation with the ax, Gawain has already made the two important choices of interpreting the Lady's behavior defensively and of accepting from her the gift of life. His third choice, of visibly wearing the girdle, proves equally crucial and indicates that perhaps Gawain has succeeded in connecting the Lady with the Green Knight and with Bercilak and in intuiting their purposes. For it is the Green Knight's claiming of his girdle which provides the opportunity for a happy conclusion to this mentorship relationship.

The girdle speaks to Bercilak the language of kinship by identifying Gawain as his and the Lady's surrogate son, but it also reveals the young man's sin of failing to restore the item in the Exchange of Winnings. Transformed into a sort of «fig leaf», the girdle divulges the young man's infraction. In a gratifyingly enlightened scene, whose echoing of the Biblical genesis merits separate treatment, the poem does something very advanced for its time: Bercilak, placed by this «fig leaf» in the unenviable position of ultimate judge, rises above the strictures of his role and does not reject the errant child. On the contrary, Bercilak accepts and comforts his young pupil and surrogate son because, as he so well knows, it was Bercilak's scheme (2360), and Gawain only sinned because he «loved his life» (2368). Furthermore, when Gawain responds with harsh self-evaluation and sincere self-condemnation, Bercilak laughs and exonerates him, he declares Gawain «polished as the pearls of impeccable speech» (917).

The girdle has gone from female garment to fig leaf and, as his and the Lady's gift, is the ligature which Bercilak uses to preserve and symbolize the connection between him and Gawain. For Gawain, it becomes the symbol of the new Life Structure which will take him from the Early Adult Transition into the Early Adult Era. For Gawain, the girdle eventually ceases to be need and becomes choice as it is knotted loosely, in ornamental fashion, under his heart. No longer a life-protecting device, but a baldric, this complex knot, which joins Gawain with his surrogate parents, will unite (among an overwhelming number of things) Gawain's idealism and his mortality; his superego with the rest of his psyche. And it will also connect Gawain's new self with Arthur's court in a situation, not just of independence, but also of relative preeminence as they all at court decide to wear «a belt worn oblique, of a bright green/» (2517) in Gawain's honor.

¹⁹ Stoddard Malarkey and J. Barre Toelken, «Gawain and the Green Girdle», *Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) p. 243. The authors maintain that «the fact that Gawain wears the girdle in plain sight over his surcoat helps objectify... his defection from the virtues of the pentangle. «I don't believe that he defects completely. He just becomes more humanized now that his adolescent sense of invulnerability is gone. His relationship to his knightly virtues is now more complex, it includes the recognition that infraction and death are inescapable.

MARITAL CONTENTMENT AND GENERATIVITY

In addition, the girdle also represents and broadcasts the relationship between its two original owners, Bercilak and the Lady. The girdle as «fig leaf» did not just call for Gawain's indictment, but even more so for the Lady's. This very intimate article of clothing, wrapped as it was around the body of a younger and (presumably) more attractive male, was charged with an awesome semiotic power. Conventionally, it was so provocative a thing that any man could have «lost his head» at the sight of it. But since Bercilak and his Lady have been accomplices in the young man's education, the girdle is simply recognized and acknowledged as a emblem of their connection.

Bercilak and his Lady have a very special type of entwinement, of linking. In their laboring together on Gawain's behalf, the Lady and Bercilak are joined by a very flexible nexus. Their enlightened complicity in the pursuit of Gawain's education is like a contrapuntal composition; their two independent melodies play together to produce a work in which the original tunes soar in unison, but in complete distinctness. This music of male-female complicitous generativity, so sadly rare on the planet, pervades and embellishes the poem.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight tells the story of a young man's successful journey into the Early Adult Era, with the help of two superb mentors. As a narrative of adult development, the poem goes beyond charm and beauty, and becomes exemplary. For the two mentors, so obviously contented in their own relationship and situation, devote themselves to Gawain's development disinterestedly,²⁰ and with superb mentorial wisdom. They succeed in transforming Gawain, who originally defined himself as simply Arthur's nephew, into a more individuated being; into a young adult who is so aware of his frailties, and so sincere and stern in his self-evaluations, that he deserves and commands the respect and admiration of his own original group and is worthy of their emulation.

²⁰ Although, if one agrees with Erikson that failure to be generative leads to boredom and stagnation, one could also say that Bercilak and the Lady have their best interest in mind.

A relation of suspicion: Talents, interests, callings, and the problem of professional «Fit» in A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects*

CATHARINE GABRIEL CAREY (*)

In the mid zone between the angels and the insects that give A. S. Byatt's novella its title stands the protagonist's consuming interest, lepidoptery, and his profession, evolutionary naturalism. It is William Adamson's gift to recognize, name, capture, examine, and mount each species of butterfly or moth, handling the scaled specimens as delicately as a beautiful woman, in fact, handling them *instead* of a beautiful and suitable woman, until he meets Eugenia Alabaster, daughter of his patron and host. «Naturally» then William extends his trained gaze to the angelic Eugenia, enshrouded in her pale gown the very morphos of her namesake butterfly, and just as naturally his finely honed skills of observation fail to screen the unnatural lure of this rare object since, as he finds, «things are not what they seem».

My attention was arrested by how the character William falls in love through love, that is, he responds to Eugenia's beauty and plight (Her fiancé, has died before the wedding could take place.) through, by means of, in terms of, as, an extension of the personal gift that is placed at the core of his personality, even though this gift has not yet fully established him within the naturalist's profession. To introduce William Adamson is to introduce his considerable visionary gift that extends the analog between the biological and social sciences, along with Adamson's aspirations to greatness within his field of endeavor – again, poised mid-way between possession and execution.

I would like to perplex this sense of one's giftedness as a transitional object to which one bears a historic and future relation and which, because giftedness necessarily rests on the possession of actual talents and the mastery of certain tasks as well as a fantastic conception of self, is like a transitional object: initially unproblematic, personally enjoyable, and deployable entirely at the possessor's whim, until such a time that it is discovered or imagined to bring distinction or monetary gain. Just when does predilection shift into original style and what are those ghostly phenomena that we think of as the call of vocation and intimations of greatness? I am going to suggest that the negotiation of arranging for one's reception into a chosen profession, the way one

(*) The University of Massachusetts, English Department, Amherst MA 01003, carey@english.umass.edu

goes about calling attention to one's gift, is the imagined negotiation with parents – perhaps long dead – who, of course, were never, are never, properly appreciative of our perceived special gifts.

When I looked up the category of lepidoptera, I realized that technically it encompasses the less showy moths along with the brilliantly colored butterflies we think of as constituting the phylum, posing for us visually two distinct psychological types that signify with premonitions of greatness: those that shine brightly with the promise of talent not fully evidenced and those great talents whose work receives no credit. How lightly the perceived gift is carried or how heavily it weighs on the personal life depends, I suggest, much less than we think upon outward recognition and more on the semi-conscious reconciliation of the twinned wishes to keep this self-object for one's own pleasure *and* to circulate its currency in wider cultural commerce; how the transitional object transides into a reparative cultural object or is hoarded as a personal fetish is the subject of the unfolding of giftedness, even genius – and what a genius Byatt was, and Nabokov before her, to lend us as the image for giftedness, the ephemeral moulted butterfly, having incubated its antennae, wings, and a tiny folded up proboscis, precariously poised for plunge or flight.

RIVERS OF BLOOD

The first stage of a marked giftedness is often its premature display, termed precocity. We do not exactly know the degree to which environmental situations and the materials at hand are accidental determinants of broader, more «polymorphously perverse» talents, and the determinants of the social or scientific visionary with whom I am concerned in this paper particularly elide the nature/nurture debate. We – or I – certainly do not want to engage in the atavistic superstitions of a convergent consciousness. Could we instead posit that wherever there is intimation of a special intelligence there is a child whose emotional stance and epistemology is unfamiliar and therefore distressing to adults, because the young knower does not like most children want to take another's word for anything, wants to independently gather information *at the source* and insists on assembling it *for herself*.

This native distrust of parents, family members, and teachers as dispensers of information and the «dirty little snooping» that results has been called by Aristotle and Melanie Klein *epistemophilia*; indeed psychoanalytic issues of self-perception relating to the epistemophilic personality and search are the subject of my dissertation study. One of the most distinguishing features of the epistemophile is the fiercely maintained, often compulsive dedication to the search for a particularized fragment of information or truth, but – oddly – also an unconsciously determined avoidance of the very searched for object. What has been repressed in the search becomes the unthinkable, the unrecoverable, the haunting, taunting split-off object. My particular contribution to this phenomenon of epistemophilia, which has received little treatment in the psychoanalytic literature as other than simple sexual curiosity standing in opposition to the sublimatory process, is to suggest that Klein's infant paradigm of primary envy and retaliation fantasy towards the source of nurturance, perceived to be withholding, is the first relation of suspicion (the paranoid-schizoid position); doubts and fears about parental dispensing of information, I suggest, follow along the milk/food hoarding/poisoning infantile psychic trajectory, contributing to and resulting in the epistemophilic personality, which preserves archaic suspicion, often to the point of paranoia, at its center.

The film version of *Angels and Insects* is quite marvelous in capturing the display of the human female species and its effect on William's ability to work; however, it omits the scanty but evocative details of childhood determinants to greatness we learn about in the novel. Like Picasso's father, William has a father who apprentices him, with whom he works alongside, and whose profession he steps into, at least initially. Unlike the elder Picasso, Mr. Adamson, while ambitious for and certain of his son's rise to the greatest social and professional status, does not have a specific professional goal in sight for him; although Adamson Senior also has experienced a rapid rise to bourgeois comfortability, he is not engaged in the educated sphere of the creative arts but rather is a butcher who carves up - with great anatomical precision we are to understand in case we

have failed to appreciate the butcher's artistry – carcasses for both working class and landed gentry's dinner tables. The peculiar aspect of Mr. Adamson the butcher and young William's upbringing is that the muscular butcher cowers before the evangelical sermons of hell fires and damnation so fiercely prevalent in the Yorkshire region:

He took pleasure in his craft, anatomising the skin, in delicate knifework and artistry with sausage and pies, and he was dreadfully aware of Hell fire, whose flames flickered at the edge of his daily imagination and consumed his dreaming nights.¹

Throughout the text, as in Freud's writing, Williams's mother is spectral,² present only through inference, which might explain the father's extra-investment in his sons and William's avoidance of romance in the name of his work, the classic epistemophilic avoidance.

A notable absence provides a rich field – the «meat» in this case – for speculation, often more productive to work with because not defended by rigid idealization. The picture of a boy of eight following his father through the wake of the slaughtery of domestic animals, hearing the cries, smelling the smells, of death in the abattoir, that is moreover deliberate death, causes us to question the father's motives in exposing the child so prematurely to such harsh experiences. This premature introduction to carnage could be viewed as a kind of slaughter of the innocents, upsetting the child's secure confidence that things should be as they are in the pre-determined course of benign nature. There is also the child's identification with the animals selected to be slaughtered, usually young animals of a comparable age, to be considered in tandem with the unknown mysterious causes for his own special grooming and what this might signify in terms of his father's religious fanaticism; the scene imagined from the child's point of view acquires resonances of the Abraham and Isaac story – and we find later in the novel that William has failed the sacrificial test of surrendering his will to an authority he cannot fathom, which leads to deep questions about whether consciousness has or will evolve along with other life forms. Because he dares to think these thoughts in opposition to his father's fearful faith, his relationship to his father, indeed to God the father, has not been spared. Like Isaac this precious son has not been severed, but unlike the biblical son, William's failure to join his father in his declaration of faith has resulted in a final severance of the filial bond.

The trade of butchery views flesh as meat, and we are probably all aware of the term meat is a stand-in term for genitalia, both male and female (as in «meat-market», a place to pick up quick sexual pleasure, the body quickly stripped and discarded). At an early age William, as a butcher's apprentice, would have been confronted with the practices of animal breeding, castration, pregnancy, lactation; presumably he acquired the detachment necessary to look coldly and analytically at animal sexual function, and the analytically detached question of whether human sexuality was any more than a by-product of the types of organs he disposed of probably arose.

I find it most fascinating for the purpose of teasing apart William's epistemophilia to dissect his memory of working by his father in «rivers of blood», especially as these «rivers of blood» might explain the disappearance of the mother. The first explanation for this hyperbole, «rivers of blood», could be the child's catching sight of the mother's menstrual flow, and the flow of the menses would have been doubly frightening if the mother, an evangelical like the father, viewed the monthly flow as shameful evidence of sexual aliveness or with relief because an unwelcome pregnancy had been averted. Since the mother is so markedly absent from all discussion, death could also have occurred in childbirth, a bloody affair for a child to witness, or worse yet through disgraceful self-induced abortion. William does mention to Eugenia that he knew a lady whose despair over her lack of goodness drove her to suicide. Was this «lady», apprehended from a respectful distance like Eugenia, his recalled mother?

¹ Byatt, A. S. (1992). «Morpho Eugenia», *Angels & Insects*. New York: Vintage, p. 10.

² Sprengnether, M. (1990). *The spectral mother: Freud, feminism, and psychoanalysis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 5-6.

Etymology in contrast to the blood letting of butchery is in any event a comparatively bloodless task. Like the insects, the Alabasters are depicted as virtually bloodless, an extreme of orderly dispassionate leisure, except when breeding (and the second Mrs. Alabaster has been exceptionally prodigious in producing eight children, doubly fertile with a set of twins in the nursery). The inhabitants of Bredely Hall to William are desexualized figures of the idealized other, examples of the properly bred English diametrically opposed in his consciousness to the display of sexual appetite he witnessed – and occasionally engaged in – in the Amazon, also a river of blood seething with exuberant life forms, chaotic murderous plots, and a pulsating primitivistic tempo that informs William's rather sterile consciousness as he classifies Harald Alabaster's eclectically assembled collection. Not once in his chore of inspection and assemblage does he inquire into the source of its neglect and disorder, a neglect and disorder of emotion in the household, as nefarious as an Amazon evening and much more insidious.

A CLOUD OF BUTTERFLIES

If there is a call to vocation, there is the siren's call away from it as well, but I want to suggest the intermediate role of the fruitful digression for the crystallization of giftedness, in this case, the establishment of William's visionary question.

Clearly, the naturalist, although he studies it, is menaced by the instinctual. By banishing anger, sexual passion, and retaliative envy in favor of the intellectual, he dwells in a dead state of deadened affect, labeling chloroformed bodies of insects. I have used Anthony Storr's connection of creativity to personality states to arrive at a label for Adamson;³ he displays the potentially schizoid symptoms of detachment from the body, a disturbing indifference to relationships, preferring to put his trust in the concepts of the mind, and a certain external air of superiority, coupled with inner cowering before his feared persecutory objects. In addition William is an obsessional, a «control freak». In his work, he cannot let go of that last detail; neither can he dance, propose, or simply sock the obnoxious stepbrother Edgar in the jaw.

Storr suggests that the creativity of the schizoid state will be tied to an earlier stage of infant aggression, the biting/sucking phase. Adamson very nicely recreates the «double-bind» frame of the prohibition against such an attack as he settles into the Alabaster household. The ladies, he thinks, are too pure, pregnant, or busy with the caretaking of infants to receive the discharge of his aggression; the father too remotely preoccupied with paramount religiosity, and the siblings perceived to possess advantages over him – bigger, richer, more traditionally manly. He also senses the intricate workings of the domestic staff whose household schedule he must not disturb – this is to hurt the innocent and most vulnerable. In short, he cannot attack those on whom he must depend, and in the «Faustian bargain»⁴ he strikes instead, asceticism is exchanged for the single pleasure of professional work. As William works, he identifies more and more with the hired help who scuttle insect-like among the corridors, delivering themselves of their various duties. William's day becomes filled with the children's nature walks, his cataloguing work, and sounding board to Harald Alabaster, his dream of launching the promised new expedition indefinitely put off.

William's passion, however, erupts in the form of an obsession with Eugenia, resulting in the supreme expression of his creative gift. She first gets his attention because of her aura of inconsolable sadness; he, of course, wants to restore her liveliness, her interest in life. If Storr sees creativity as defense, Susan Kavalier-Adler deems it actual pathology, for many female artists at least. She connects the artist's compulsion to create to «pathological mourning» for the split-off

³ Storr, A. (1972). *The dynamics of creation*. London: Penguin.

⁴ Gardner, H. (1993). *Creating minds: an anatomy of creativity seen through the lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi*. New York: Harper Collins, p. 386.

internalized opposite-sex parental object, who is imaged as an unsatisfied «demon-lover colored by [in this case, the mother's] personality».⁵ The compulsion to create may well include a compulsion towards persecutory reenactment as an artistic means of possessing this more distant parent. Further, we have Storr's permission to ungender Kavalier-Adler's concept of compulsive creativity, since schizoid impulses belong to the pre-oedipal, pre-gender phase.

The work that has not been done on the origins of a special creativity then is to imagine the undifferentiated child's desire for «being with» the opposite-sex parent, in this case the unapproachable, unspeaking statue-like mother, that she become again a vivacious desirous self, like himself able to engage in the potential space of imagining self: the old daydream of circulating improvised and co-created talents and performances between the «simpatico» selves of the originary «nursing couple».

William's orchestration of «the cloud of butterflies» is the attempt to restore the circulation of affect between lost loved object and himself. Visually and emotionally he is able to create what Christopher Bollas terms the «aesthetic moment».⁶ One of the notable aspects of the scene is his «aesthetics of care», with which he fosters the hatching of the larvae, importing them with their indigenous foliage and fostering their incubation and release with great patience, wisdom, and empathy for their struggle. Another is the element of surprise, difficult because it involved simultaneous timing of the hatching embryos, but it is the delicacy of William's timing, his consideration for Eugenia's tolerance, that allows him to press his suit. His magnum opus is a tribute of exquisite appropriateness to his beloved, assuring her of her place in the natural order as the delightfully colored insects settle on her skirts and she twirls in a moment of suspended time where he can admire her admiring her own beauty and taking hope.

Bollas explains the conditions under which the aesthetic moment can be transformational: when it supplies a mechanism for integrating the unintegrated raw-feeling aspects of the self. In this aesthetic moment it is affirmed that William has a need to love, even to worship, a female object, and further he needs to be appreciated, respected, and revered *for what he knows how to do*. Eugenia provides a momentary focus so that he can relax his hyper vigilant scanning function, a resonant object around which to arrange the amorphous landscape, which he perceives animistically as teeming layers, a relaxing of mistrusts and easeful entry into the beauty of the natural world.

The failure of the aesthetic moment to hold its transformation is tied to the emergence of William's visionary question. The evening session in the conservatory is held with a cloud of moths rather than butterflies, and Eugenia is repulsed by the male moths that cling to her skirts and bodice, as if she cannot stand the closeness of the male creature to her secret, part of which she confesses: that she is not fit to love, that Captain Hunt killed himself before their marriage date, and then interestingly, that she would accept William as her husband in Captain Hunt's stead. Moths are nocturnal creatures, known to denude clothing, duller in color than butterflies, and attracted to heat. William's self-metaphor is that of a moth irresistibly drawn to the source of heat, about to perform suttee over the desirable Eugenia. He had noticed a small insect-like, almost vampirish bite on Eugenia's cleavage, a puncture wound that serves the function of Roland Barthes' *punctum*,⁷ the flaw that lets one inside the perfect picture so that it can be seen. At the moment of his engagement Adamson becomes perversely preoccupied with Eugenia's motives, what purposes might lurk behind her strange reserve, and how these might have analogs in the natural world or to the more licentious culture of the Amazon.

⁵ Kavalier-Adler, S. (1993). *The compulsion to create: a psychoanalytic study of women artists*. New York: Routledge.

⁶ Bollas, C. (1993). The aesthetic moment and the search for transformation. In Peter Rudnytsky (Ed.), *Transitional objects and potential spaces: literary uses of D. W. Winnicott* (pp. 40-49). New York: Columbia University Press.

⁷ Barthes, R. (1981). *Camera Lucida: reflections on photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Will and Wang.

This «double-consciousness» (28) is emblematic of the «Janusian thinking» described by Albert Rothenberg in his work on geniuses.⁸ What clicks after the scene with the moths where William, not so pleasurably engaged now to Eugenia, finds himself immersed in the Alabaster hive is a linkage of the conundrum of his own natural selection as a gifted scientist, a butcher's son now selected to join gentry through marriage, to the natural plan of selective breeding by which the other, the foreigner, the outsider, even in «civilized» countries like Great Britain, is colonized for evolutionary breeding purposes. The object-relations implication of such a question is not impossible to detect; what William questions is the intent of the nurturant mother, nature as maternal in this instance: Is there a developmental price to pay for the sensual accommodation of infancy and the delicious pleasure of sexual exchange, and is the price of such seductive entrapment one's most precious possession, the surrender of one's gift?

THE SINKING SHIP

Caught up in the fecundity (five children, two sets of twins) that results from Eugenia's summons to the marital bed, William experiences a test of his belief in his giftedness, «the frustration of lying fallow».⁹ Instead of succumbing to the culturally prevalent myth of sexual drain that makes creative work unlikely, he employs his double-consciousness to draw parallels between his present function as breeder of baby Alabasters to the habits of the slave-making ants, whose colony he studies with the nursery group, accompanied and advised by the sardonic Miss Matty Crompton, a «hanger-on» like himself. One of William's reactions against an underestimation of his intellectual worth, as more than a contributor of fresh genes, (Gedo 40) is to begin to snoop around the estate, and this includes the hushed comings and goings of the help, whom he has realized are privy to the secrets of the key players of the household. Diminished and trapped by his role as father to children who do not resemble him, he is increasingly apt to find fault with the inhabitants of this province of artifice that has mired him. Unsuspecting, he had boarded a sieve of a ship home and had lost all his specimens and almost his life; this time he smells (but cannot yet holler) «rot».

It is in the nature of the factotum to command the scene without fanfare, and Mathida's «take-over» of the direction of William's intellectual unfolding happens without his knowing that he has been commandeered. Darwin's enigmatic hiatus on the situation of humans in the evolutionary process acted as a provocative challenge to William;¹⁰ like Freud he was willing to investigate the material of his present life, but not without painful perceptions of his inefficacy. The gestation of a new precept is fraught with vulnerability, recalling the time period immediately after birth; the factotum, like the mother, comes to the rescue to tenderly attend the birth and nurturance of the new idea, a tricky dynamic since the creator at this vulnerable point both needs isolation in which to work but is also in great need of another's belief in the importance of the work. (Gardner 388) Matty adds in her perspective through her fine drawings and humorous caricatures, but she also gives William two other valuable perspectives: 1. that he, like herself, can make use of this period of lying fallow if he looks to, not beyond, the material at hand and 2. that he must get himself in position to leave, indeed, that circumstances will allow him to escape Eugenia designs.

Creativity is problematic within paradigmatic work; William rediscovers the usefulness characteristic of the second son, not letting his experiences go to rot, but rather employing them in a speculative work on evolution and theology that is both a reasoned reply to his father's theory of

⁸ Rothenberg, A. (1979). *The emerging goddess: the creative process in art, science, and other fields*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 138-206.

⁹ Gedo, J. (1996). *The artist and the emotional world: creativity and personality*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 109-124.

¹⁰ Beer, G. (1983). *Darwin's plots: evolutionary narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century fiction*. London: Routledge, p. 62.

personal damnation and an answer to Sir Harold's morbid clinging to creationism, in fact, a new domain situated between them. William and Matty's forms for discovery allow for the sensibility and issues of the very young child facing cultural givens: drawings, fables, digressions into the personal, and out of the recall of those primary questions, one of which is why the mother needs and wants children other than that child himself, comes the urge to purify the premises of those givens. (Gardner 1)

What allows William his brilliant moment of extrapolation from these freshly viewed premises, however, is a glimpse of the actual source of corruption in the household, not so subtly arranged by Matty. First on a ruse she has him summoned to witness Eugenia in torpid love-making with her stepbrother Edgar, and then, to let him know she knows, she arranges her cards to spell it out to him, «incest». «No», his cards reply, «insects». She makes him reverse his myopic defense; incest it is. «Clever Matty» (36) who has forced William to take the developmental leap away from emotional dependency on Eugenia that expresses itself as guilt and obligation to face the unthinkable reality of her betrayal, Matty's actions a cruel but necessary spur to the launching of his talent. Philosopher Jonathan Lear, dissecting the psychoanalytic implications of the experience of love, suggests it is just this «kick in the butt», justifiable in the name of potential, that is a «developmental force» in both individuals' lives.¹¹

Breakthrough is the paramount moment for the genius, and it calls for a massive replacement of every element in the genius' thinking and plans. If the Alabaster's through their in-breeding are doomed to extinction, William's life need not then be usurped. He has received vindication of his powers through the publication of his book and now has a partner who also craves the «fruitful asynchrony» (Gardner 381) he lives for. In Matty – Matilda's – attic (a sane woman in this attic), he takes a quantum leap towards an intelligence that includes a bodily intelligence, although there lurks a shadow of suspicion as she accompanies William on the desired expedition and presumably into professional status. She is the proverbial spider who has «coat-tailed» herself into the profession («The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.» Proverbs: 30: 24-8 17) – and what part of Williams's gift will this insect eventually care to extract? – but that also is part and parcel of the childhood struggle to possess and manage the ephemeral capital of one's own giftedness: to lend it, to borrow against it, to refresh it, to retaliate with it, to bestow it where it can be properly appreciated for what it is – and what it is not.

¹¹ Lear, J. (1990). *Love and its place in nature: a philosophical interpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

Id, Ego and Super-Ego in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale: Madame Eglentyne and the Jews

CAROLE STONE (*)

The question of anti-Semitism in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* has become a major critical issue in post-Holocaust criticism.¹ Yet, for the most part scholarly work on the Tale has not dealt with the issue of the Tale's anti-Semitism psychoanalytically.

Among the few psychoanalytic studies is Maurice Cohen's in which Cohen views Chaucer's Prioress as an anal character and her tale as anal-sadistic and an anti-Semitic fantasy. He discusses the compromise between the Prioress's repressed genital impulses and her reactivated infantile sexuality expressed in her hatred of the Jews. Denied reproductive rights in the convent, the Prioress is attracted to a tale of fantasy murder of a child. The child becomes a sacrificial object, a surrogate for the child she has sacrificed to the church in recognition of her chastity. Cohen points out, as well, that the Jews in the tale «function as images of the phallic father, at once provocative and dangerous, and in obviously genital imagery, are associated with Satan, the negative father image par excellence» (242).

Wolfgang Rudat's «Gender-Crossing in the *Prioress's Tale*: Chaucer's Satire on Theological Anti-Semitism» uses Cohen's observations about the Prioress's association of the Jews with Satan and her frustrated sexual needs to argue that Chaucer «satirizes the religious conflict of Christians versus Jews by reducing it to sexual terms, or more precisely, by reducing it to a conflict between the Biblical Hebrews' pronounced preoccupation with multiplication on the one hand and the Catholic Church's shift of emphasis to celibacy on the other» (12-13). Rudat argues that Chaucer uses the Prioress's sexually innocent statements about Satan's actions, as when the Prioress accuses the «up swal» serpent of being «the father» of the evil actions of the Jews, to play off the Church's association of the Jews with Satan, and the Church's stand on sexuality which sentences Madame Eglentyne to celibacy. He goes so far as to suggest that the story is about a child the Prioress has been unable to keep.

(*) Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043, USA.

¹ For treatments of the Tale's anti-Semitism see Albert B. Friedman, «The Prioress's Tale and Chaucer's Anti-Semitism», *ChauR10* (1975), 30-45; John Archer, «The Structure of Anti-Semitism in the Prioress's Tale», *ChauR19* (1984, 46-54; Emmy Stark Zitter, «Anti-Semitism in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale», *The Chaucer Review*, 25 (4), 1991, 277-284; Philip Alexander, «Madame Eglentyne, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Problem of Medieval Anti-Semitism», *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 1992, 109-201; Louise Fradenberg, «Criticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Prioress's Tale», *Exemplaria*, 1989, 69-115.

Rudat's and Cohen's psycho-sexual analyses of Chaucer's tale could explain why the boy's murder by the Jews has such appeal for the Prioress. However, I want to address the anti-Semitism of the story, by using the Freudian formulation of id, ego and super-ego to illuminate the text's use (or one might say misuse) of the Jews. In this Freudian formulation, which I see as a trinity parallel to the Christian Trinity, the Jews can be seen as the id, the boy as the ego, and Mary as the super-ego. The Prioress's narrative is her cathartic effort to mediate between the perfection required by following Christ's example, the lesson of conscience embodied in the boy whom the Jews murder in the story, and her repressed id impulses (dirtiness, aggressiveness and sexuality) projected onto the Jews. The Prioress defends herself against her repressed identification with them by making them into murderers.

Thus, the tale's anti-Semitism is necessary in order for the Prioress, Madame Eglentyne, to repress her instinctual urges. She becomes a medium for God the Father's mercy as the Holy Spirit speaks through her to recount the tale of Christ's martyrdom reenacted in the murder of a Christian child by Jews. While she fears her repressed id impulses, embodied as the «wicked» Jews, her defense mechanisms also, in my reading, mirror the larger Christian community's relationship to Jewry which threatens the collective ego that is their Christian faith.

I want to demonstrate the developmental dynamic embodied in the Prioress's struggle for ego-equilibrium made manifest in her story of the Jews' murder of a child and her identification with him. Chaucer reveals Madame Eglentyne's identification in her Prologue when, addressing the Virgin, she asks for help in telling the tale, because she is «But as a child of twelf month old, or lesse»². (370) She also, in her address to God in the opening lines, says that He is praised not only by «men of dignitee,/But by the mouth of children». (371) Her identification with the child's singing his praise to Mary in the tale and her own telling of his story express her striving for the ego equilibrium he represents. Furthermore, her wearing «Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar/A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene» (8) is mirrored in her later description of the child, «This gemme of chastitee, this emeraude, And eek of martirdom the ruby bright». (378)

Madame Eglentyne, the Prioress, tells the story of «A litel clergeon, seven yeer of age», (372) a Christian child in a city in «Asie», who passes through a ghetto singing a hymn to the Virgin and is murdered by a hired Jewish assassin. The child's throat is cut and he is thrown into the Jew's latrine where he remains until his mother hears him miraculously still singing the hymn. The child continues to sing until a «greyn» that the Virgin placed on his tongue is removed. He then can die and is buried as a martyr. At the story's end, Madame Eglentyne likens the boy to Hugh of Lincoln who was «slayn also with cursed Jewes». (382)

According to Freud, the super-ego «takes over the power, function and even the methods of the parental agency» (*New Int Lectures* 55). Thus, the murdered child can be seen as internalizing the super-ego, (Mary), and every association with his martyrdom suggests that he also represents the conscience of the Prioress and the Christian community.

First of all, he is an example to them through his learning of the Christian hymn whose words he does not even understand.

As he sat in the scole at his prymer,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde singe,
As children lerned hir antiphoner;
And, as he dorste, he drough him ner and ner,
And herkned ay the wordes and the note,
Till he the firste vers coude al by rote. (372)

² All my references to The Prioress's Tale are taken from *The Canterbury Tales*, eds. Kent Hieatt and Constance Hieatt, New York: Bantam/Doubleday/Dell Publishing co., 1990 and will here after be cited by line references only.

The boy asks an older school mate to explain the words to him and he answers:

This song I have heard seye, as maked of our blisful Lady free,
Hir to salve, and eek hir for to preye
To been our help and socour whan we deye.
I can no more expounde in this matere;
I lerne song, I can but smal grammere. (374)

So even though he doesn't understand the words, the boy vows that he will learn the whole song by Christmas, «Our Lady for to honoure» (374). In accepting that the song was written in reverence of Christ's mother, the child is pure faith. His psychological preparation for such faith, for his internalizing Mary, the super-ego, had already begun through the teachings of his mother at home who «hir litel sone y taughte/Our blisful Lady, Christes moder dere,/To worship, and he forgat it naught». (372) Therefore, psychological preparation for his internalizing Mary, the super-ego had already begun.

Secondly, he gives voice to this faith by singing the hymn in opposition to the Jews, who don't accept Christianity and especially the miracles of the Virgin Mary.

throughout the Jewerye
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
Ful merily than wolde he singe, and crye
O *Alma redemptoris* everemo.
The swetnes hath his herte perced so
Of Christes moder, that, to hir to preye,
He can nat stinte of singing by the weye. (374)

Until the serpent Satan provokes the Jews to kill the child, he walks freely in and out of the ghetto, and protected by his song to «Our blisful Lady free», (274) is uncontaminated by what the Christian community regards as evil, the usury practiced there. Chaucer makes it clear that the Jews are moneylenders when the prioress announces, in the opening lines of the tale, that there was «Amonges Christen folk, a Jewerye, Sustened by a Lord of that contree/For foul usure and lucre of vilanye» (372). Philip Alexander points out, «The civil authorities actively encouraged Jewish moneylending». The word «foule» can be connected not only to usury, but in Freudian terms, to excrement. This association becomes clear when, after murdering him, the Jews throw the boy's body into «a wardrobe» where they «purgen hir entraille» (276). One could argue that the boy's internalized super-ego has become overdeveloped and he is behaving masochistically walking through the ghetto where «He can not stinte of singing by the weye» (374). Still, moving through the Jewish community with its instinctual id impulses associated with the «foule», he remains pure because of his adoration of Mary.

Thirdly, he is a teaching instrument of parental authority that is the super-ego. Exemplifying Christ's martyrdom, his death reenacts and reteaches the Passion, as the Prioress praises him to God.

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude
By mouth of innocents, lo heer thy might!
This gemme of chastitee, this emeraude,
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,
Ther he with throte y-corven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to singe
So loude that al the place gan to ringe. (378)

In contrast to the child, the Jews represent the repressed negative id impulses. Freud describes the id as «knowing no judgements of value, no good, and evil, no morality» (Int Lect66). According to Freud, the id is linked to the pleasure principle which seeks immediate discharge. It is, he writes,

«the dark inaccessible part of our personality. What little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dreamwork and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego» (*IntLect65*).

With Freud's description in mind, consider the representation of the Jews in Chaucer's Tale. Chaucer exoticizes them, by setting the tale in Asia, thus introducing them to his Christian and English audience as a foreign element. They live in a large city in contrast to simple Christian rural folk, and they are associated with money-lending, «foule usure and lucre of vilanye» (372). In addition, Chaucer's Prioress associates them with the devil, «The serpent Satan, our first enemy,/Who has his wasps' nest in the hearts of the Jews» (CT374). When they murder the child, they throw him into a cesspit, «Whereas these Jewes purgen hir entraille» (376). And thus the Prioress describes them as not only fiendish, but «foule», suggesting all of the id's instinctual energy.

What, then, do these Jews have to do with the spotless Prioress? Are they truly the «Other» or in fact does she share the characteristics she ascribes to them – love of money, filth, excessive sexuality and sadism? One way to answer this question is by examining Chaucer's description of the Prioress in his Prologue. She is fully acquainted with worldly goods as seen in Chaucer's description of her attire. «Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was; ful fetis was hir cloke; Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar/A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,/And theron heng a broche of gold ful shene» (8). So though apparently disassociated from economic activity, she appears to be acquisitive. She is also urbane, a quality associated with the Jews who live in a large city, as evidenced by her travelling on a Pilgrimage and being able to speak French. Her over-fastidiousness and perfect table manners are described by Chaucer in the Prologue. He also tells us of her tender feelings toward small animals.

She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe. Wel coude she carie a
morsel, and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille upon hir brest. (CT8)

She wolde wepe if that she sawe a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
With roasted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But sore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte. (8)

Chaucer explicitly uses the word «conscience» saying of Madame Eglentyne, «And al was conscience and tendre herte» (CT8). However, one can see her over-zealous conscience as a defense against her id. Maurice Cohen points out that these qualities are reaction-formations against her own id impulses (233). The sexual imagery of her invocation to Mary in her Prologue, clearly reveals sexual longings:

O moder Mayde, O madye Moder free!
O bussh unbrent, brenninge in Moyses sighte,
That ravishedest down fro the deitee,
Through thyn humblesse, the goost that in th'alighte,
Of whos vertu, when he thyn herte lighte,
Conceived was the Fadres sapience:
Help me to telle it in thy reverence. (370)

Cohen sees this passage as a fantasy of divine rape (235). I agree that images of «ravishedest» and «the goost that in th'alighte» suggest a sexualized encounter with the Holy Spirit.

And so, the Prioress's telling of an anti-Semitic narrative is her effort to mediate between the perfection required by following Christ's example, the super-ego embodied in the boy's sacrifice, and her repressed id impulses projected onto the Jews. They become the murderers of her tale, and

she projects her own id impulses of dirtiness, impoliteness, and sexuality onto them, which as a Prioress, a woman in the Church, she cannot act out.

It is important to note that the *Prioress's Tale* is a miracle tale in which the Jews threaten the Christian beliefs because they do not accept the miracles of the Virgin. Anti-Semitism abounds in the genre of the miracle of the Virgin. Robert Worth Frank, Jr. has shown «anyone who reads at all extensively in the genre to which Chaucer's tale belongs, the miracles of the Virgin, soon becomes aware of the persistent presence of anti-Semitism» (177-88). The essence of a miracle tale is the intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary to help a besieged martyr. Chaucer's narrative reenacts Christ's killing which Jews were accused of. As Philp Alexander points out, «The Prioress invites us in all kinds of subtle but not unmistakable ways to see the death of Mary's little devotee as being parallel to the death of Mary's son» (113). The Prioress, trying to project her unconscious id impulses represented by the Jews, maintains her shaky ego defenses through the intervention of the Virgin. In contrast to the Jews, who are imagos of the phallic father (Cohen, 142), the Virgin Mary is the ideal and perfect good mother beyond reproach with the power to perform miracles and thus assure an Edenic pre-Oedipal paradisaical symbiosis between mother and child. In such a pre-Oedipal world the threat of the phallic father is removed, or put another way, there are no Jews to disrupt pure faith.

The Prioress who in her prologue describes herself as a child, identifies with the boy who sings the hymn in adoration of the Virgin even though he doesn't understand the words. The boy (ego) has internalized through agency of the Virgin, a super-ego. It is Mary's love which enables him to attain pure belief. The tale, as Judith Feaster notes, «could fit the post-Freudian account of any young child's dependence on and identification with the mother» (156).

Mother love is also exemplified in the story by the bereaved mother who, going out to seek her slain child, calls upon Christ's mother for help. Mother love (super-ego) stands in sharp contrast to the phallic Jews who are identified with God the Father of the Old Testament.

With modres pitee in hir brest enclosed,
She goeth, as she were half out of hir minde,
To every place wher she hath supposed
By lyklihede hir litel childe to finde;
And ever on Christes moder meke and kinde
She cryde, and atte laste thus she wrought:
Among the cursed Jewes she him soghte. (376)

At the same time, it is hard to ignore the fact that at the boy's funeral, his grieving mother is referred to as «This newe Rachel brynge fro his beere» (378). Rachel is a reference to Matthew ii:18, but Matthew quoted from Jeremiah xxxi:15. The murdered boy's mother can be seen as the suffering Jewish mother of the Old Testament, and thus, Chaucer demonstrates how the Prioress identifies with the «Hebraik peple» (374) who she says have the serpent Satan in their hearts. As if to deny her instinctual id impulses, the Rachel reference is followed by a description of the Jews' fate. For their crime, they suffer severe punishment: the Jews who knew of the murder («of this mordre wiste») are drawn by wild horses and then hanged. «Therfore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe, And after that he heng hem by the lawe» (378).

The Virgin as healer maintains the Prioress's ego by restoring her faith in miraculousness. By extension, the Virgin Mary mediating between the Prioress's id and her super-ego, also restores the community's collective ego. The grain which the Virgin placed on the child's tongue allowed him to continue singing the hymn, brings forth knowledge. The grain, a seed, has been sown so that through «mother Mary's» therapeutic intervention, wholeness is restored to the Christian community's faith. This restoration is reinforced by the Prioress's ending her story with a remembrance of young Hugh of Lincoln, said to have been murdered by the Jews in 1255. For this alleged crime, eighteen Jews were put to death. «O yonge Hugh of Lincoln, slayn also/With cursed Jewes, as is notable,/For it nis but a litel whyle ago» (382). I would argue that the tacked on, and historically inaccurate

reference (it did not happen «a litel whyle ago»), gives the Prioress the final word in disassociating herself from the Jews'(id) murderous impulses and reconnecting herself with the Christian community's collective ego.

While the sacrificed child has the grace to accept the parental lesson of the super-ego, shown through the Virgin Mary's healing love, the Jews, the id's murderous impulses, are an obstacle to faith and must be punished. Madame Eglentyne restores her ego equilibrium (piety) through the example of the child's ego strength (sacrifice) and Mary's mother love (super-ego). Her anti-Semitism maintains the Trinity at the expense of the Jews.

Freud points out in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that «Beauty, cleanliness and order occupy a special position among the requirements of civilization» (45). Because civilization needs to repress the id, and Christianity in Chaucer's tale is civilization, the Jews must be killed for their crime against civilization embodied in the child. The id is projected onto the Jews as murderers when, in fact, historically the Jews have been the victims of Christian violence. For as Horkheimer and Adorno have pointed out, «The pogroms are the true ritual murders» (*Dialect of Enlight*, 171).

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Henry Roth's swan song

ANNE M. WYATT-BROWN (*)

In 1934 Henry Roth published *Call It Sleep* (1934), which many have regarded as the most evocative account of immigrant life during the early years of the century. In 1994 the first volume of *Mercy of a Rude Stream* appeared, sixty years after *Call It Sleep*. Two others quickly followed the first volume (1995, 1996). In the sixty years between *Call It Sleep* and *Mercy of a Rude Stream* Roth had published very little except for scattered magazine stories and articles. Needless to say after such a lengthy hiatus, most readers assumed that he suffered from incurable writer's block. Few knew that for nearly twenty years he had been composing six volumes of his continuing saga. In 1987 a collection of his magazine articles and fragments of his work in progress appeared in *Shifting Landscape*, but the volume received relatively little publicity. The recent novels provide a fascinating view of immigrant life in the post World War I period. They suggest that success or failure in a new country may depend on a delicate balance between a person's talents, training, stability, and ability to attract or luck in finding helpful mentors. Even more important for those of us interested in psychoanalytic interpretations of creativity, the late-life novels challenge our view of the writer. The material that Roth includes about his character's adolescent sexual behavior makes it impossible to continue to assess him as an innocent victim of circumstances beyond his control, the position that he took in his first novel. Instead we are faced with an unresolvable dilemma, how can we assess the relationship between this artist's life and art if the writer himself is determined to trick the reader? Given the unexpected revelations that Roth makes in the last two volumes of his family saga, are we to view the work as the portrait of the artist as a dirty young man or as the portrait of the artist as a tricky old one? Somehow it does not seem quite enough to say that Roth has created an unreliable narrator and leave it at that. Very often when writers employ that device – such as Thomas Mann in *Confessions of Felix Krull* *Confidence Man* – they use the unreliability to tell the truth about themselves but in such a way that most will be unaware of the slight of hand.

The three recent novels – three more have been promised – challenge any easy interpretation of the well-springs of Roth's creativity. He converted the story of David Schearl, the child-victim of *Call It Sleep*, into a comedic epic of sin and redemption. The new name of his hero in *Mercy of a Rude*

(*) University of Florida, Program in Linguistics, 112 Anderson Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA.

Stream is Ira Stigman, a good name for a person of spoiled identity. What has been published so far reveals that, like Dante, Roth threw himself wholeheartedly into the most sinful episodes of his story. At the same time from the beginning Roth has insisted that Ira's life (and by extension his own) is a journey of redemption, his salvation being owed, much like Dante's pilgrim, to a woman, his beloved wife M. In contrast to Dante's pilgrim, however, who lost his way at midlife without committing mortal sin, Ira Stigman reports that in adolescence he repeatedly had incestuous relations with his sister, Minnie, and when she rejected him replaced her with his cousin Stella.

Roth employs a complex narrative strategy, which makes it almost impossible to separate fact from fiction. Much of what he says about the process of writing is clearly based on personal experience, and the story of incest, guilt, and writer's block, a compelling account. Young Ira Stigman's story is filtered through the perspective of a seventy-year-old narrator, who treats his computer as a father confessor or a psychotherapist. Then nearly twenty years later a much older narrator edits the manuscript that caused him so much trouble to write in the first place. All this was probably true. Encouraged finally by the healing powers of technology and by the memories of his dead wife's unstinting love, the narrator reveals his guilty secret. As an adolescent Ira paid his sister – whose existence has been erased from the first section of the trilogy – to have sex with him. Part of the explanation lies in Ira's past. As a boy various individuals – some his age and others much older – tried to get him to masturbate with them. These encounters horrified Ira so much that on principle he refused to masturbate even in private. As a result that he had few outlets for his sex drive. Thus Ira, who in childhood was occasionally a victim, in adolescence becomes a victimizer in his turn. Discomfort with those unhappy memories had, according to the narrator, made it impossible for Ira to continue writing fiction.

How are we to interpret this story? Is Roth's account of incest and guilt based on a recurring fantasy or actual fact? At present it is impossible to say, although speculation is irresistible. All we know about Roth's own sexual initiation is that he left his family when in college to live with Eda Lou Walton, an instructor at New York University. Not only was she considerably older than he, but unlike the Roths she was a Christian. Clearly Roth wanted to break from his parents, chiefly from his mother to whom his ties were strong. Walton clearly played the motherly role; in fact she prided herself on encouraging young talent. Roth formed an attachment with Walton that was as strong as the one to his mother had been. As he put it later, «when I became her lover, it was as if she adopted me» (1987, p. 295). The strength of his attachment and his need made it difficult to break away from her, even though he resented his dependence. Eventually he abandoned her after he met Muriel, his wife to be, at Yaddo, a colony for aspiring artists. Muriel, who like Walton was a Protestant, took over the motherly role in Roth's life. A gifted composer, she gave up her college teaching position and her music to nurture him. For many years she taught school in Maine and struggled to keep house under conditions that almost duplicated Roth's childhood slum. Roth seemed determined to relive his childhood on his own terms. He had a college degree and might have supported his family better, but he stubbornly insisted on living an experimentally working-class existence. Not only did his middle-class wife lack any creature comforts, but she had no time to compose. Not until they both retired to a trailer in New Mexico was she able to resume writing music, for which she eventually won a prize.

Roth's political opinions, like his romantic attachments, showed the same insistence on principle regardless of the cost, an all-or-nothing character structure. He held his positions vehemently, rarely considering the possibility of compromise, even though he might eventually change his view. In boyhood, like some immigrant youths, he longed to assimilate to American culture and was embarrassed by his parents' greenhorn ways. But unlike many young immigrants as he grew older for many years he did not lose a persistent sense of shame at being Jewish and foreign, an attitude exacerbated by nativist hostility to immigrants and Jews. His relationship with his ethnic roots is as complex as his treatment of his sexual past. Like many Jews he became fiercely pro-union and a socialist. In 1933 he joined the Communist Party (1987) and espoused assimilationism. Yet unlike many of his compatriots for a long time he ignored the emerging state of Israel. Even after he left the Communist Party, he rarely mentioned Israel, insisting that salvation lay in socialism. In 1963 he said,

«I feel that to the great boons Jews have already conferred upon humanity, Jews in America might add this last and greatest one: of orienting themselves toward ceasing to be Jews» (1987, p. 114). Then after years of ethnic self-hatred, Israel's victory in the Six-Day-War converted him to Zionism. At that point he abandoned his assimilationist position and in 1978 toyed with the idea of emigrating to his promised land (1987, p. 115). To that end he made an extended visit, but that trip provided another turning point for him. He rejoiced in the thought that Israeli Jews were at home, but acknowledged that the strange language, culture, and landscape made him feel like a foreigner. For better or for worse Roth recognized that he belonged in America. Roth's sexual and political oscillations suggest that his identity theme, to borrow Norman Holland's term, was that of a true believer, but one who lacked a sustaining faith. His character, Ira, shares Roth's reactions to external stimuli. Like the writer he also rejects compromises, preferring to oscillate between extremes both in thought and action.

Much of *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, like *Call It Sleep* is drawn directly from Roth's recollections of early life. Some episodes are based on autobiographical passages that appear in *Shifting Landscape*. Needless to say Roth's dramatic revelation about Ira's sexual predations makes one wonder why Roth made this narrative turn, for introducing Ira's sister Minnie complicates Roth's message in several ways. In the nonfictional essays, Roth had consistently claimed that his writer's block resulted from his move from the lower East Side to Harlem when he was eight years old. His new neighborhood in Catholic Harlem, he claimed, failed to provide him «a community of interest». The new uprooting destroyed a crucial part of his identity and from then on he felt like an observer rather than a participant (1987, pp. 295, 299). He could not overcome this loss of continuity and sense of being homeless for many years. Looking back on his experience, Roth asserted that Greenwich Village, the place to which he later moved from his parents' home, did not «feed» him any more than it had other writers in the 1930s, such as Thomas Wolfe (1987, p. 255).

Despite the disruption of the early move, in his twenties Roth overcame his sense of anomie by following the lead of James Joyce. Many critics have recognized that *Call It Sleep* is an American *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. As Roth became more political in outlet after the book was published, he stopped idolizing Joyce and rejected his apolitical and detached stance. Once Roth decided that he could not write a new *Ulysses*, however, he had nothing to put in Joyce's place. Repeatedly he faulted the Irish writer for ignoring the two world wars and Ireland's upheavals, but his attempts to write a proletarian novel failed, largely because he was drawing upon lives other than his own. Fortunately, Roth's two-month sojourn in Israel broke the stalemate. After returning home Roth began work on *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, and by 1981 he was «well on the way to Volume Two of my fictionalized and debased past», the «scandalous» incest story (1987, pp. 256, 260, 263, & 285).

Roth realized that he was taking a chance by introducing the incest theme. Many readers would assume that the account was literally true. For one thing, attributing writer's block to guilt over sexual misconduct is an easier concept to grasp than Roth's complicated account of the failure of his boyhood neighborhood and Greenwich Village to sustain his art. Thus in the novel Ira the narrator talks a great deal about sexual guilt, although he does claim that the loss of ethnic continuity caused him to stop writing. At this point, however, we have no way of knowing whether the incest story is true. Roth had talked of his family in various interviews and fragments, many of which are reprinted in *Shifting Landscape*. He never mentions a sister in the interviews, but one appears in one of his fictionalized fragments. He makes reference to a cousin Stella in one of the personal reminiscences (1987), but so offhandedly that one would never suspect that he had any attachment to her. As it happens Roth did have a sister, a fact which I learned from a member of the audience at the Ipsa conference.¹

Curiously, even the obviously genuine family portrait of Roth's mother conceals as much as it discloses. Before I knew that of the existence of his sister, I pored over the endpapers of the first

¹ Marcia Landau from Albuquerque, New Mexico, told me about Roth's sister.

volume of *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, trying to determine if one of the three children could also have been a girl, despite the absence of an obligatory hair ribbon. I realized that no boy's name appeared in any of the elaborate family trees or in Roth's autobiographical accounts, but then sister Minnie's name was missing until the middle of volume two when Roth revised his family tree. To ward off the inference that the novel reflected his past, moreover, Roth printed a stern reminder on the credit pages of volumes two and three that «this is a work of fiction.... This novel is certainly *not* an autobiography, nor should it be taken as such». The plot, the picture, and the warning create a double bind for the reader. We are encouraged to take the narrative as remembered truth but discouraged at the same time. Perhaps the thought of our bemusement would amuse Roth, who knew Margaret Mead and was likely to be aware of Gregory Bateson's theory of the double bind (1956). Leonard Michaels, who wrote the introduction to *Shifting Landscape* in 1994, begs the question. He states that we cannot know exactly what is «factually true» in *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, but that «the combination of true and imagined gives the novel its radically personal effect» (1994, p. xxi).

At any event Roth was eighty-eight when he published his revelation. Perhaps he felt that no matter what we thought he had little to lose. No one would possibly have the nerve to question the frail old man. Moreover developing the theme of incest obviously cheered the aging writer, who suffered from intermittent depression and rheumatoid arthritis. Throughout volume one, Ira teases his readers in *A Star Shines over Mt. Morris Park* by promising to reveal a guilty secret but fails to do so until well into *A Diving Rock on the Hudson*, volume two. In volume two at nearly eighty he reports that writing about «this literary scamp» rejuvenates him. Writing about sex allows him to «come to life, so to speak, to leap into an orbit of higher energy», thereby forgetting his arthritis for a while (1995, p. 285).

Since we will have no way at present of knowing if Roth's story of incest was true, it makes sense to examine the facts that we have. Several essays on immigrant life written from a psychoanalytic perspective offer useful insights into much of what appears to have been Roth's life story. Juana Antokoletz argues that immigrants undergo a process not of acculturation but of «cultural transformation» (1993, p. 35). This «synthesis» of two or more cultures creates opportunities and burdens for immigrants, who may often feel that longtime residents are less than accepting of their home culture. That surely was the experience of many East European Jews, like Roth's family. According to his account in *Shifting Landscape* and *Call It Sleep*, his parents broke with orthodoxy shortly after arriving in America. This freed them from some of the more punitive aspects of the traditional village culture, but at the same time it isolated the family from the larger community. Moreover, this process of transformation had its pitfalls like any similar change. As Antokoletz points out, the migrant must integrate «new cultural identifications and values with earlier ones transmitted by parents and native social milieu» (1993, p. 37). The wider the gap between the values of the two cultures, the more personal transformation is necessary, and the more personal strength is necessary to survive. Clearly on all counts Roth had problems. His family was sufficiently conflicted that they did not pass on usable values. Moreover the pressure of the dominant culture and Roth's own all-or-nothing stance encouraged the young man to take an assimilationist position, which he maintained until his seventies.

Marc Kaminsky, whose therapy practice has been largely with East European Jewish immigrants and their children, challenges Antokoletz's emphasis on the personal nature of the cross-cultural journey. He prefers to raise questions of community values. In a recent essay he points out that cultural transformation is not always possible when the two cultures have radically different ideals (1993, p. 107). The children of immigrants have a foot in both worlds but may feel that they are citizens of nowhere. Growing up in what has been called «the cultural household of Ashkenaz» (1994, p. 293), he asserts that the meanings of words and of core values change as they migrate across cultures. Children may hear the voices of their grandparents and parents, for whom the word «*mentsh*», for example, means a person who observes the proprieties, while they are aware that in common American usage the term marks exceptional behavior not the norm. According to Kaminsky, the concept of *mentsh* helped Ashkenazi Jews, the group to which both Roth and the Stigmans belonged, maintain their sense of collective identity while «undergoing bewildering fragmentation and change» (1994, p. 300).

For that reason many Jews are pro-union and socialist in their politics. Kaminsky's analysis explains why Roth claimed repeatedly in *Mercy of a Rude Stream* and in *Shifting Landscape* that leaving the Jewish enclave of the East Side at the age of eight affected his thinking and his art. Roth's conviction that the move to a new neighborhood disrupted his life almost more than the original immigration in infancy is echoed by psychotherapist Michelle Price's observation that those «who move across state, social, economic, and class lines ... may be immigrants, even if they are just "crossing Delancey Street» (1994, p. 319).

On the other hand, other matters also disrupted the family life of the Roths. The outbreak of World War I, which took place the year of the move, had a permanent effect on daily life of most of the participants involved. Moreover, Roth's family had their own internal troubles no matter where they lived. According to Roth, his father found it hard to make friends and earn a living wage. He did not drink, however, so unlike Frank McCourt's Irish family (1996) in a recent Pulitzer Prize winning novel, the Roths never went without food or a place to live. Nonetheless the peculiarities of Roth's father took their toll on the family life. For example, although his parents moved largely to be near his mother's family, unlike the grandparents they eventually settled in a mixed neighborhood. The rent was cheaper, and Roth's father had uncertain earnings.

Had his parents been observant Jews, or his father less irascible, Roth might have maintained his ties to his community, even though he was sent to public school in a largely Christian neighborhood. But from the beginning of their American adventure, Roth's parents isolated themselves from most of their neighbors. His mother never spoke English fluently so her friendships were limited. Moreover, both mother and father had been unhappy in Galitzia; thus they had no desire to recreate the village atmosphere from which they had escaped. To complicate matters, Roth's father was known for his evil temper; his mother had to protect the boy from his father's erratic wrath. As a result, he turned to her as the only refuge in an uncertain world. The combination of poverty and family pathology, therefore, caused Roth to grow up outside of his ethnic group. Even living a few blocks from his mother's family did not provide a buffer against either his father or his goyish neighbors. As a result, from an early age Roth was on his own, a pioneer with no adult guides to smooth his path. On one occasion in the third volume of the saga, Ira reports to Edith, the Eda Lou Walton figure, that he is «the only collegian in the whole tribe. So I lead the way in things American. You get it? I'm the authority» (Roth, 1996, p. 372). Such freedom has its price. Young people like Ira may be able to set their own standards, but they have no one to consult when they need guidance.

Roth's novels and interviews suggest the usefulness of a modified version of both Antokoletz's and Kaminsky's analysis. Roth repeatedly claims that his collectivist thinking supported him throughout his life. Even when he left the Communist Party in 1933, he continued to believe in the efficacy of political action. Later on, when it appeared that Israel would survive, identifying with his people supported his sometimes frail sense of self. Kaminsky explains that East European Jews in America were bound together by their belief in community life, which in turn led to a left-wing political orientation, a celebration of brotherhood. Roth, however, for many years tried to disconnect politics from his ethnic origins. On the other hand, more traditionally oriented analysts, like Antokoletz, have emphasized that the personal strains that the individual undergoes have much to do with their relationship with their parents and their first home (Grinberg, 1984; Amati-Mehler, 1990; Antokoletz, 1993). Roth's own account demonstrates that both his own psychological strengths and weaknesses were much affected by his parents and his neighborhood life. Moreover, we should keep in mind that many writers, regardless of their immigrant status, report feeling like outsiders. Without that sense of alienation, they might not have developed the powers of observation that fueled their art.

Leaving aside the vexed question of veracity – after all most fiction and autobiography create blurred genres –, we can begin to see that Roth's theme involves reconciliation and reassessment, not mere disclosure. In the last pages of the final volume Roth even acknowledges that he recognized the demands that he made on his wife, who by that time had died. In a narrative section written shortly before his death, he wrote of the sacrifices that she made in order to sustain his sometimes waning talent (1996). His tribute to her steadfastness indicates some insight on his part. He even admits that

once again he needed a mother figure. Although he does not say so, it seems apparent that Roth really never grew up. We must remember, however, that the writer himself freely gave all the evidence of his immaturity, a fact which surely complicates our response.

Moreover, although he continued to write about Ira's sexual experimentation, Roth concentrates in this final volume on the young man's effort to educate himself. He entered college thinking that he would become a scientist, but through Eda Walton he met poets and aesthetes, who exposed him to modernist poetry, which was just beginning to dominate the literary world. The young man felt attracted to T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* because the poet described a malaise shared by many of the postwar generation. The character Edith, who teaches English poetry, comments acutely, «Ira keeps reading Eliot to find out what he feels about life →» (Roth, 1996, p. 159), but she fails to understand what sense he made of Eliot's anti-Semitism. At that point Ira accepts Eliot's prejudices as reasonable. Having left the East Side, he sees himself as different from his people. He feels exempt from Eliot's caricatures because unlike most of his people he «*appreciated* them» (1996, p. 138), a stance imitated no doubt by other highly educated and temporarily alienated young Jews of the period. That is not to say that the older Roth agreed with his youthful justification of prejudice. Still, he was willing to remember how he felt even though he no longer shared his sense of superiority.

Taken as a whole, the unflinching honesty of Roth's late style suggests that old age released him from a lifelong struggle to repress his authorial voice. Unlike E. M. Forster's characters in *Howards End* who struggled to choose a single way to view the world, in extreme old age Roth saw life both steadily and whole. Because he was willing in the last years of his life to rewrite the story of his life, he has left a richly dense memoir of immigrant life that should make a fitting memorial to a remarkable career. He left us with a puzzle but with the respect that we accord those writers who are willing to take great risks.

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Les deux Albert C: De la volubilité au silence des instances parentales

VÉRONIQUE DUPREY (*)

Albert Camus (1913-1960) Albert Cohen (1895-1981). La célébrité de l'homme et de l'œuvre du premier, comme en témoignent les études innombrables sur celui dénommé par Sartre le «titi de Belcourt» et devenu Prix Nobel de Littérature, contraste avec le silence qui entoure l'œuvre du second. Le grec ottoman Albert Cohen, naturalisé suisse, est pourtant l'auteur d'une œuvre accueillie dans la célèbre collection de la Pléiade¹ et célébrée par le public.

Rien ne semble, par ailleurs, rapprocher celui dénommé l'écrivain de l'absurde, qui s'est méfié des effets littéraires et s'est employé à développer une écriture neutre, de Cohen – écrivain volubile qui a réhabilité l'imagination et la tradition des écrivains démiurges. Toutefois, l'examen de leurs productions littéraires respectives révèle bel et bien une affinité fondamentale entre ces deux auteurs: pour l'un, comme pour l'autre, l'écriture littéraire sert à déployer un véritable roman familial à travers l'évocation des origines filiales et en particulier la figure de la mère.

1. LA FIGURE DE LA MÈRE

Dans *L'Envers et l'endroit* (1937) et *Le Premier homme* (1994), ouvrages que l'on peut raisonnablement classer dans la catégorie du témoignage malgré quelques points d'équivoques², et pour Cohen *Le Livre de ma mère*, *Ô vous, frères humains*, et *Carnets 1978* où l'écriture a vocation

(*) Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, PostBus 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

¹ Les œuvres d'Albert Cohen ont été rassemblées dans la collection de la Pléiade, en deux volumes (éd. établie par Christel Peyrefitte et Bella Cohen): *Belle du Seigneur*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986; *Œuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993. C'est à cette édition que renvoie le présent article.

² La préface de *L'Envers et l'endroit* où Albert Camus accorde à cet ouvrage la valeur de témoignage rend les choses assez claires. Par contre, le statut du *Premier homme* est plus ambigu. Pris généralement pour une confession, cet ouvrage inachevé peut être aussi considéré comme une amorce de roman – même si largement autobiographique – qui n'a jamais eu le temps d'aboutir. Pour s'en persuader, il suffit de consulter d'une part le carnet intitulé *Le Premier homme* joint au 144 pages dactylographiés qui grâce à des notes et des plans permet d'entrevoir le développement romanesque que l'auteur souhaitait donner à son œuvre –, et d'autre part *Carnets III*. Dans ces carnets, il ressort clairement que durant la période d'août 1954 à 1958, l'auteur déjà se livrait à l'ébauche d'un projet romanesque consigné sous le nom de *Premier homme*.

autobiographique n'est pas non plus toujours sans ambiguïté³, la quête des origines se confond avec l'évocation de la figure maternelle.

Dans cette remémoration du souvenir de l'enfance, l'image de la mère, en effet, occupe dans les œuvres respectives de Camus et de Cohen une place centrale. Et peu de mères ont reçu un hommage aussi émouvant et aussi constant de leur fils, que ces deux femmes pauvres, simples et recluses, dont le destin, somme toute ordinaire, serait resté dans l'ombre si leurs fils écrivains ne les avaient mis au premier plan de la scène de leur écriture.

Malgré l'indigence documentaire, les quelques textes témoignages de Camus comme *Carnets*, *L'Envers et l'endroit* ou *Le Premier homme* distillent ici et là un portrait de la mère. L'amour filial que voue le fils à la figure maternelle semble total:

Réponse à la question sur les mots préférés: «Le monde, la douleur, la terre, **la mère**, les hommes, le désert, l'honneur, la misère, l'été, la mer.» (Mars 1951-juillet 1954, p. 15).

Maman. Si l'on aimait assez ceux qu'on aime, on les empêcherait de mourir» (Août 1954-juillet 1958, p. 23)

De même, dans *L'Envers et l'endroit*, Camus n'a de cesse de vanter celle au «silence admirable» pour laquelle il ressent «un grand élan d'amour» (20-21). Toutefois, Jean Gassin dans *L'Univers symbolique d'Albert Camus: essai d'interprétation psychanalytique*⁴ souligne nombre d'indications ambiguës dans ce texte. Il relève ainsi avec justesse l'équivoque de la nature des sentiments que porte le fils à la mère.

A tel moment, pourtant «l'enfant croit sentir [...] de l'amour pour [s]a mère» (26). Et [ajoute immédiatement l'auteur], il le faut bien parce qu'après tout c'est sa mère. [...] La locution après tout fait ressortir l'infinie répugnance avec laquelle est finalement admise cette identification. (206)

Jean Gassin a très bien montré de surcroît comment dans les pages autobiographiques l'image de la mère évoque tour à tour le silence, l'indifférence, la peur et la mort.

Or l'analyse du *Premier homme* – œuvre que Jean Gassin n'a pas été apparemment en mesure de consulter – confirme les hypothèses de ce critique. En filigrane des expressions d'amour filial («il comprenait en même temps que lui l'[la mère] aimait éperdument» [90]), se retrouve le même trouble de l'auteur face au silence et à l'indifférence de la mère:

Elle l'embrassait et puis, après l'avoir lâché, le regardait et le reprenait pour l'embrasser encore une fois [...] Et puis, tout de suite après, détournée, elle retournait dans l'appartement [...] elle ne semblait plus penser à lui ni d'ailleurs à rien, et le regardait même parfois avec une étrange expression, comme si maintenant, ou du moins il en avait l'impression, il était de trop et dérangeait l'univers étroit, vide et fermé où elle se mouvait solitairement (*PH*, 59)

Ce silence, cette indifférence de la mère que Camus exaltera dans son œuvre romanesque par un processus d'idéalisation, sont pourtant bel et bien vécus dans l'autobiographie comme une frustration

³ Parmi les ouvrages d'Albert Cohen, seuls *Le Livre de ma mère*, *Ô vous, frères humains*, et *Carnets 1978* semblent répondre formellement et précisément aux critères de l'autobiographie (identité du narrateur-scripteur et du personnage principal). Toutefois, une lecture minutieuse de ces trois ouvrages laisse apparaître nombre de points d'équivoques quant à leur définition générique. (L'auteur se comporte par exemple dans certains passages du *Livre de ma mère*, comme un narrateur omniscient; le texte de *Carnets 1978*, quant à lui, rassemblant non seulement des souvenirs personnels de l'auteur mais aussi un ensemble de réflexions sur Dieu et sur le peuple juif, oscille entre l'essai et l'autobiographie.

⁴ Paris, Minard, 1981.

(«Les rares fois où elle le prenait sur les genoux [...] qui avait pour lui, l'odeur trop rare dans sa vie d'enfant, de la tendresse» [PH, 58].) Il provoque le désarroi de l'enfant qui souvent a douté de l'amour que lui portait sa mère:

Le regard de sa mère, tremblant, doux, fiévreux, était posé sur lui avec une telle expression que l'enfant recula, hésita et s'enfuit. «Elle m'aime, elle m'aime donc,» [...] et il comprenait en même temps que lui l'aimait éperdument, qu'il avait souhaité de toutes ses forces d'être aimé d'elle et qu'il en avait toujours douté jusque-là. (PH, 90).

Dans l'œuvre autobiographique d'Albert Cohen, l'image de la mère est tout aussi prégnante. Evoquer la mère, c'est découvrir, comme l'énonce Jean Blot, «l'astre majeur de la constellation psychologique de l'auteur»⁵. L'œuvre autobiographique, dans un travail de reconstruction du souvenir, est là pour en témoigner. Dans *Le Livre de ma mère* mais également dans *Carnets 1978* et dans *Ô vous, frères humains*, la figure de la mère est centrale. L'éloge de Louise Coen inlassablement psalmodié dans l'œuvre autobiographique porta la critique à saluer la présence dans l'œuvre d'une piété filiale sans défaut. Cependant, un examen attentif des récits de l'auteur laisse apparaître une réalité plus complexe.

Dans le doux refuge de la mémoire et le travail de l'écriture du *Livre de ma mère* tout est recherche de l'amour maternel «à nul autre pareil» [737]. Louise Coen se présente au fils comme l'archétype de tout amour humain dont la perfection réside dans son total altruisme: «Ma mère n'avait pas de moi, mais un fils. Peu lui importait de ne pas dormir ou d'être lasse si j'avais besoin d'elle» [742].

Cette dévotion sans restriction de la figure maternelle à l'égard du fils installe l'enfant Cohen dans un univers de tendresse où il se sent maître et seigneur absolu. Etroitement mêlés dans une relation symbiotique apparemment sans faille, la mère et le fils puisent l'un en l'autre leur raison d'être et de vivre. «Aider maman c'est la vie qu'il me faut» [Carn, 1122] proclame Cohen, comme il affirme à propos de la figure maternelle: «Elle attendait tout de moi» [LM, 746]. La fusion avec la figure maternelle semble si forte que les frontières des identités s'estompent. Dans le royaume enfantin, le petit Albert place sa mère au centre de son identité, lui déniait toute altérité: «Etrange que je ne m'aperçoive que maintenant que ma mère était un être humain, un être autre que moi et avec de vraies souffrances» [LM, 745].

Or l'auteur, même une fois adulte, ne parvint pas à se défaire de cette union symbiotique propre à la petite enfance («Je me regarde dans la glace, mais c'est ma mère qui est dans la glace» [LM, 754]). Aussi est-on tenté d'inverser la proposition: «ma mère n'avait pas de moi mais un fils» en Cohen n'avait pas de moi mais une mère, ce qu'il suggère aussi dans *Carnets 1978*:

Je ne suis qu'un fils et qu'un ami. Jamais je ne saurai être un père ou un mari. N'ayant plus ma mère et plus l'ami de mon enfance⁶, mais n'étant qu'un fils et un ami, je ne sais plus ce que je suis. (1136).

Toutefois, comme dans les pages autobiographiques de Camus, l'évocation de la mère n'est pas dénuée d'équivoques. C'est ainsi que dans les récits autobiographiques, de simples tournures employées pour désigner la mère finissent par devenir dans leurs «excroissances» des pastiches de l'expression affective. Par exemple, on peut noter que dans la profusion innombrable de qualificatifs employés pour désigner la figure maternelle dans *Le Livre de ma mère*, un petit pourcentage exprime sous le couvert de l'affection, des sentiments plus ambivalents: («nigaude»; «une simple, ma mère»; «pauvre roulée d'avance»; «empotée ma pauvre chérie»; «ma piteuse petite mère»; «bon chien fidèle»; «pauvre sainte poire»). Si ces expressions prises dans le flux abondant de qualificatifs

⁵ Jean Blot, *Albert Cohen*, Paris, Balland, p.130.

⁶ Cohen désigne ici Marcel Pagnol qu'il connut à l'école à Marseille et avec lequel il entretint une grande amitié durant toute son existence.

chaleureux passent inaperçues, elles n'en font pas moins partie de ces dérapages langagiers indiquant que la personne qui parle, même si elle «est décidée à ne pas laisser apparaître la tendance refoulée dans le discours, commet [des] lapsus c'est à dire que la tendance refoulée s'exprime malgré lui».⁷

Ce surcroît de sens, où se loge l'expression de l'ambivalence des sentiments filiaux à l'égard de la mère, apparaît en outre dans le jeu des regards. Alors que lorsque Camus regarde sa mère, il lit dans son regard une certaine indifférence, distraction et même distance, Cohen étouffe sous l'intensité envahissante, la pesante affection que traduit le regard de sa mère:

Obscurément je lui en voulais de trop surveiller et deviner [...] Elle me regardait presque animale avec une attention de lionne. (*LM*, 707)

Et contrairement à ce qui se passe dans l'œuvre de Camus, l'œuvre romanesque de Cohen, loin de sublimer l'image maternelle, renforcera l'image de la mère dévorante et envahissante. Un exemple tiré du roman *Solal* suffit à illustrer cette animosité qu'éprouve le fils pour l'image de la mère:

Ensuite, Solal détailla sa mère. [...] Pourquoi avait-il de la répulsion pour cette femme qui le considérait avec une odieuse clairvoyance? (*Sol*, 109)

En schématisant quelque peu, il est possible de dire que Cohen a concédé au mode autobiographique le rôle de symboliser la bonne mère et au roman la mauvaise mère. On observe le passage de l'idéalisation de la figure maternelle dans l'autobiographie, somme toute désirée par le fils qui souhaite prolonger l'union symbiotique avec elle, au sentiment diffus, dans l'œuvre romanesque, de la menace que représentent les rets maternels. Et cet amour de la mère, total et exclusif, capable d'incorporer le fils, conduit celui-ci à désirer l'anéantissement de la figure maternelle afin d'empêcher son propre engloutissement.

Dans l'œuvre de Camus, on observe le schéma inverse. A l'image donc ambiguë de la mère dans l'autobiographie, succède une image sublimée de la figure maternelle dans l'œuvre romanesque. Toutefois, la dialectique qui s'instaure entre les œuvres autobiographiques et romanesques autour de l'imaginaire maternelle dans la production livresque de ces deux écrivains renvoie bien au même schéma: celui d'une production littéraire, où même les œuvres à vocation romanesque, doivent être lues comme un prolongement du discours autobiographique. Ce n'est qu'au prix d'une lecture superposée des œuvres de ces deux modes que peut être cernée la complexité des motifs qui circulent dans ces œuvres respectives autour des instances parentales et en particulier des figures maternelles.

2. LE LANGAGE DES PAUVRES

La quête des origines passe également par la remémoration de la situation sociale et familiale. Chez Camus, c'est d'abord dans *Le Premier homme* (1994), l'histoire en somme banale d'une enfance pauvre d'un enfant algérien privé de père tué sur le front, comme des milliers d'enfants d'après la Première Guerre, et le rapport à la grand-mère autoritaire qui corrige l'enfant à l'aide d'un nerf de boeuf devant une mère impuissante, épuisée par le travail servile «chez les autres» silencieuse et analphabète.

Ces origines sont à la base d'une quête des mots justes capables de témoigner de l'indicible de cet univers. Cet indicible c'est en premier lieu que dans cette famille «on ne lisait ni n'écrivait» (*PH*, 31). C'est surtout l'image de la mère Lucie⁸ Cormery et de «ses difficultés de langage» (*PH*, 61) provoquées par une maladie de jeunesse qui l'a laissée «sourde et avec un embarras de parole» (*PH*, 79) et l'a «empêchée d'apprendre ce que l'on enseignait même au plus déshérités» (*Ibid*).

⁷ S. Freud, *Introduction à la psychanalyse*, Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1973, p. 53.

⁸ La mère de Jacques Cormery, prénommée jusqu'à la page 15 Lucie, est ensuite dénommée Catherine.

On ne décèle aucune trace de mépris apparent dans le récit de l'écrivain vis-à-vis de cette simplicité familiale et tout particulièrement maternelle. Par contre, transparait ici et là un sentiment de gêne ou de honte. En remplissant un de ces imprimés où doit être indiquée la profession des parents, l'enfant Jacques au moment d'inscrire le mot domestique «connu d'un seul coup la honte et la honte d'avoir eu honte» (PH, 187). Suit un constat lucide: «un enfant n'est rien par lui-même, ce sont ces parents qui le représentent. C'est par eux qu'il se définit, qu'il est défini aux yeux du monde» (*ibid*). Pourtant, l'enfant Jacques réaffirme son attachement:

Jacques ne désirait nullement changer d'état ni de famille, et sa mère telle qu'elle était demeurerait ce qu'il aimait le plus au monde, même s'il l'aimait désespérément. Comment faire comprendre d'ailleurs qu'un enfant pauvre puisse avoir honte sans jamais rien envier? (PH, 188)

La découverte des origines – qui passe essentiellement pour Camus par la découverte du poids des mots – marque le début d'un long trajet dans le fondement d'une identité propre et littéraire. Si le narrateur semble considérer comme émouvante la simplicité du noyau familial et ne rejette pas ses origines, il éprouvera toutefois le désir de devenir autre:

Lui avait essayé d'échapper à l'anonymat, à la vie pauvre, ignorante obstinée, il n'avait pu vivre au niveau de cette patience aveugle, sans phrases, sans autre projet que l'immédiat. (PH, 182)⁹

Dans l'œuvre de Cohen, on retrouve un parcours presque semblable. A travers *Le Livre de ma mère* (1954), c'est un autre univers étranger qui se révèle: celui d'un enfant juif de Corfou, immigré en France à Marseille en 1900 à l'âge de cinq ans avec des parents hagards et égarés qui s'intègrent mal en Occident et tentent modestement à l'aide d'un commerce d'oeufs de survivre. L'auteur rappelle:

on était des rien du tout sociaux «qui étaient» fiers quoique pauvres. Nous ne fréquentions personne. Ou plutôt, personne ne nous fréquentait. Mais nous ne l'avouions pas ou, peut-être ne nous en rendions-nous pas compte. (LM, 716-717)

Elevée à Corfou, la mère, Louise Coen, s'exprime originellement dans un dialecte vénitien¹⁰. L'apprentissage de la langue française renforce l'exotisme de sa langue dont elle essaie «de camoufler [...] l'accent, à demi marseillais et à demi balkanique sous un murmure qui se voulait parisien» [LM, 724]. C'est ainsi que plus que tout autre signe extérieur, ce sont ses inflexions, son accent, ses intonations, ses vocables d'émigré qui l'individualisent et lui confèrent son identité d'étrangère au sein de la communauté occidentale («sa petite angoisse d'éternelle étrangère» [LM, 733]). Et bien qu'elle ne soit pas analphabète, la simplicité de la mère de Cohen est proche de celle de la mère de Camus:

Dis-moi, mes yeux, ces fables que tu écris (ainsi appelait-elle un roman que je venais de publier) comment les trouves-tu dans ta tête, ces fables? [...] des centaines de pages sorties du cerveau. Quelle merveille du monde! [...] Et moi, pauvrete, je ne suis même pas capable d'écrire une lettre de condoléances. (LM, 728)

sa maladroite petite main le jour où elle avait pris sous ma dictée, avec tant de fautes d'orthographe et de bonne volonté, des pages d'un livre de moi auxquelles elle ne comprenait saintement que dalle. (LM, 741)

⁹ Par ailleurs, Camus aura soin de corriger à travers ses héros (le père de Clémence est officier) l'histoire de ses origines.

¹⁰ Les parents de Cohen, repliés sur leur langage qu'ils dressent comme un rempart aux slogans antisémites en langue française qui couvrent les murs de Marseille, ne parvinrent jamais à assimiler parfaitement la langue de leur nouvelle patrie. Ils sont dans la situation de «ces immigrés qui connaissent mal la langue majeure dont ils sont forcés de se servir» G. Deleuze et F. Guattari Kafka, *Pour une littérature mineure*, Minuit, 1975, p. 35.

Ainsi, dans la production autobiographique d'Albert Cohen, le rejet de la simplicité familiale – malgré le déni de l'écrivain – est très prégnant. La mère est méconduite à maintes reprises par le fils. Cohen s'insurge particulièrement contre son emploi approximatif de la langue française, hanté par le désir de s'intégrer en France et d'«en être»:

Et pourquoi cette indigne colère? *Peut-être* parce que son accent étranger et ses fautes de français en téléphonant à ces crétins cultivés m'avaient gêné. (*LM*, 730)

Cet énoncé dévoile une vérité refoulée: le complexe social de l'écrivain¹¹ qui s'exprime d'une manière en quelque sorte atténuée (emploi de «*peut-être*»). Honteux de ses origines étrangères et modestes dont la mère est un rappel permanent¹², il tente de la maintenir dans une certaine invisibilité, en la tenant à l'écart de la société mondaine dans laquelle il évolue. Néanmoins, il ne peut étouffer sa voix. Ses fautes de français et son accent étranger lui confèrent une identité «d'immigré[e] et [de] tzigane de la langue française»¹³. Ainsi, de simples expressions comme ici *peut-être* introduisent un type de révélation involontaire qui procède par l'immersion «dans le discours proféré d'un fragment emprunté au discours réprimé»¹⁴. Ici, celui-ci permet de prendre conscience du «complexe social» de l'auteur.

Les mères sont donc pour les deux écrivains un rappel permanent de la modestie de leur origine. Simplicité moins bien intégrée que les deux auteurs ne veulent le faire croire. En outre, il est possible après avoir montré que le rapport à la mère a marqué profondément l'imaginaire de ces œuvres respectives, de dégager l'importance recouverte par ces figures dans le déploiement des formes de l'écriture et d'éclairer les coulisses de la création langagière des deux écrivains.

3. LES COULISSES DE L'ECRITURE

Les analyses psychanalytiques sont toutes d'accord pour affirmer que, chez Camus, l'origine de l'activité littéraire est dans la parole manquante du père et de la mère. La mort du père – homme apparemment qui parlait peu – prive surtout l'enfant d'une certaine représentation de la loi et de la soumission à une certaine autorité, comme l'avoue Camus une fois devenu écrivain:

A 40 ans, il reconnaît qu'il a besoin de quelqu'un qui lui montre la voie et lui donne blâme ou louange: un père. L'autorité et non le pouvoir. (*PH*, annexes, 289)

Toutefois, l'œuvre – au-delà du manque du père qu'elle exprime ici et là – ne cesse surtout à travers l'écriture d'être une œuvre parlant de – et parlant à – la mère. Camus écrit pour celle qui ne peut le lire:

[...] tu ne me comprends pas et ne peux me lire. Aussi je te parle, je t'écris à toi, à toi seule, et, quand ce sera fini, je te demanderai pardon sans autre explication et tu me souriras. (*PH*, annexes, 319)

Et ce qu'il désirait le plus au monde, qui était que sa mère lut tout ce qui était sa vie et sa chair, cela était impossible. Son amour, son seul amour serait à jamais muet. (*PH*, annexes, 292)

¹¹ L'écrivain inscrira ailleurs dans son écriture ce complexe: «je savoure d'être [...] un bourgeois comme eux. On aime être ce qu'on n'est pas,» (*LM*, p. 702).

¹² *LM*, (p. 735): «Pauvre maman, tu avais si peur de me déplaire, de n'être pas assez occidentale à mon gré.»

¹³ G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Kafka Pour une littérature mineure*, p. 35.

¹⁴ *Figures II*, p. 281.

Ainsi, même lorsque Camus semble se proposer comme dans *Le Premier homme* de parler du père, c'est encore sur la mère qu'il retombe. Dans *Carnets III* (1954-1958), où déjà apparaissent des fragments du *Premier homme*, on trouve l'indication suivante:

Premier homme. La mère obligée de fuir l'Algérie finit sa vie en Provence, dans la campagne achetée pour elle par le fils. [...].

Titre: Le Père et la mère? (août 1954-juillet 1958, p. 182)

Plus encore, l'écriture camusienne, selon l'aveu propre de l'écrivain dans l'autobiographie, tente de redonner une voix à la muette de son enfance:

C'est à elle qu'il se propose de donner dans des chapitres en alterné une voix: «Le commentaire des mêmes faits mais avec son [la mère] vocabulaire de 400 mots.» (*PH*, *Annexes*, 312)

Dans l'idéal, si le livre était écrit à la mère, d'un bout à l'autre – et l'on apprendrait seulement à la fin qu'elle ne sait pas lire –, oui ce serait cela. (*Annexes*, 292)

A la parole qu'il aimerait adresser à la mère mais qu'il n'a jamais osé prononcer («Il allait dire: "Tu es très belle" et s'arrêta. Il avait toujours pensé cela de sa mère et n'avait jamais osé le lui dire» [*PH*, 60]), il substitue donc l'écriture littéraire qui lui permet enfin de parler à la mère.

Cette parole manquante de la mère, présente mais taciturne, et silencieuse, Camus n'aura cesse de la sublimer et de la louer dans l'œuvre romanesque. Dans l'œuvre fictionnelle, en effet, le silence de la mère devient celui admirable de ceux qui, parce qu'ils savent se taisent, et son indifférence, le reflet de la tendre indifférence du monde.

Toutefois, il est évident que Camus non seulement a souffert des silences de la mère mais que ceux-ci l'ont profondément marqué. Face à cette figure quasi muette, le fils étrangement troublé s'inclinera toujours («Le silence de la mère. Il déposait ses armes devant elle» [*PH*, annexes 310]) jusqu'à être réduit lui-même à la paralysie langagière («Lui aussi était devant elle [la mère] muet et infirme à sa manière» [*PH*, 79]). Dans ce contexte de soumission au silence de la mère, il n'est pas étonnant que la quête de l'écriture se transforme en une tentative de mise en forme langagière du silence. C'est dans l'œuvre romanesque les biens connus dialogues «cahotants, pleins de malentendus¹⁵», l'écriture neutre et comme glissante, le silence des personnages, en particulier des figures de mère, comme celle de Madame Rieux dans *La Peste*. A sa conversation manquée avec la mère, il substitue donc l'écriture du cycle de l'absurde, langage qui, en reproduisant le silence maternel, l'en libère.

Dans l'œuvre de Cohen, c'est surtout la volubilité de la voix de la mère qui est mise en avant. C'est une parole créatrice et prolifique. Cohen, enfant puis adulte, savoure les «histoires douloureuses ou bouffonnes du ghetto» [*LM*, 738] de la mère ainsi que ses interminables contes qui tiennent à distance, par le verbe, la réalité extérieure et le monde des occidentaux. La mère devient un écrivain «aux émois de génie» qui se méconnaît et a été méconnue («Toi humble et méconnue, ma géniale, Maman, ma petite fille chérie» [*LM*, 731]). Celle-ci, cependant, est reconnue et saluée par le fils qui avoue mieux aime[r] «les histoires de [sa] mère que les romans de certaines dames de la littérature» [*Carn*, 1119].

Les histoires de la mère initient le petit Cohen aux joies de la création et au discours libre de l'imaginaire. Ses paroles, par le seul pouvoir des mots, créent des univers familiers, faisant défi au monde extérieur menaçant, et dont le charme envoûte l'enfant: «"Sache mon fils..." commençait-elle. Et moi je l'écoutais physiquement charmé, car j'étais amoureux des interminables histoires de ma mère.» [*LM*, 738]

¹⁵ *Albert Camus ou la parole manquante*, A Costes, Paris, Payot, 1973.

Tout est dialogue perpétuel entre Louise Coen et son fils, entre les contes de la «géniale» et l'enfant écrivain qui intériorise des rêveries poétiques dans la chambre calfeutrée de l'enfance. A l'exemple de la mère inspiratrice et écrivain, le petit Cohen «écrivain sur l'air en marchant» invente à son tour des histoires où, dépassant les frontières du réel et de l'imaginaire, les mots par leur magie confondent les deux¹⁶. Ce rapport, loin de disparaître, se renforcera en faisant de Cohen adulte ce que sa mère avait rêvé qu'il soit, écrivain:

Elle me dit alors que je suis son écrivain chéri. Je souris de petit bonheur, et avec mon index j'écris sur de l'air en marchant, j'écris que je suis l'écrivain chéri de Maman. [*Carn*, 1124]

Le destin du futur écrivain est par conséquent déjà inscrit à l'avance par les paroles de la mère qui, dès son enfance, l'identifie à un homme de lettres. C'est ainsi que l'écrivain, devenu adulte, dans les rares évocations de l'acte d'écriture, lie étroitement, dans un prolongement fantasmatique puisant ses racines dans l'enfance, la mère et le mot:

Tandis que je continue ces pages sans espoir où je me suis embarqué au hasard, hésitantes galères sur des vagues et ressacs, remous et soudains ressacs d'une mer, ô ma mère perdue. [*Carn*, 1139]

En dehors du jeu courant de l'analogie phonétique entre mer et mère, l'œuvre et l'écriture apparaissent bien aussi, dans une association œdipienne incontournable, un «départ ivre vers la mer» (mère) [*BS*, 397] où la figure maternelle est à la fois le sujet de l'œuvre, le ressort de l'écriture, et une voix dont l'auteur cherchera à reproduire les échos perdus: «Assis devant cette table, je fais la conversation avec elle. Je lui demande si je dois mettre mon pardessus pour sortir. "Oui, mon chéri, c'est plus sûr". Mais ce n'est que moi qui radote, imitant son accent.» [*LM*, 767].

La volubilité de la mère devient celle du fils écrivain. L'écriture d'Albert Cohen est une écriture qui va dans le sens du déploiement. D'une version à l'autre, le texte prolifère. C'est ainsi qu'à propos de *Belle du Seigneur* il affirme:

L'autre jour je relisais des pages de *Belle du Seigneur* et il me venait une telle envie d'en remettre, d'en remettre sans fin. (*BS*, préface, p. LXIX)

Cette parole qui prolifère, trouve son origine dans l'angoisse de la vision de la mort, la sienne mais surtout celle de la mère. Les personnages parlent dans l'œuvre d'Albert Cohen comme dans ceux des pièces de Beckett, pour oublier leur finitude. Ils combleront cette angoisse par un usage immodéré de la parole. Car vivre, c'est se répandre en paroles comme le faisait la mère, palliatif indispensable à la vision de la mort et au silence. Le mal être, le mal de vivre des personnages cohéniens transpirent dans les interstices de cette mobilité verbale

Et moi j'ai le vertige, si vivante ma mère morte, j'ai le vertige, et à quoi bon écrire, et comment continuer à raconter [...], comment sourire? Mais il faut continuer de vivre et de sourire avec eux, continuer le péché de vie en attendant ma mort si proche, ma mort après la mort de ma mère, tous deux ensemble sous la terre, Maman.

Toutefois, l'œuvre cohénienne a beau se déverser en un flux abondant de mots, comme chez Camus, toute vérité se dévoile dans le silence:

En somme, qu'est-ce que c'est que la vérité? demanda rêveusement Salomon.
C'est ce qui est entre les mots dit le petit oncle et qu'on éprouve dans la joie [*Sol*, 113]

¹⁶ Voir à ce propos le rêve de l'âne charmant analysé par Denise Goitein-Galperin dans «Albert Cohen: la reconquête de la parole», *Traces*, 1984, n.º spécial 9/10 où est remarquablement bien établie cette confusion du réel et de l'imaginaire.

Dans les œuvres respectives de ces deux auteurs, dominées l'une plutôt par une poétique et une stylisation du silence, l'autre par celle de la volubilité, l'écriture est donc souvent le reflet de la prégnance maternelle. Celle-ci sert non seulement de fondement au déploiement de l'imaginaire des textes, mais permet de dévoiler les ressorts de l'écriture de ces deux œuvres. Or en parlant de – et à – la mère, il est indubitable que la quête des deux écrivains devient double et même parfois antinomique. L'œuvre, en effet, devient le reflet du désir pour Camus d'établir – et pour Cohen de rétablir – un dialogue avec la figure maternelle, tout en marquant la tentative des fils écrivains de se libérer des rets maternels. Et c'est bien dans cet espace où les fluctuations autour de l'imaginaire maternelle se dessinent que les œuvres de ces deux auteurs puisent une partie de leur originalité profonde.

Ardor and shame in *Middlemarch*

GORDON HIRSCH (*)

Usually readers of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* stress the sociological and ethical aspects of the novel rather than the psychological. Certainly the title of the book, which refers to the fictional town in or near which the characters live, and its subtitle, «A Study of Provincial Life», point to the book's social dimensions. The book's ethical focus is also evident. The narrative propels its characters through one set of ethical dilemmas and choices after another, in order to develop a thematic argument demonstrating the need for «sympathy» and fellow-feeling in a modern era increasingly dominated by a divisive individualism and «egoism». Still, Eliot is clearly fascinated by emotions and individual psychology as well as by her social and ethical themes, and she makes a very serious effort to understand both the power of affects and their connections with the structures of her society.¹

Eliot is in fact a remarkable student of the points where emotion, society, and ethical thought intersect, documenting both the socially disruptive and the socially binding aspects of important affects such as shame, which she repeatedly links to her central thematic concerns. Shame is connected with individuals' quests for «vocation» in the novel – for a career, profession, something to do. Shame is associated as well with their idealism, which Eliot calls «ardor», but also with their shortcomings, disillusion, and despair when that idealistic vision fails to be realized for one reason or another. Characters try to defend against shame by developing their narcissism and grandiosity, by becoming what Eliot would call «egoists», armoring themselves against the judgments and opinions of others.

In other words, Eliot paints a complicated portrait of shame: it knits society together in a web of shared values, yet it may also be coercive. It promotes idealism, but may bring on depression and despair when idealism is frustrated. There is perhaps an evolutionary, Darwinian subtext to all of this: shame is a nonviolent way of binding together the social group, the community, but it can be an instrument of oppression and conformity as well, as the community identifies and persecutes its scapegoats. It is an intensely personal and private feeling, but also the quintessentially interpersonal emotion, the one most likely to function as a social regulator. George Eliot's insight into the role of affects generally and shame in particular is thus subtle and complex. She relates individual psychology both to questions of personal ethics and to forms of social organization.

(*) University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus, Department of English, College of Liberal Arts, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0134, USA.

¹ One classic discussion of «the presentation of feeling» in *Middlemarch* is Barbara Hardy's «*Middlemarch* and the Passions». Hardy notes that Eliot places her passionate moments in a densely social world: «The characters relate to each other's emotions, and are changed by the relation» (10).

SHAME AND NARCISSISM

The operations of shame in *Middlemarch* are clearest, as Alexander Welsh has noted, in the melodramatic Bulstrode subplot.² John Raffles is aware of the banker Bulstrode's shady past in London, where as a kind of pawnbroker Bulstrode likely trafficked in stolen goods, and where, though a strict Evangelical, he nevertheless suppressed news of the discovery of the run-away daughter of the wealthy woman to whom he proposed marriage. The daughter's whereabouts remain hidden. Bulstrode marries, inherits his first wife's fortune upon her death, and, after convincing himself that the source of his wealth and position is immaterial, becomes a leading citizen and moral lantern of Middlemarch, persuaded that he now deploys his wealth as an instrument of divine providence. Raffles suddenly appears on the scene, however, functioning as Bulstrode's «incorporate past» (523), and tries to extort money from him. Whereas the first part of *Middlemarch* registers Bulstrode's position of power and authority in the community, the last half details Raffles's blackmail of Bulstrode and the latter's fear of exposure and disgrace.

Other characters represent similar, though perhaps more complicated, cases where narcissism and grandiosity serve as defenses against shame.³ Among the more interesting examples are Tertius Lydgate and his wife, Rosamond Vincy. Lydgate is a medical man, new to the town, whose central characteristic is his ambition of becoming a hero of medical science. Though born to the gentry, Lydgate is of limited means for that social class, and his medical practice tends as a matter of course to compromise his social status. At the same time, however, any compromise of his professional ideals for the sake of money is equally threatening to his sense of self-esteem. Lydgate, then, is vulnerable on two fronts – socially and professionally. Eliot carefully details his defensive pride by noting his «conceit» and «benevolent contempt» for the Middlemarchers he has come to join, and this pride, Eliot notes, is his «spot of commonness», his moral shortcoming, the chink in his moral armor (149-50). He is someone who bears himself «with the careless politeness of conscious superiority», who always «seemed to have the right clothes on by a certain natural affinity, without ever having to think about them» (167). Fred Vincy, for example, picks up on this attitude and considers Lydgate «a prig, tremendously conscious of his superiority» (672). Eliot makes it very clear that Lydgate alienates his medical colleagues by assuming his superior knowledge and shaming them for their misdiagnoses, for their old-fashioned treatment regimens, and particularly for dispensing and directly charging for their own prescriptions, which Lydgate recognizes invites a conflict of interest. Just as Lydgate shames his fellow practitioners for their scientific backwardness and provinciality, so he shames his rival for the affections of Rosamond Vincy, the unfortunate Ned Plymdale, when Ned shows interest in the fashionable literary annual *Keepsake*. Yet, as Eliot suggests, Lydgate's shaming of others merely underlines his own spot of commonness and vulnerability – his need to believe in his superiority.

It is only when Lydgate marries Rosamond Vincy, whose narcissism (which Eliot calls «egoism») is as unreflecting as his own, that he encounters an intractable object that cannot be subordinated to himself. As the genteelly educated daughter of a Middlemarch manufacturer, Rosamond has a social status she would prefer to rise above. She has in fact been trained throughout her life and schooling to concoct a narcissistic «romance» about how a gentleman will marry her and carry her away from Middlemarch. An early impression of Rosamond's narcissistic self-alienation is

² Welsh is one of the few critics to allude to shame in *Middlemarch*, but he focuses primarily on Eliot's complex representation of the pursuit of knowledge, showing how one aspect of this is represented by the acquisition of information that results in blackmail, scandal, and exposure. Welsh's emphasis finally is on themes related to knowledge and accountability rather than on affect.

³ Helen Block Lewis («Shame and Guilt» 248) and Leon Wurmser (28), are among the modern psychiatrists who explore the role of narcissism and grandiosity as defenses against shame and self-hatred.

communicated through the image of Rosamond as «an actress of parts; ... she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own» (117). Eliot magnificently depicts the somewhat condescending tenderness that Lydgate feels toward Rosamond, which is based on his sexist assumption that «the innate submissiveness of the goose» will beautifully correspond «to the strength of the gander» (356). When Lydgate is frustrated by Rosamond's resistance, his «tenderness ...», which was both an emotional prompting and a well-considered resolve, was inevitably interrupted by ... outbursts of indignation either ironical or remonstrant» (702). His condescension spills over into rage and contempt: by the end of the novel, Lydgate is calling Rosamond «his basil plant; and when she asked for an explanation, [he] said that basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains» (835).

Their entire relationship is in fact shamed-based: Lydgate feels Rosamond undercuts him through her want of openness, which may go so far as duplicity (666) – as when she countermands his instructions for letting their house, or when she secretly writes to his uncle, a baronet, to appeal for funds. Lydgate tries to shame Rosamond into compliance, but in this context she is in fact shame-less and sees herself as the victim of his want of proper solicitude, as the aggrieved party. Eventually, through her «negations» of his wishes and actions, through her passive and not-so-passive aggression, Rosamond, much to Lydgate's astonishment and horror, «had mastered him» (667).⁴

When the couple falls deeply into debt, Lydgate's continued pride, born of a fear of shame – «the pride which made him revolt from exposure as a debtor, or from asking men to help him with their money» (648) – isolates him. He particularly resents «the humiliation of asking» for financial assistance since he has prided himself on his independence (678). Lydgate's marriage to Rosamond and his sinking into debt produce in him a sense of «pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance» (782-83) that will result in the abandonment of all of his old, proud ideals. When he turns briefly to gambling in hopes of finding a way out of the financial morass, Fred Vincy observes in Lydgate the «excited narrow consciousness» of a gambler as opposed to his habitual «air of self-possessed strength» (671). Although Lydgate once possessed «strength and mastery» (764), now «people think me disgraced» (757), believing that he has accepted a bribe from Bulstrode to keep from probing too deeply into Raffles's suspicious death. Lydgate feels shame when he is discovered gaming by Mr. Farebrother, and the «humiliations» Lydgate's pride suffers at this point in the novel, the «disgust with himself» he feels (677), appear in the book beside the various humiliations Bulstrode suffers as the disgraceful «past facts» of his life become known (686). As always in Eliot, this kind of contiguity and parallelism invites comparison and connection⁵ – in this case between Lydgate's humiliation and Bulstrode's.

Another of the most fully realized depictions of narcissistic defenses against shame in *Middlemarch* is to be found in Dorothea's first husband, Edward Casaubon. Eliot shows in great detail how this pedant hopes to furnish the world with his *magnum opus*, a «Key to all Mythologies»,

⁴ Leon Wurmser closes his book with a wonderful description of such shame-based relationships, one which could apply almost word for word to the Lydgates: «Where the other is *used*, partially or fully, emotionally or physically, unconsciously or consciously, love flees and shame enters. This happens where part of the other is disregarded, where calculation and envy, comparing, competing, and accounting take over, where the growth of the other is put down, where stinginess enters and the demand for one's rights and dues is thrown up, where "I am hurt" is more important than "what may I have done wrong?" Most of all, shame demolishingly takes over when one has given all of oneself only to be responded to by a selfish, calculating demand, by duplicity, a cold stare, a sarcastic comment. There is no greater humiliation than giving oneself trustingly and absolutely and being countered with selfishness and betrayal. Then privacy protected by the walls of shame becomes the only refuge in such a stunted relationship. Shame thus is ... the night side of love» (309).

⁵ Barbara Hardy (*Novels* 78-134) and David Carroll, for example, stress the way Eliot uses repetition, parallels, and contrasts.

which will show how «all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed» (24). At the same time, Eliot demonstrates that beneath the surface Casaubon has no real confidence in his work, and she pokes a great deal of fun at his sensitivity to the sneers of his critics – all named after fish – Carp, Tench, and Pike.

Even more importantly, after Dorothea Brooke marries him – as an expression of her need to be married to a worthy, estimable husband – once her disillusion sets in Casaubon feels especially bitter at what he takes to be her criticism:

Poor Mr. Casaubon! This suffering was harder to bear because it seemed like a betrayal: the young creature who had worshipped him with perfect trust had quickly turned into the critical wife.... To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence now was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them; and when she acquiesced it was a self-approved effort of forbearance. (418)

All of Dorothea's responses are now, in the context of their marriage, interpreted by Casaubon as judgments on himself. Although Dorothea does indeed have reason at this point to doubt the usefulness and validity of Casaubon's scholarship, she has in fact studiously censored her critical thoughts about her husband. Instead, Eliot makes clear, Casaubon is largely projecting his self-doubt onto his wife, so that she is felt to be a «cruel outward accuser», giving voice to «those confused [inward] murmurs which we try to call morbid, and strive against as if they were the oncoming of numbness» (200). Before marriage, Casaubon's self-doubts had been easier to set aside: «But Dorothea, now that she was present – Dorothea, as a young wife, who herself had shown an offensive capability of criticism, necessarily gave concentration to the uneasiness which had before been vague» (360).

Casaubon grows jealous, too, of the friendship between Dorothea and his young cousin, Will Ladislaw, whom Casaubon knows to be critical of his scholarly work, but Eliot consistently locates the principal source for Casaubon's feelings in his own anxiety, characterizing his jealousy as «a blight bred in the cloudy, damp, despondency of uneasy egoism» (243). He is «too doubtful – too uncertain of himself» (364-65). His sense of self-worth, is fragile, despite his presentation of himself to the world as an important scholar. His pride in his public image is brittle, and a corroding sense of vulnerability and shame lie just beneath the surface. Eliot offers a splendid image drawn from the world of classical drama to express this discrepancy between public persona and inward feelings of shame: «Doubtless some ancient Greek has observed that behind the big mask and the speaking-trumpet, there must always be our poor little eyes peeping as usual and our timorous lips more or less under anxious control» (314). Less elegantly, perhaps, modern psychologists have termed this phenomenon «the impostor syndrome» (Clance and Imes); Casaubon's professional and scholarly grandiosity papers over a deep conviction of his worthlessness and inadequacy.

In the section of the novel titled «The Dead Hand», Casaubon even tries to control Dorothea after his death – «from what is called fatty degeneration of the heart»! (423) – by attempting to mobilize her shame to prevent her remarriage to Will Ladislaw. At first the dying Casaubon hopes to extract a general, unspecified promise from Dorothea. The way he haltingly phrases his ambiguous request is «that you will let me know, deliberately, whether, in case of my death, you will carry out my wishes: whether you will avoid doing what I should deprecate, and apply yourself to do what I should desire» (477). Dorothea protests that «it is not right – to make a promise when I am ignorant what it will bind me to» (478). In fact, unaware of the intensity of Casaubon's jealousy of Will, she believes that her husband is attempting to yoke her to pursuing his mythological researches after his death. After hours of resistance and internal conflict, Dorothea is finally prepared to agree to Casaubon's cryptic request, but he dies before they meet again. The «dead hand», however, is expressed in the codicil to Casaubon's will which would deprive Dorothea of her late husband's

property if she marries Ladislaw. Dorothea has no great need for the income from Casaubon's property, so the codicil is partly an effort publicly to shame Will and Dorothea into compliance. The language Eliot uses to communicate Dorothea's uneasy resolve, prior to Casaubon's death, to submit to his demands is fascinating:

She simply felt that she was going to say «Yes» to her own doom: she was too weak, too full of dread at the thought of inflicting a keen-edged blow on her husband to do anything but submit completely.... Neither law nor the world's opinion compelled her to this – only her husband's nature and her own compassion, only the ideal and not the real yoke of marriage. She saw clearly enough the whole situation, yet she was fettered: she could not smite the stricken soul that entreated hers. If that were weakness, Dorothea was weak. (481)

Dorothea's preparation to accede involves no active choice, but rather one into which she falls: «She simply felt that she was going to say “Yes”.» The quality of that submission, based on a reluctance to cause injury, is conveyed by the passive agency in which Dorothea's thoughts are framed, by the imagery of containment and control which is contrasted with the imagery of a dreaded violent attack, and by the evasive, conditional narrative commentary which concludes the passage («If that were weakness, Dorothea was weak»).

After Casaubon dies and his will is read, however, Dorothea no longer feels bound by such «duteous devotion» to her husband. In fact, she is shocked at the way Casaubon has brought shame upon them both by making his unworthy fears and suspicions public:

The living, suffering man was no longer before her to awaken her pity: there remained only the retrospect of painful subjection to a husband whose thoughts had been lower than she had believed, whose exorbitant claims for himself had even blinded his scrupulous care for his own character, and made him defeat his own pride by shocking men of ordinary honor. (493)

The «dead hand» of the codicil is one last expression of Casaubon's narcissism and need to control, through the use of shame and the threat of financial penalty, but it fails utterly. In fact, Casaubon's effort to bind Dorothea after her death has the effect of liberating her, demonstrating that her husband was unworthy in a way she had never fully grasped.

SHAME AND VOCATION

Critics have long suggested that the issue of «vocation», what work the men and women will find to do, is a crucial one in this novel.⁶ Lydgate's struggles with his medical career have already been touched upon, and many of the book's other characters – including Dorothea Brooke, Mr. Brooke, Mary Garth, Caleb Garth, the Rev. Camden Farebrother (who would have preferred becoming a naturalist rather than a cleric) – exemplify this theme in one way or another. In Fred Vincy and Will Ladislaw, particularly, the relation of vocation to shame is most fully worked out. Fred Vincy is in some respects a rather minor character in the novel, yet thematically he is very important because of the light he casts on this matter of vocation. Fred, Rosamond's brother, is the child of an upper-middle class manufacturer, and, indeed, his father has attained such important positions in the town of Middlemarch as alderman and mayor. Fred was sent off to «Omnibus College», but failed his examination and dropped out before obtaining his degree, which

⁶ Alan Mintz offers the most complete discussion of the importance of this subject to George Eliot.

would have qualified him for a gentleman's career in the church. He spends much of the novel being rebuffed by Mary Garth, his admirable childhood sweetheart, on grounds that he has proved himself «to be fit for nothing in the world that is useful» (255). The only career Fred can visualize for himself is in the church, though Mary, who can see he has no true religious vocation, declares that she will not accept him if he chooses that path. Instead, she thinks his courtship of her ought to wait «until he has done something worthy», found some fitting work:

I should like better than anything to see him worthy of every one's respect. But please tell him I will not promise to marry him till then; I should shame and grieve my father and mother. He is free to choose some one else. (517)

Meanwhile, Fred gambles, is repeatedly denounced by his father for his idle and spendthrift ways, and suffers the embarrassment of falling into debt and defaulting on that debt, with the result that his co-signer Caleb Garth, Mary's father, is liable. Mary's mother retaliates and tries to shame Fred by alluding to the Reverend Camden Farebrother's romantic interest in Mary; Farebrother is considered by Mrs. Garth and by most Middlemarchers to be a much more admirable and worthy man than Fred.

In essence, then, Fred's difficulty in finding a vocation involves shame; the woman he loves, her parents, and his own parents all try to shame him. He internalizes their judgments that he is foolish, ridiculous, and worthless because he can find no career.⁷ Eventually Mary's father takes pity on Fred and brings him into his business of managing estates, though not before denouncing him for having developed a gentlemanly but illegible style of handwriting – one that is totally inappropriate for a man of business who must keep accurate records. Fred Vincy, then, represents the possibility that one might fail utterly at one's vocation, or even at discovering one's vocation. He manifests a young person's sense that his self is flawed and inadequate (cf. Morrison 86), and as such Fred represents the shameful obverse of that vocational grandiosity with which characters like Bulstrode, Casaubon, and Lydgate present themselves to the world.

Vocation is also a crucial issue for Will Ladislav, who starts out as a dilettantish painter, imagines for a time he might become a poet or perhaps a journalist, and eventually finds his *métier* in politics. In the beginning Will is dependent on his cousin, Mr. Casaubon, for financial support, and yet he clearly is sensitive to Casaubon's feelings that he will never amount to much. In fact, Eliot hints that some of Will's attack on Casaubon's erudition is motivated by the feeling that his own perseverance and accomplishments are being criticized by his cousin (207). Will's attacks on Casaubon's competence, in other words, partly reflect his own feelings of inadequacy and self-reproach. Like Casaubon, Will sometimes interprets Dorothea's most innocuous remarks as expressions of criticism; when she pleads her ignorance about Will's drawing and about art in general, Will «took her words for a covert judgment, and was certain she thought his sketch detestable» (80). Later Eliot records Will's sense that he is «making a fool of himself» (468) by hanging around Middlemarch and working for Mr. Brooke, and she dramatizes this by meticulously documenting Will's embarrassing attempt to catch a glimpse of Dorothea in Lowick Church. Before this fiasco ends, Will is «utterly ridiculous, out of temper, and miserable» (473). After Casaubon's death, Will is motivated by «his proud resolve to give the lie beforehand to any suspicion that he would play the needy adventurer seeking a rich woman» (547), and his «pride became a repellent force, keeping him asunder from Dorothea» (546). Later in the novel, too, his pride defends against feelings of shame when he forbids himself to express his love for Dorothea so long as he lacks fortune and position. Similarly, he spurns

⁷ Gershen Kaufman considers the relation between «failure in vocation» and shame (53-54), and Andrew Morrison notes that rather than speaking explicitly about shame, his patients generally «speak instead of feeling foolish, ridiculous, pathetic, insignificant, invisible, or worthless» (196), which is very much the way Fred Vincy judges himself.

Bulstrode's offer of money to repair the wrong once done Will's mother on the grounds that his mother had originally refused money gotten from the same tainted source and in the belief that Dorothea would think less of him for accepting Bulstrode's offer.

The worst crisis in Will's life develops when Dorothea discovers him with Rosamond in what appears to be a romantic scene, and Will feels ashamed at himself and angry at Rosamond, whom he considers the cause of his disgrace in Dorothea's eyes. In the meantime, the Middlemarchers believe there is indeed a scandal brewing between Rosamond and Will, as they had earlier suspected that there must have been a relationship between Dorothea and Will while Casaubon still lived; Mrs. Cadwallader, in particular, steps up her attacks on Will as «the grandson of a thieving Jewish pawnbroker» (772) and the son of «a rebellious Polish fiddler or dancing master» (819). Society, in other words, seeks to shame Will and thrust scandal upon him, while Will struggles to maintain his independence and reputation while at the same time trying to discover his life's work. The key question for Will throughout is what Dorothea will think of him, how she will judge him, and the critical arena for this judgment is in the context of vocation, what he will become. Will's quest for a vocation and respectability, then, is a constant struggle against a vulnerability to shame.

MINOR CHARACTERS, SHAMEFUL SCRIPTS, AND CANDOR

Shame is an issue for a very great number of minor characters in the novel. For example, Mr. Brooke, Dorothea's uncle and guardian, puffs himself up into a political figure, purchases a newspaper, and runs for parliament. Eventually these bids for admiration crumble, particularly when an effigy of Brooke is used to mock him at a campaign rally, an event which rapidly deteriorates as the candidate is pelted with rotten eggs. A telling point against Brooke is that he cannot truly be a «reform» candidate while he exploits all the tenants living on his estate and the estate itself goes to rack and ruin. These are issues that Brooke's genteel friends, Sir James Chettam and Mrs. Cadwallader, repeatedly try to raise with him, in anticipation of the efforts of his political enemies to shame and discredit him.

Sir James Chettam himself suffers shame when Dorothea Brooke rejects him as a suitor in favor of Casaubon. Chettam's injured pride causes him to turn romantically toward Dorothea's sister, Celia, after Mrs. Cadwallader works on his injured sensibility by suggesting that Celia has always been interested in him. As the narrator comments, «Pride helps us, and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts and not to hurt others» (62). Later on, both Sir James and his wife, Celia, repeatedly attempt to shame Dorothea in an effort to dissuade her from any plan of marrying Will Ladislaw.

Peter Featherstone uses shame to control his relatives. He forces Fred Vincy, for instance, to obtain a note from Bulstrode certifying that Fred has not been advanced any money based on expectations of an inheritance from Featherstone. By allowing these imputations to stand unanswered, Fred's father explains to Bulstrode in requesting such a letter, «you might as well slander Fred» (130). Shame is the means by which Featherstone gains power and control over all those around him, playing one set of relations off against another; and, in part, it is the way many of his relatives, whom Eliot terms «the Christian carnivora» (331), seek to control him, as they remind him of their family connection, which they hope he will honor in his will. After Featherstone's death, he continues to exercise power over his greedy relatives through another exercise of the «dead hand», by leaving his property to his illegitimate son, Joshua Rigg, an act which expresses both Featherstone's defiance of his family and his desire to shame the lot of them.⁸

⁸ Gershen Kaufman offers a good, brief description of the way in which «scripts that aim at maximizing power over others and maintaining control ... constitute [a] strategy for protecting the self against shame» (101). Featherstone is basically a mass of such power scripts.

Sarah Dunkirk, who is not strictly speaking a character at all but part of the book's pre-history, exists largely because of her proud rejection of shame. She is Will Ladislav's mother, and the only thing the reader is told about her is that she ran away from the family of Bulstrode's first wife because their wealth derived from pawning stolen property.

Perhaps the character who most directly embodies conventional, genteel opinion is Mrs. Cadwallader, whom Eliot employs to exemplify the use of shame as a social sanction in the novel. The verse epigraph which Eliot places at the head of the chapter in which Mrs. Cadwallader is introduced clearly points to her character: «My lady's tongue is like the meadow blades,/ That cut you stroking them with idle hand./ Nice cutting is her function» (52). In the chapter proper she is described as having «a turn of tongue that let[s] you know who she was, ... a lady of immeasurably high birth, descended as it were, from unknown earls» (53). Speaking from this position of social eminence, she is quick to tell Mr. Brooke exactly «what people say of you, to be quite frank» and to let him know when he is only mouthing «a piece of clap-trap you have got ready for the hustings» (54). Later in the novel, she spreads gossip to Dorothea about Ladislav, who «is making a sad dark-blue scandal by warbling continually with your Mr Lydgate's wife, who they tell me is as pretty as pretty can be» (628). In a very telling, extended metaphor, soon after Mrs. Cadwallader is introduced into the novel, in fact, Eliot turns a «microscope» on a hypothetical microorganism to find that «a stronger lens» reveals «certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for [its] victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's matchmaking will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed» (83). This is Eliot's metaphorical portrait, then, of her foremost example of snobbery, matchmaking, gossip, scandal, and the operations of shame in the book. More than anyone else, Mrs. Cadwallader is the voice of Middlemarch society.

In yet another striking figure Eliot embodies the operation of all of these strong social pressures in her personification of the «Candor» which makes a Middlemarch wife aware «that the town held a bad opinion of her husband.... To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candor never waited to be asked for its opinion» (741). Thus Harriet Bulstrode does not have long to wait before she learns of her husband's disgrace. «Candor» in Middlemarch directly expresses the town's censure, explicitly marking an individual's shame and fall from grace.

ARDOR AND DISILLUSION

The other side of the coin of shame is, as has already been suggested, the «ardor» manifested by a number of Eliot's young idealists. To Eliot, this word suggests an ambitious idealism, fervor, zeal, passion. The word itself derives from the Latin *ardere*, meaning «to burn». In a sense, the fire of ardor is the obverse of blushing, which is a shameful burning. Ardor is the pride of achievement and accomplishment, to which the intensity of youthful idealism might lead.

Although much of *Middlemarch* concerns itself with ardor, the fear of failure, the fear of not accomplishing one's goals, is very much present as well. Eliot's «Prelude» to the novel emphatically introduces the theme of «ardor» by citing the case of Saint Theresa of Avila, founder of a religious order, and by describing «her flame» and her «passionate, ideal nature [which] demanded an epic life» (3). Eliot insists, however, that «the social lot of women» constrains them, and in modern times one frequently encounters a young woman whose ardor can find no socially acceptable expression: «Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed» (4). The novel's «Finale» returns to the example of Saint Theresa; however, it more positively iterates the themes and images of the

«Prelude», implying that even the «unhistoric acts» of an ardent woman may be «incalculably diffusive» on those around her (896), rather than, as the «Prelude» would have it, merely «dispersed among hindrances». Diffusion, in other words, carries a very different weight than dispersal. Still, the entire book, from its very beginning to its final words, chronicles this oscillation between achievement and failure, between ardor and disappointment, between pride and shame.

Nor does the book foreclose the possibilities of an ironic kind of «success» at the end. Tertius Lydgate becomes «what is called a successful man», with a medical practice among the well-to-do, «alternating ... between London and a Continental bathing place.... But he always regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he once meant to do» (834-35). Eliot ironically interweaves success and failure: though the world thinks Lydgate has succeeded, he regards himself as having failed. Yet what Lydgate has actually achieved might – given his social background and personal limitations – be regarded as more realistic than his grandiose scheme of becoming a hero of medicine, an outcome available to relatively few.

One other way of gauging the downside of ardor and the idealistic quest for vocation is to note that perhaps the novel's most memorable moment is Dorothea Brooke's fall into deep despair during her honeymoon visit to Rome. Casaubon has buried himself in the Vatican library to do research, and Dorothea feels the crushing (if still inarticulable) weight of her disillusion with the ideals of her marriage as she confronts the visible decay of Rome, seeing «ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence». The city itself is a «vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual», an image of ideals smashed and left in fragments, drained of all vitality. This passage culminates in the remarkable description of «the red drapery which was being hung [in St. Peter's] for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina» (193-94), perhaps the most striking image of unhappiness and disillusion to be found anywhere in fiction.⁹

The core affects in *Middlemarch* oscillate, then, between an idealistic hopefulness and somber disillusion, between ardor and depression. The obverse of all the proud hopefulness in the novel is a profound sense of failure and despair.

DOROTHEA'S SYMPATHY AND WOMEN'S ROLES

At a critical point early in *Middlemarch*, Eliot asks a rhetorical question that has become famous in the history of the novel, «But why always Dorothea?» (278). It is a question that, one-third of the way into the novel, deflects our attention from the consciousness of the book's heroine and invites us to engage with the thought processes of other, perhaps less central and less admirable characters, in order that we may see things from their points of view and understand their behaviors as well. The question is Eliot's quintessential demonstration in the narrative itself of the need for «sympathy» rather than «egoism», if we are ever to understand one another and function ethically in a social milieu.

However, since this essay has largely put Dorothea to one side in its discussion of shame, it seems appropriate to bring her back to center stage in order to consider how Eliot's crucial theme of «sympathy» relates to the emotion of shame. The crisis of Dorothea's story occurs when she suddenly comes upon Will Ladislaw and Rosamond Vincy in what appears to be an intensely romantic moment. Will's response is shame and embarrassment at being discovered in what looks like a compromising situation, and Dorothea's initial response is «jealous indignation and disgust», «burning scorn»:

⁹ Helen Block Lewis is among the clinicians who argue that «shame is a central component in depression.... Depressed people feel helpless to affect their destiny at the same time that their (helpless) self seems to them the appropriate target of hostility» («Shame and Guilt» 250-51). See also Lewis, «The Role of Shame in Depression Over the Life Span».

But the base prompting which makes a woman more cruel to a rival than to a faithless lover, could have no strength of recurrence in Dorothea when the dominant spirit of justice within her had once overcome the tumult and had once shown her the truer measure of things. All the active thought with which she had before been representing to herself the trials of Lydgate's lot, and this young marriage union which, like her own, seemed to have its hidden as well as evident troubles – all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance. She said to her own irremediable grief that it should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort. (788)

Dorothea is aware of her injury, but she overcomes her jealousy by a conscious, willed sympathy – or empathy, since she is able to identify the difficulties of the Lydgates' marriage with her own earlier marital problems with Casaubon. Dorothea subsequently returns to Rosamond's house to offer financial and emotional support, and as a result prompts Rosamond's acknowledgment that Dorothea has misinterpreted the earlier scene and that Will is not in love with Rosamond. The narrator offers this commentary on Dorothea's extraordinary efforts to assist the Lydgates: «It is given to us sometimes even in our everyday life to witness the saving influence of a noble nature, the divine efficacy of rescue that may lie in a self-subduing act of fellowship» (803).

Despite the fact, then, that *Middlemarch* exists in a secular universe of social judgments and sanctions, a world governed largely by the shaming of Mrs. Cadwallader and the community's «Candor», there are other values that may be invoked. Eliot insists on the unity of society, its organic relations: this novel is not titled «Dorothea Brooke», as it might well have been, but «*Middlemarch*». Dorothea's essential virtue, from Eliot's point of view, is her desire to protect individuals from calumny, from false or distorting accusations that shame. A crucial aspect of Dorothea's character is her readiness to trust people, unless or until that trust is proven to be misplaced. Thus she continues to feel the obligations of her marriage to Casaubon, almost to the point of pathology, even after she has learned the limits of his affection for her and has come to doubt the value of his intellectual pursuits: «It seemed as if she must quell every impulse in her except the yearnings of faithfulness and compassion» (592). Similarly, Dorothea absolutely refuses to suspect Will Ladislaw of any unworthy pursuit of herself while Casaubon is alive, and trusts in his integrity after Casaubon's codicil is disclosed, even though Will himself feels «I have been grossly insulted in [Dorothea's] eyes and in the eyes of others. There has been a mean implication against my character» (631). Finally, Dorothea is absolutely loyal in defending Lydgate's probity when the townfolk by and large believe he has been influenced by Bulstrode's «bribe»; Dorothea is readier publicly to defend Lydgate against these suggestions of improper influence than Lydgate is in his own mind. This is how she expresses the radically self-sacrificing loyalty she acts upon: «Mr. Lydgate would understand that if his friends hear a calumny about him their first wish must be to justify him. What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?» (733-34). «I believe that people are almost always better than their neighbors think they are», Dorothea notes, and the narrator adds: «Some of her intensest experience in the last two years had set her mind strongly in opposition to any unfavorable construction of others» (733).

Eliot's point is the very Victorian one that her world is threatened by fragmentation and atomism. Individuals, left to their own devices, may act entirely out of «egoism», without any shared set of values. Because egoistic individuals still live in a society, there may be social sanctions, but they are likely to be applied without a sound ethical basis. They will be based on a struggle for personal power and ascendancy, and they will be founded upon presumptions of guilt, rather than an empathic generosity. Eliot presents «sympathy» or compassion as a means of defending against shame. It invokes belief, trust, and loyalty to individuals to whom one has grown attached – regardless of whatever accusations and imputations are abroad. It mobilizes a resistance

to conventional social judgments, to what «the world believes» (738).¹⁰ Dorothea's energies, her passion and ardor, resist shame and disillusion. The shame of the blush is transformed into the idealizing flame of ardor, and a certain naivete is preferable to suspicion too readily deployed:

While [Dorothea] was full of pity for the visible mistakes of others, she had not yet any material within her experience for subtle constructions and suspicions of hidden wrong. But that simplicity of hers, holding up an ideal for others in her believing conception of them, was one of the great powers of her womanhood. (772)

One of the reasons Eliot is so interested in depicting resistance to shame is that she perceives it as something to which women are particularly vulnerable. Much of *Middlemarch* is concerned with the question of what it is that women can do in a society in which men are predominant,¹¹ and, as Gershen Kaufman declares, «Shame is the affect of inferiority» (17). The best-known and most pointed expression of this sense of limitation occurs in the book's «Finale», where Dorothea's marriage to Will Ladislaw is described. Ladislaw will eventually enter Parliament, where he can work for reform, and Dorothea will provide «wifely help»:

Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should be absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done. (836)

This popular opinion is still a kind of shaming of Dorothea, a corroding skepticism. Eliot knows that, rather than ideal conditions, we live in «an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion» (839). She insists, however, that it is preferable to live in trust and belief in one another, even though that might risk «the aspect of illusion» and even occasional error, than to live in a society dominated by shame and skeptical disbelief.¹²

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¹⁰ In a more skeptical modern age, Leon Wurmser argues that such unqualified and idealized love can itself be a defense against shame, a means of undoing a fundamental sense of deprivation and unlovability in oneself (199-200).

¹¹ Helen Block Lewis has written tellingly about shame as a particular problem for women in Western societies (*Sex* 203-19).

¹² I wish to thank my spouse, Louella Elizabeth Hirsch, for her many valuable editorial and interpretive contributions to this essay.

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Love in death: The unknown jouissance of Salvador Dali

YANA HASHAMOVA (*)

The reader may find the bond between love and death banal since this topic has been thought over plenty of times and yet we are destined to return to it with a vain hope: this time we may finally comprehend it. Fortunately, Dali's life and work offer a shocking twist to our common understanding of love and death. Certainly, the sentence above hides a paradox but it is necessary to see this paradox. There cannot be a common understanding of love and Dali's work rigidly dismisses all conventional norms. Love is unique as is death and any time we think and write about love we challenge this uniqueness for we attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible. However, we never cease thinking and talking about love. What is it that attracts love to language?

Lacan suggests that the act of love is poetry and there is a world between them (*Livre XX*, pp. 67-68). With this assumption, talking about Dali's work would be talking about his making love. It appears from his work that for mystery of love Dali substitutes frustration and perversion. Love provokes death and death consumes love in aggression and violence. Tragedy or supreme happiness is inflamed by the unknown jouissance, the mysterious female nature, which underlie any exchange between sexes and motivate hysterical erotic ecstasy.

The unknown of the other sex lures Dali in an infinite fly of imagination which guides him in his life and his work. This imagination to painfully uncovers personal layers of Dali's individuality.

In 1950 Dali drew a sketch showing a boy in the nude, stepping on his own shadow and holding the end of a silhouette of a boat. Only the boy's sex organ is drawn in the greatest detail.¹ The oil that came from this sketch is quite different. In «Dali at the Age of Six, when He Thought He Was a Girl, Lifting the Skin of the Water to See a Dog Sleeping in the Shade of the Sea» the boy has changed his sex organ which now on the canvas is feminine. To lift the skin of the water and to see a dog sleeping in the shade of the sea is a pure attempt to alter nature, to change gender, to transform identity. What is there under the skin of the water that Dali wants to discover?

In 1933 Dali ventured Gala's experience which seemed to him exotic and simultaneously familiar. «Gala with Two Lamb Chops Balanced on Her Shoulder» betrays both fear and pleasure. The unusual fusion of Gala's face and the chops disturbs the senses. Gala's expression radiates extreme satisfaction and enjoyment whereas the two lamb chops introduce the unknown, the

(*) University of Illinois, Program in Comparative Literature, 2070 Foreign Languages Literature, Urbana, Illinois 61801, USA.

¹ See Rojas, p. 137.

unfamiliar, perhaps the violent in pleasure. The flesh and the blood on the foreground of the delightful face question the seemingly known pleasure.

The same year Dali published a photo collage entitled «Le Phenomene de l'extase» which presents close-ups of women's faces with a smiling face of a statue in the middle. (The photomontage was a reference to an earlier homage to Charcot.²) The photographs unite around one emotional state: the faces reveal enjoyment and enchanting satisfaction of women in a moment of supreme relaxation, a moment between being awake and falling asleep. The camera has caught a gentle delightful smile on most of the faces. Simultaneously, all faces are different and hide a very feminine expression of rapture. The close-ups of ears in the collage underlie the difference between all faces. Only two male photos appear in the collage as well as one vertical line with a leaf or a tail on the top, no doubt very phallic image.

Many years later Lacan saw in Bernini's statue of Saint Teresa a feminine ecstasy and an expression of female jouissance.

Pour la Hadewijch en question, c'est comme pour Sainte Thérèse – vous n'avez qu'à aller regarder à Rome la statue du Bernini pour comprendre tout de suite qu'elle jouit, ça ne fait pas de doute. Et de quoi jouit-elle? Il est clair que le témoignage essentiel des mystiques, c'est justement de dire qu'ils l'éprouvent, mais qu'ils n'en savent rien.³

Lacan calls a mystic any one who senses that there is a jouissance that goes beyond, that a jouissance of woman is something more. The jouissance of woman goes beyond language and the law, and exceeds the phallic fantasy. Woman does not have the illusion of possessing jouissance, however, she allows herself to be possessed. There are men as good as women, says Lacan. Perhaps Dali is such a mystic?

Dali is one of those rare artists who offers to Twentieth century audience «The Last Supper» with a portrait of female Christ. In the figure of Christ everyone can recognize Gala inspired and absorbed in a talk or a thought with her breast uncovered. Is this Dali's obsession with Gala and the jouissance or was Christ a mystic as well?

In his relationship with Gala, Dali wished to achieve a complete fusion and introduced a dual signature to his works, «Dali-Gala». Violence and possession dominate the process of this fusion, the process of his relationship with her. Once he climbed high cliffs with her and both hand in hand looked down over the edge. While she was observing him with her big and enigmatic eyes, Dali had a sudden impulse to throw rocks into the sea and he was delighted imagining that it was Gala he was smashing down.⁴ Dali claims he did not know why he did not kill her. Perhaps she quenched his aggressive drive by answering his needs or perhaps he desperately needed her. After their first erotic kiss which converged all his sexual fantasy, Dali grabbed her by the hair, pulled her head back, asking what he could do to prove to her that he was a man and an animal. «Kill me», she replied.⁵ Dali did not kill her. His aggression was slowly transformed into submission and fear. He became her slave in an attempt to know jouissance, to absorb it and embrace it. Gala became for him the phallic mother of whom he was afraid. His repulsive obsession with the grasshopper suggests his phobia for the phallic mother. The image of the grasshopper appears often in his pictures hanging on the mouth of a face (usually Dali's face). He explained this obsession with an incident in his school years when his classmates took a grasshopper and put it on his mouth. Since then Dali was terrified by this image. Freud explains Leonardo's fear of the phallic mother, his homosexuality and his narcissism with Leonardo's memory of a vulture which had landed on his

² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³ Lacan, p. 71.

⁴ See Rojas, p. 145.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

mouth, opened it and struck him many times with its tail against his lips. At the end of his essay Freud concludes:

It seems at any rate as if only a man who had had Leonardo's childhood experiences could have painted the Mona Lisa and the St. Anne, have secured so melancholy a fate for his works and have embarked on such an astonishing career as a natural scientist, as if the key to all his achievements and misfortunes lay hidden in the childhood phantasy of the vulture.

These words could be said about Dali and his art, who sublimates his libido into a feverish urge to work, expresses his phobic obsession and horror of the phallic mother in his pictures and, finally, succeeds violently in stealing the mysterious essence of feminine nature.

In «Chien Andalou» woman's hair (from her armpits) flies over and appears on a man's face while the man aroused and wild attacks the woman in the corner of a room. Is that the dog sleeping in the shade of the sea under the skin of the water? Or the dog is in «L'Age d'or»? Two scenes – a female face with a male hand in the mouth and a male face with a female hand in the mouth – provoke with the male quest (Bunuel's and Dali's) for the female mystery, the unknown experience, for there is no language to express it. What is the excitement and the satisfaction of a woman? The difference in the unknown motivates love and any encounter between sexes. Dali sees this encounter only possible in transgression and death.

Pictures and movies were the love language for Dali and he mastered this language well since he could not perfect that well the language of his relationship with Gala. Surprisingly, in 1945 he turned to words in fiction in his quest to comprehend the incomprehensible. Dali wrote a novel about the Second World War and the French resistance which is really a novel about his fears and phobia.

Provocative and arrogant as always, Dali is simultaneously sincere in his discovery of words. He is bound to exploit the language of words for his phobia and complexes needed not only to talk but to shout. Talking gave him the excitement he could hardly get from anything else. In his broken English, which according to him, the Americans never understood although they laugh like crazy at any phrase they manage to catch, Dali said about himself:

Dali is impotent sexually. But not completely – myself exaggerate tremendously in my talking – sometimes some erection is possible. But no make love too much because... is easy. Never clear anything you know. All big artists, except Johann Sebastian Bach, qui create tremendous quantity of (offspring are impotent).⁶

All his fears of impotence and excitements of erection become transparent in the novel. Dali writes with voluptuous delight about the life of the Count of Grandsailles, about the women he has and he does not have. Grandsailles destroys everything and everyone around him in his life. The victims, his friends and the women who love him, painfully suffer and die under the spell of his irresistible seductiveness. His language and ability to talk are the most powerful tool of his seduction.

(The Count had an) unique reputation as an original conversationalist. He availed himself of these jotted notes also and more especially to seduce women, and above all to keep alive that latent and consuming passion, composed of idle talk and artificiality, which by the growing addiction to its slow and fatal power linked him to Madame Solange de Cleda.

⁶ Quoted in Rojas, p. 10.

For many years the Count purposefully avoids any close or physical contact with Solange and feeds his own and her erotic phantasies only with words. He even asks her to visit him at night, lie in bed with him not touching him and leave when he tells her to do so.

As soon as Solange had left, the Count of Grandsailles turned on the light in his room. The sheets of his bed, imperceptibly mussed, barely kept the imprint of Solange's body, and her irremediable absence suddenly assailed him, haunting him and plunging his desire into a deep distress, in the heart of which the most contradictory feelings began to batter one another in a cruel struggle.

Distraction and the feeling of death are brought together by no action, by lack. Grandsailles tortures her by not recognizing her body and himself by realizing her absence. Their passion and desire for each other are consumed only in words. The suffering, the pain, and the enjoyment are there in their talks and letters, in words and language. All of which is too much for the body to bear and is discharged in language. According to Lacan, *jouissance* is felt most of the times as unbearable suffering. Is Grandsailles's painful pleasure only in language? Is this another attempt to capture *jouissance* and is Grandsailles a mystic too? *Jouissance* cannot be possessed as well as language. We are born in them. One of the main purposes of human life is to regulate *jouissance*, to discharge *jouissance* from the body which Lacan sees as castration. The symbolic register of castration is language. What is Grandsailles's life other than a long, slow, and agonizing castration in language? He literally kills Solange with a letter, but may be, there is nothing else for her to do but to die, for this is his sadistic wish and her masochistic answer. In this letter the Count asks her to admit two sins which, the reader knows well, are not really sins, for she did them with the only thought to please him and to be with him. However, she admits her guilt without any explanation and thus she again gives him the only thing he wishes for, her death. She completely allows her desire to consume her even when this desire is her own death.

At the end Grandsailles is left with the ugliest woman around him, the canoness who not only articulates the truth for him: he is a killer, but wants him physically and wants to give him a son.

... she bent forward without the slightest embarrassment the gaping neck of her dress exposed her bosom far down, with her two breasts, withered, elongated and dangling like a goat's...

This is the punishment of the flesh which the Count abused all his life; this is the chastisement of both the imaginary and the real. In Grandsailles's disdainful abuse of nature, the reader could imagine Dali at the age of six lifting the skin of the water. What is the dog sleeping in the shade of the sea? Has Dali discovered what it is? It appears he conceives there only death.

Dali lived a long life with constant visions of violence and fear of death. Threatened by the phallic mother, he became a victim of the other sex, which lured him with its mystery, with its difference, with the seductive delight of the unknown. Dali dived in the very bottom of the unknown, obsessed and impotent. He never thought he could possess *jouissance* but he allowed himself to be possessed by it, especially, in his art, in his language. The dog still sleeps in the shade of the sea. However, Dali has forever lifted for us the skin of the water.

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Emotions reflected in Picasso's portraiture of four women in his intimate life (*)

*PAUL DE BOECK (**)*

*SEYMOUR ROSENBERG (***)*

The purpose of this study is to explore the relations between emotions that viewers see depicted in portraiture and the artist's beliefs and feelings about the person portrayed. Particularly amenable to such an exploration is the 20th century portraiture that is more emotionally interpretive of the person portrayed than traditional portraiture. Our psychological perspective also leads us to portraiture for which there is a strong personal relationship between the person portrayed and the artist. Picasso's numerous portraits of each of several intimate women in his life is an excellent candidate for such an exploration, given his highly interpretative portraits of these women, and given how much we know about Picasso, about the women involved, and about his emotional relationship with each of them.

We are hardly the first to explore the relations between emotional expression in art and the artist. What our study brings to this exploration is an empirical approach to the assessment of depicted emotions in portraiture, combined with a computer-based analysis specifically suited to finding emotional patterns associated with each of the persons portrayed. The success of such an empirical approach also requires that we have a stable assessment of the range of emotions that an artist might have associated with the person. Here again, Picasso's portraiture is a good choice since he painted numerous portraits of each of these intimates; so, we need not rely on a portrait or two to make such an assessment.

We want to highlight the fact that our assessment of the emotional content depicted in the portraiture also conforms to the methodological requirement that it be replicable. By replicable we mean that a researcher who follows the procedure we used will come up with essentially the same assessments that we did. Thus, one of the main advantages of using an empirical procedure to identify what emotions are depicted in a portrait is that we separate the identification of emotions depicted in the art from our (the authors') interpretations of what influenced the artist to depict

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(**) Department of Psychology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.

(***) Department of Psychology, Rutgers University, Livingston Campus, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903, USA.

them. That is, researchers might have different ideas about what influenced the artist to depict the emotional content in his/her art, but not on the replicable data on which they based their ideas. In a way, the study is a test of the value of bringing such an approach to this topic.

SELECTION OF PORTRAITS

We selected portraits of four women with whom Picasso had an intimate and long-standing relationship. The four women are Marie-Therese Walter, Dora Maar, Françoise Gilot, and Jacqueline (Roque) Picasso. The first of these relationships, with Marie-Therese, started when Picasso was in his mid-forties. Then, Dora; then Françoise. The last, with Jacqueline, started when Picasso was in his 70's and ended with his death at 91. We selected four portraits of each woman, 16 in all.

For each woman, the sample of portraits spans the total time period during which Picasso painted portraits of her. We restricted our selection to portraits of the woman alone, painted in oil. The 16 portraits are listed in Table 1. These (and other) portraits by Picasso are «a break from the ... conception of "portrait" [as] a visual parallelism between a thing seen and its image...» (Rubin (1996a, p. 13).

VIEWS

Once we selected the 16 portraits for the study, our next task was to identify the emotions depicted in each of the portraits. For this, we enlisted the help of several viewers (five women and three men) from among our colleagues and acquaintances who are knowledgeable about art, and who would give us sensitive and conscientious judgments.

Each viewer was shown the 16 portraits, one at a time, and asked to identify emotions depicted in each portrait, using a list of emotion terms supplied by us. The list includes the primary affects (Tomkins, 1962, 1963), such as interest, joy, anger, fear, sadness, and so on. Also included in the list are emotion terms that we thought might be particularly salient in Picasso's portraiture (or his emotional personality).

For each emotion, a viewer was asked to make one of three ratings: 1. the emotion is not depicted in this painting; 2. the emotion is depicted to a noticeable degree; 3. the emotion is depicted to an extreme degree.

THE CLUSTERING OF EMOTIONS INTO SUB-GROUPS

Our first analysis of these ratings is a kind of computer-based clustering that identifies how the terms tended to sort themselves out empirically (De Boeck & Rosenberg, 1988; Maris, De Boeck, & Van Mechelen, 1996; Van Mechelen, De Boeck, & Rosenberg, 1995). This analysis revealed that when viewers saw one positive emotion in a painting, they also tended to report seeing other positive emotions in that painting; and in a similar way, negative emotions tended to co-occur with each other. However, emotional valence is not the only determinant of cluster membership. For some emotion terms, their membership in a cluster with other terms is due to their similarity in meaning, for example, angry and contempt; in other cases, membership in a cluster of terms is due to the fact that when Picasso depicted one emotion, say sad, he was also very likely to depict pained with it.

In any case, the cluster analysis gave us five clusters of emotion terms implicitly used by the viewers to describe the pattern of emotions associated with each of the paintings. The most characteristic member(s) of the five clusters are listed at the bottom of Table 1. The first two clusters, [+I]-affection, cheerful, relaxed and [+II]-connected, interested, warm, are positive; the last two clusters, [-I]-angry, contempt and [-II]-sad, pained, are negative. The middle cluster, distant, is rather special, in that it can be positive or negative, depending on what else occurs with it in a painting.

TABLE 1
Portraits used in the study and the emotion clusters depicted in each portrait

	E M O T I O N C L U S T E R S :				
	+I	+II	distant	–I	–II
MARIE-THERESE:					
Bust of a Girl (1926)		*	*		'
The Dream (1932)	**	*			
Girl before a Mirror (1932)		***			
Marie-Therese Leaning on One Elbow (1939)	*	*			
JACQUELINE:					
Jacqueline with Flowers (1954)	'		*	'	
Jacqueline in a Black Scarf (1954)	*	**			
Large Profile (1963)	'	*	*		
Seated Woman (1971)	*	*	*		
DORA:					
Weeping Woman (1937)				'	***
Dora Maar Seated (1937)	**	*			
Head of a Woman (1940)			**	'	'
FRANCOISE:					
Seated Woman (1945)			*		*
Woman-Flower (1946)	'			'	
Woman Drawing (1951)	*		*	'	
Head of Francoise (1952)		'			*

+I is the emotion cluster: affection, cheerful, relaxed.

+II is the emotion cluster: connected, interested, warm.
distant.

–I is the emotion cluster: angry, contempt.

–II is the emotion cluster: sad, pained.

*** The probability of a viewer perceiving the emotion cluster of the column is at least .75.

** The probability ... is at least .50.

* The probability ... is at least .25.

' The probability ... is at least .125.

EMOTIONAL PATTERNS DEPICTED IN THE PORTRAITURE

Now to the main questions of this study: In order to explore the relations between emotions that viewers see depicted in portraiture and the artist's beliefs and feelings about the person portrayed, we first have the question: What is the pattern of depicted emotions in the portraiture of each of the four women? We answer this question in terms of the presence of each of the five clusters of emotions. Then and most importantly, the question is: To what extent are Picasso's feelings about each of these women, and his beliefs about their emotional life as he saw it, reflected

in the portraiture? We answer this second question with what we know about Picasso, about the women, and about his relationship with each of them.

The pattern of depicted emotions for each of the women is in Table 1. Notice that in all four portraits of Marie-Therese, she is depicted almost exclusively with positive emotions, with [+II]-connected, interested, warm somewhat stronger on average than [+I]-affection, cheerful, relaxed. The two negative clusters, [-I] and [-II], are not depicted with any strength in any of the portraits of Marie-Therese, although distant is a dominant emotion in a portrait (Bust of a Girl) that Picasso painted early in their relationship (perhaps the first one of her).

As for Jacqueline, the results in Table 1 show that the emotional patterns depicted in her portraits are very similar to those of Marie-Therese. However, distant is a more salient emotion in Jacqueline's portraiture.

On the interpretive side: We know that Marie-Therese and Jacqueline devoted their lives almost exclusively to Picasso (O'Brian, 1976; Penrose, 1958). Their major identity was to be Picasso's woman. As for the distant emotion in Jacqueline's portraiture, it may be due to the fact that she was more controlling of the relationship than was Marie-Therese – and Picasso had given up resisting such control in the last two decades of his long life, although it did distance him.

The emotional patterns depicted in the portraiture of Dora and Francoise are in sharp contrast to those of Marie-Therese and Jacqueline.

Table 1 shows that, unlike Marie-Therese and Jacqueline, Dora and Francoise are both depicted with a mixture of positive and negative emotions. Also, the positive emotions are somewhat more attenuated than those for Marie-Therese and Jacqueline – also a contrast. On the negative side, sad and pained are about equally salient for Dora and Francoise, as is distant. However, anger is somewhat more salient in Dora's portraiture than in Francoise's.

In an interpretive vein again: These depicted emotional patterns for Dora and Francoise are consistent with his relationship with these two women; they simply did not idolize him as did Marie-Therese and Jacqueline. Dora and Francoise were both independent women. They had each developed a strong professional identity before meeting Picasso. Dora was a photographer (and artist) and Francoise was an artist. They both continued their professional work during their relationship with Picasso. Each was more than a «Picasso's woman». Unlike Marie-Therese and Jacqueline, these women were both intellectuals and challenged Picasso intellectually (which he did like, and found wanting in Marie-Therese).

Their positive emotional life with him, while affectionate, was less dominated by an adoration of, and acquiescence to Picasso. They simply had more spirit and less docile devotion than Marie-Therese and Jacqueline.

There are, however, two important differences between the Dora and Francoise: 1. As we have already mentioned, anger is more salient in Dora's portraiture than in Francoise's. 2. Each of Dora's portraits is either primarily positive or primarily negative, whereas in Francoise's portraits, positive and negative emotions tend to be simultaneously depicted, and somewhat muted.

These subtle differences between the portraiture of these two women is consistent both with their differences in personality and with the emotionality they expressed in the relationship. Dora was emotionally volatile and openly expressive of her feelings toward Picasso. Francoise, on the other hand, had a more even temperament and showed much greater restraint in expressing her negative feelings, particularly anger, about the relationship (Gilot & Lake, 1964, p. 340). (The «low-key» ambivalence in Francoise's portraits is also consistent with Picasso's general perception of her.)

The depicted emotions, «distant» and «connected» warrant special comment. They are very salient in Picasso's portraiture and probably stem from an ambivalence he had about interpersonal distance. On the one hand he was attracted by distance in women. In so far as distance suggests self-sufficiency, it may have been intriguing to Picasso, making a connectedness with the woman all the more pleasurable. (See Marie-Therese and Jacqueline in Table 1.) On the other hand, he could also feel offended by distance, as if he were rejected. (See Dora and Francoise in Table 1.)

One of Picasso's biographers describes his ambivalence about distance: «Picasso loved pride and independence in others; but he could not always refrain from destroying both, ...» (O'Brian, 1976, p. 436).

Finally, Picasso used distance, himself, particularly in relationships, as a way of not becoming too involved in any relationship. He said he valued his art (a solitary activity) above any and all relationships – and even himself.

TIME-RELATED EFFECTS

The study also offers an overview of the temporal sequence of the four consecutive relationships, in terms of the shifts in their emotional content. This sequence, and related biographical information are all summarized in Table 2.

We have given the sequence, itself, a psychological interpretation. We see a rather simple pattern in Picasso's move from one relationship to the next. In emotional terms, it is:

A - B - B' - A',

with A and B being contrasts with each other. Also, A' is a variant of A, and B' is a variant of B. Thus, Dora is Marie-Therese's contrast, Francoise is a variant of Dora, and Jacqueline is Francoise's contrast and also a regression to the kind of relationship he had with Marie-Therese.

To fill in the nuances somewhat, we offer the following brief narrative: To begin with, Picasso overcomes the distance he depicts in one of his first portraits of Marie-Therese (Bust of a Girl, 1926), and experiences her connectedness and love for him, as depicted in later portraits of her. However, this was not enough for him. The relationship lacked intellectual nourishment. A more independent and intellectually interesting woman, like Dora, could «nourish» him with her own ideas. But then he also had to take the negative aspects of such a relationship for him, which he

TABLE 2
The nature of four relationships in temporal sequence

	The nature of the relationship, according to the depicted emotions:		biographical information:
Marie-Therese	connected...; affection...		devoted, sensual, accommodating
Dora	affection...; distant; angry...; sad...		intellectual, volatile emotions
Francoise	affection...; distant; angry (muted)...; sad...		intellectual, restrained emotions
Jacqueline	connected...; affection...; distant		devoted, controlling

depicts with the strong negative emotions seen in Dora's portraiture. These negative emotions might well have been of his own doing, that is, his trying to destroy her pride and independence, which it is known he was prone to do. Going from Dora to Francoise, he also has an intellectually challenging woman, who is also less emotional volatile than Dora – as we see reflected in a more muted depiction of negative feelings in Francoise's portraiture. Still, his relationship with Francoise was also filled with conflict, and he did not have the unconditional love that Marie-Therese gave him. He would have liked to have both (and apparently tried to do so when Dora entered his life, by continuing his loving relationship with Marie-Therese.) Finally, after having explored the contrast to Marie-Therese in two versions (Dora and Francoise), he returned to an earlier emotional alternative in Jacqueline. As one art scholar noted, «... Jacqueline knew how to brush aside and defuse Picasso's provocations and incitements to the kind of emotional agony that had characterized, in particular, his liaisons with Dora Maar and Francoise Gilot» (Rubin, 1996b, p. 458).

An underlying theme in this narrative is that Picasso wanted two things in a relationship – connectedness and independence/distance – a goal he could not achieve with the same woman. When going for independence in Dora, he also tries to destroy it, thereby producing the negative feelings. He then wants to get rid of those, and tries a variant in Francoise with less dramatic effects. He finally settles for a compromise with Jacqueline. That is, Picasso probably found in Jacqueline a tenable compromise between connectedness and distance.

The ABB'A' pattern may not be all that unusual in a series of problematic relationships. And it may not follow a strict ABB'A' pattern. What is interesting is the presence of contrast (A,B) and quasi-replication (A,A') in a sequence of relationships.

CONCLUDING NOTE

We have verified in some detail what art scholars have asserted about Picasso's portraiture - that he invested this work with considerable autobiographical content (e.g., Leal, 1996, p. 385; Rubin, 1996a, p. 15). Indeed, our study has shown how much autobiographical content, particularly emotional content, Picasso depicted in the portraits of the four women. For this reason, I also think Picasso was a good choice for us to check on the value of our empirical approach to the study of emotion and art.

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Die Muse und der Interpret: zur tiefenpsychologischen Betrachtung literarischer Texte

MARIA KARDAUN (*)

1. EINFÜHRUNG

Eines der schönsten Bilder der künstlerischen Begeisterung findet sich im frühplatonischen Dialog *Ion*.¹ Dort wird dargetan, wie der Dichter, entrückt und nicht von dieser Welt, sich zu den Gärten der Musen begibt, um aus deren honigfließenden Quellen seine göttlichen Lieder zu schöpfen. Ein leichtes, geflügeltes und heiliges Etwas sei der Dichter, ein Prophet, ein Gott-erfüllter, dessen herrliche Kunst sich ganz von alleine bildet, - wenigstens solange er im Rausch verkehrt und nicht im Besitz seines normalen Verstandes ist; denn das Ergriffensein von der Gottheit ist Voraussetzung aller wirklichen Kunst, so meint Platon, und wer versuchen würde ohne diese inspirierende Kraft, nur durch technisches Können, gleichsam auf artifizielle Art und Weise, Kunst hervorzubringen, ein solcher sei ungeweiht, und seine Poesie wertlos.

Der literarische Schaffensprozeß verlangt Inspiration, soviel ist klar. Literatur will jedoch nicht nur hervorgebracht, sondern auch verstanden werden. Angesichts des 'göttlichen', nicht zu sagen düsteren Charakters mancher literarischer Werke, ist es kaum verwunderlich, daß es zur Erklärung des poetischen Bildermaterials manchmal einen Interpreten braucht. Der Künstler selber ist in dieser Hinsicht leider nicht gerade von Nutzen – wie auch aus den vielen Fällen geringwertiger künstlerischer 'Selbstdeutung' ersichtlich ist –, jedenfalls nicht in seiner Qualität von Künstler;

(*) Maastricht University, Faculty of Arts and Culture, P.O. Box 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands.

¹ *Ion* 533 e5 ff. Dieses Bild (mit Varianten) wird von Platon in seinen späteren Schriften mehrmals aufgegriffen und weiterentwickelt, unter anderem in den *Gesetzen* und im *Phaidros*. Siehe für eine ausführliche Auseinandersetzung der Platonischen Kunstauffassung Kardaun 1997. Vgl. im übrigen auch Horaz *Carminum* liber III, 25, worin der Dichter die erschütternde Erfahrung der *theia mania*, der er während des künstlerischen Schaffensprozesses unterworfen ist, in ähnliche Worte faßt.

denn es ist ja die wesentlich intuitive und bildhafte² Wirklichkeitsdarstellung des schöpferischen Genies, die der Erläuterung bedarf.

Das Interpretieren literarischer Texte ist nicht unbedingt ein dankbares Unternehmen. Es ist offensichtlich, daß interpretatorische Ergebnisse sich normalerweise in Tiefgang und ästhetischem Wert mit dem ursprünglichen Kunstwerk überhaupt nicht messen können. Immerhin beweist das Interpretieren literarischer Texte, meine ich, gelegentlich seinen Nutzen, nämlich dann, wenn das unmittelbare Erfassen eines Kunstwerks nicht (mehr) ausreicht und das Bedürfnis entsteht, für sich selbst oder andere das intuitive Verstehen des Werkes, das man am Anfang hatte, mit rationalen Überlegungen und Einsichten zu ergänzen. Vor allem, wenn das Atemberaubende einer ersten Erfahrung mit dem Kunstwerk sich beruhigt hat, möchte man nunmehr nicht nur betroffen sein, sondern möglichst auch *wissen*, was hinter dieser Betroffenheit stecken mag.

Eine der möglichen Strategien, der geheimnisvollen Wirkung literarischer Texte auf die Spur zu kommen, ist die Suche nach den in ihnen enthaltenen tiefenpsychologischen Strukturen. Tiefenpsychologische Untersuchungen sind verheißungsvoll. Nicht nur sind die in der Tiefenpsychologie benutzten Begriffe im allgemeinen eindeutiger und schärfer umrissen als vergleichbare Begriffe der Alltagssprache, sondern eignen sich die ihnen zugrundeliegenden Theorien auch sehr dazu, tiefere Schichten des menschlichen Verstehens und Erlebens, so wie sie u.a. in der Literatur zum Ausdruck kommen, auf begründete Art und Weise zu erläutern.

Die Frage, die im vorliegenden Aufsatz aufgeworfen wird, ist: was versuchen tiefenpsychologische Literaturinterpretationen nun eigentlich zu ermitteln? Die Tiefenpsychologie hat sich ursprünglich aus der klinischen Psychiatrie heraus entwickelt – wiewohl es auch andere Quellen gibt, wie z.B. die Ethnologie, das Studium der Mythologie usw. –, jedoch geht sie mittlerweile weit darüber hinaus: Die therapeutische Praxis ist heute nur noch eines der vielen Anwendungsgebiete der Tiefenpsychologie (d.h. der Sammlung tiefenpsychologischer Theorien und Auffassungen, die wir hier der Einfachheit wegen als 'die' Tiefenpsychologie bezeichnen). Inwieweit ist die tiefenpsychologische Analyse eines literarischen Textes der analytischen Arbeit im therapeutisch-klinischen Bereich gleichzusetzen? Ist es überhaupt möglich, ein theoretisches Modell für tiefenpsychologische Literaturinterpretationen zu entwerfen, das dem spezifischen Kunstcharakter literarischer Werke gerecht wird?

Zur Klärung dieses Problems soll bei der Tatsache angesetzt werden, daß die therapeutisch-klinische Analyse dessen, was ein Analysand in der Sprechstunde erzählt, sich aus offensichtlichen Gründen auf die Person des Analysanden richten muß, während bei literarischen Textinterpretationen die Notwendigkeit, den Urheber des zu deutenden Textes in die Interpretation einzubeziehen zunächst nicht feststeht. Die Erkenntnis dieser fundamentalen Differenz führt zu einem etwas anderen, als das gängige theoretische Modell tiefenpsychologischer Literaturinterpretation.

2. DAS ENDOPOETISCHE UND DAS EXOPOETISCHE INTERPRETATIONSVERFAHREN

Der Begriff 'literarische Textinterpretation' kann methodisch umschrieben werden als: ein gezieltes Streben, aus einer gewissen Perspektive Elemente des literarischen Textes in eine umfassende sinnvolle³ innere Ordnung unterzubringen oder aber den Text oder Textausschnitte einem externen Zusammenhang zuzuordnen, damit der Text verständlicher als vorher erscheint. Der Interpret wird sich bemühen, eine Hypothese oder eine Theorie, die eine Anzahl Textelemente in irgendeinen Zusammenhang sinnvoll einordnet, aufzustellen.

² Zum Thema des wesentlich Bildhaften aller Kunst, inklusive der Literatur, siehe u.a. Aristoteles Poetik 1460 b 7-9. Man beachte, daß das Herstellen von Bildern in der Literatur durch Worte stattfindet: Der Dichter 'malt' Bilder in Worten.

³ 'Sinnvoll' allerdings nur für diejenigen, die bereit sind, sich in die Voraussetzungen der betreffenden Betrachtungsweise wohlwollend hineinzusetzen.

Wie aus dieser Formulierung schon hervorgeht, sind zur Einordnung der Textelemente verschiedenartige Hypothesen möglich. Eine Hypothese kann sich z.B. auf den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Text und historischen Ereignissen beziehen oder etwa auf den Zusammenhang zwischen Texteigenschaften und dem Seelenleben des Verfassers. Eine Hypothese kann sich auch beziehen auf die (vom Verfasser beabsichtigte oder unbeabsichtigte) innere rhetorische Struktur des Textes oder auf die Wirkung des Textes auf eine bestimmte Lesergruppe. Was diese und andere Hypothesen gemeinsam haben, ist ihre Zeitbedingtheit, – schon deshalb, weil das ihnen zugrundeliegende Begriffssystem notwendig zeitbedingten Charakter hat.

Für die folgende Darlegung ist es zweckdienlich, zu unterscheiden zwischen Interpretationen, die den Zusammenhang grundsätzlich innerhalb des literarischen Textes suchen (allerdings unter Heranziehung externer Begriffskategorien), und solchen, die Textelemente mit externen Gegebenheiten in Verbindung bringen wollen. Im ersten Fall kann von einer endopoetischen, im zweiten von einer exopoetischen Interpretation des Textes gesprochen werden.⁴

Sowohl in der endopoetischen als auch in der exopoetischen Betrachtungsweise ist Vergrößerung des Textverständnisses vorausgesetztes Ziel. Beide Betrachtungsweisen beziehen sich – wie schon aus dem Wortteil – ‘poetisch’ hervorgeht –, ausschließlich auf literarische Texte. Darin unterscheiden sie sich also nicht. Der Unterschied besteht darin, daß man bei einer vorgenommenen exopoetischen Betrachtungsweise den Text oder Teile des Textes in einen breiteren Bezugsrahmen faßt, um damit vielleicht einen zusätzlichen Sinn oder gar eine neue Bedeutung einzelner Textelemente herbeizuschaffen, aber ohne daß man dabei das nachdrückliche Ziel verfolgt, den inneren Zusammenhang des Textes aufzudecken. In der endopoetischen Betrachtungsweise verhält es sich umgekehrt: Man hat zwar nichts dagegen, wenn nebenbei externe Verknüpfungen, wie z.B. Entstehungsgründe des Werkes, aufgezeigt werden, aber man ist erst zufrieden, wenn der Text weitgehend als ein sinnvolles und in sich zusammenhängendes Ganzes dargetan werden kann.⁵

Die Adjektive ‘endopoetisch’ und ‘exopoetisch’ beziehen sich m.a.W. auf die Zielsetzung der Interpretation und nicht auf die benutzten Mittel und Wege, denn letztere sind immer sowohl endo- als exopoetischer Art: Auch wenn man sich beim Interpretieren ein endopoetisches Ziel setzt, sich also auf den inneren Textzusammenhang richtet, ist man erstens sowieso auf gewisse außertextuelle Begriffskategorien angewiesen und zweitens wird man sich vorhandene externe Informationen nur zu gerne zunutze machen wollen. Wenn umgekehrt ein exopoetisches Untersuchungsziel verfolgt wird, wird man dennoch nicht vermeiden können, sich mit einigen relevanten Zusammenhängen innerhalb des literarischen Textes zu beschäftigen.

Extreme Standpunkte sind zwar vertreten worden, z.B. daß nicht nur die Zielsetzung der Interpretation, sondern auch die Mittel und Wege exklusiv endopoetisch sein sollten, und daß der Leser-Interpret sich also in seinem Umgang mit literarischen Werken sogar von seinen eigenen Begriffskategorien loszulösen habe, aber diese extreme Auffassung ist aus offensichtlichen Gründen unhaltbar. Die gelegentlich verteidigte extrem exopoetische Stellungnahme führt ebenfalls zu kuriosen und kaum erfüllbaren Forderungen, da nämlich dem literarischen Werk grundsätzlich Be-

⁴ Siehe zu diesem ursprünglich von Harold Collins vorgeschlagenen Begriffspaar u.a. Eissler 1971, 6-7. In Erörterungen zu diesem Thema besteht im übrigen die Tendenz, die endopoetische Interpretationsweise so vorzustellen, als ob externe Gegebenheiten, wie etwa biographische Daten des Autors, in ihr grundsätzlich keinen Platz hätten. Der vorliegende Aufsatz bezweckt unter anderem, dieses Bild zu korrigieren.

⁵ Was man genau unter ‘endopoetisch’ und ‘exopoetisch’ versteht, hängt mit der (impliziten) Auffassung darüber zusammen, was einen Text zu einem literarischen Text macht oder – anders gesagt – was einen Text zum Kunstwerk macht. Letzteres ist bekanntlich ein schwieriges, wenn nicht unlösbares Problem. Dennoch will mir scheinen, daß der Grund, weswegen etwas als Kunstwerk bezeichnet wird, eher mit dem, was der Betrachter darin finden kann, d.h. mit dem Wirkungspotential des Textes, zu tun hat, als mit dem, was der reale Autor (bewußt oder unbewußt) hat ausdrücken wollen. Wenn man durch die literarische Interpretation dem literarischen Text als Kunstwerk gerecht werden will, kommt man m.E. nicht umhin, sich auf jeden Fall auch mit der Suche nach möglichen sinnvollen Zusammenhängen innerhalb des Textes zu beschäftigen.

deutung und Wert abgesprochen wird, wenn gefordert wird, daß bei der Interpretation immer ausschließlich auf externe Aspekte des literarischen Textes, wie z.B. die Genese des Werkes innerhalb seinem historischen, politischen, sozialen oder psychologischen Kontext, Acht gegeben werden soll. Es sei ferner bemerkt, daß in der Praxis in ein und derselben Textinterpretation sowohl endo- als exopoetische Ziele verfolgt werden können.

Die endopoetische Interpretation könnte man, wie ich meine, als literarische Interpretation im eigentlichen Sinn⁶ oder, in einer anderen Terminologie, als ästhetische Interpretation⁷ bezeichnen. Die exopoetische Interpretation ist m.E. als literarische Textinterpretation im erweiterten Sinn zu verstehen, da sie den Text zwar durch das Aufzeigen von externen Zusammenhängen erläutert, jedoch ohne daß dadurch das Verstehen des inneren Textzusammenhangs notwendigerweise gefördert wird. Mit anderen Worten: exopoetische Interpretationen beziehen sich zwar auf literarische Texte, aber ohne daß dabei Ziele verfolgt werden, die nicht auch bei nichtliterarischen Texten verfolgt werden könnten. Im Grunde genommen macht es für exopoetische Textinterpretationen keinen Unterschied, ob der zu untersuchende Text literarische Qualität hat oder diese entbehrt.

3. ZUR TIEFENPSYCHOLOGISCHEN BETRACHTUNG LITERARISCHER TEXTE

An einem literarischen Text können verschiedene Aspekte unterschieden werden. Natürlich gehört viel 'Technik', im Sinne einer bewußten Anstrengung des Autors, zu der Schaffung eines literarischen Werkes. Der Autor wird sich vielleicht einer Tradition anschließen oder sich gerade

⁶ Es gibt bekanntlich auch andere Auffassungen darüber, was literarische Interpretationen im eigentlichen Sinn bezwecken sollen. Z.B. ist E.D. Hirsch der Meinung, der literarische Text habe eine objektive, unabänderliche Bedeutung ('meaning'), die mit dem, was der Autor durch den Text ausdrücken wollte, identisch sei (Hirsch 1967, 5-6, 8, 31 und 1976, 8). Eine literarische Interpretation soll s.E. darauf ausgerichtet sein, die im Text enthaltene Autorintention so gut wie möglich wiederzugeben. Oft entzieht sich die Autorintention jedoch, wie er zugibt, der direkten Ermittlung. Sogar eventuell vorhandene Aussagen des Autors über die von ihm intendierte Bedeutung des Textes können nicht ohne weiteres als zuverlässige Information gelten (1967, 14-19). Das wichtigste Kriterium zur Überprüfung, ob man die vom Autor intendierte Bedeutung tatsächlich erfaßt hat, ist, wie Hirsch meint, wieviele Textelemente durch die Interpretation sinnvoll erklärt werden (Hirsch 1967, 236-237). Letzterem Kriterium des 'richtigen' Interpretierens stimme ich natürlich gerne zu: Wie ich glaube, sollen literarische Interpretationen im eigentlichen Sinn danach streben, den literarischen Text als ein möglichst sinnvolles und kohärentes Ganzes darzutun. Wenn wir schon von einem erstrebenswerten 'meaning' reden können, so ist dieses m.E. zu umschreiben als die maximale innere Kohärenz des Textes, die unter Berücksichtigung der gewählten Perspektive erreicht werden kann. Mir scheint jedoch die Frage, ob eine augenscheinlich 'gelungene' Interpretation, d.h. eine die viele Textelemente sinnvoll erklärt, zudem noch mit dem, was der Autor tatsächlich ausdrücken wollte, übereinstimmt, methodisch belanglos.

⁷ Mir Recht unterscheidet J.J.A. Mooij die folgenden Möglichkeiten, wie literarische Texte interpretiert werden können: (i) das Interpretieren, das beim 'einfachen' Lesen (durch die Herstellung einer Verbindung von visuellen Textzeichen mit Sprachlauten und deren Bedeutung) ohnehin schon stattfindet; (ii) das philologische Interpretieren – hierdurch werden dem Durchschnittsleser praktische Kenntnisse, die er wahrscheinlich nicht hat, aber doch schon für ein oberflächliches Textverständnis benötigt, vermittelt: Erläuterungen dieser Art bilden an und für sich jedoch noch keine ästhetische Interpretation –, und (iii) das ästhetische Interpretieren: diese Interpretationsform hat zum Ziel, sinnvolle Zusammenhänge innerhalb des literarischen Kunstwerks aufzuzeigen, z.B. indem inhaltliche und formale Aspekte des Werkes miteinander verbunden werden (Mooij 1979, 35-7). Die ästhetische Interpretation könnte man auch als 'endopoetisch' bezeichnen. Der Grund, weshalb der – zwar technisch anmutende – Terminus 'endopoetisch' von mir bevorzugt wird, liegt darin, daß dieser Terminus (noch) nicht mit allen möglichen, zum Teil widersprüchlichen, Konnotationen belastet ist. Im übrigen wäre es m.E. sinnvoll zu überlegen, ob nicht die zweite der von Mooij unterschiedenen Interpretationskategorien, das sogenannte 'philologische' Interpretieren, durch die allgemeinere Kategorie des 'eluzidierenden' Interpretierens ersetzt werden sollte, da auf diese Weise z.B. auch rezeptionsgeschichtliche Forschungen oder die Ermittlung der unbewußten Beweggründe des Autors beim Zustandekommen des literarischen Werkes in dieselbe Kategorie eingeordnet werden können; für letztere Art von Textinterpretationen gibt es sonst in der obenstehenden Einteilung keinen Platz. Die zweite Kategorie wäre dann mit einem anderen Namen auch als 'exopoetisch' zu bezeichnen.

gegen sie auflehnen wollen. Den Gang der Handlung wird er vermutlich vorher entwerfen, obwohl es auch Autoren gibt, die einfach anfangen zu schreiben und dann schon sehen, worauf ihr Werk hinausläuft. Jedenfalls hat das Bewußtsein im allgemeinen einen beachtlichen Anteil am literarischen Schaffensprozeß. Ebenso spielt bei der Aufnahme des Werkes durch den Leser das bewußte Textverständnis normalerweise eine wichtige Rolle.

Dennoch – und das ist nun ein tiefenpsychologischer Ausgangspunkt – ist auch eine unbewußte Dimension mit im Spiel. Der Autor ist nicht ganz frei in dem, was er schreibt. Er weiß außerdem nicht, jedenfalls nicht genau, warum er schreibt, was er schreibt, genauso wie es dem Leser-Interpreten schwer fällt, in Worte zu fassen, warum das literarische Werk ihn berührt. Es ist diese unbewußte Komponente im literarischen Bereich, die das Objekt der tiefenpsychologischen Literaturbetrachtung bildet.

Eine häufig anzutreffende Art und Weise, sich tiefenpsychologisch mit literarischen Texten auseinanderzusetzen, ist die, die man – mit einem Hinweis auf die therapeutische Situation – auch als 'Deutung *in absentia*' bezeichnet. Diese Form von Interpretation zielt nicht auf das Aufdecken von dem, was der Text im Idealfall beim Leser auslösen könnte oder sollte, sondern möchte die unbewußten Motive, die den Autor zum Schreiben des Textes geführt haben, ans Licht bringen. Dem Interpreten wird dabei die Rolle des Analytikers des Autors zugeteilt.

Es ist evident, daß das Aufdeckenwollen des unbewußten Seelenlebens eines leiblichen Autors an sich eine exopoetische Zielsetzung ist: nicht die (maximale) Bedeutung, die der Text für den Leser haben könnte, sondern die Beschaffenheit des Urhebers wird ermittelt. Daß es bei der Deutung *in absentia* durchaus der leibliche Autor ist, dessen Seelenleben erforscht werden soll, und nicht etwa der Autor, insofern er dem literarischen Werke zugrunde liegt – nicht der *implied author* von Wayne C. Booth also –,⁸ geht schon aus dem Namen dieses Interpretationsmodells hervor; denn der *implied author* ist im literarischen Text selbstverständlich zugegen und muß nicht *in absentia* analysiert werden.

Insofern eine Deutung *in absentia* überhaupt kein anderes Vorhaben hat, als die konkrete Person des Autors zu analysieren, ist sie m.E. aus literaturwissenschaftlicher Sicht geradezu nutzlos. Erstens könnte eine solche Analyse ja genausogut anhand eines – wer weiß vielbezeichnenden – Einkaufszettels durchgeführt werden, sollte ein solcher vorhanden sein. Und zweitens ist nicht einzusehen, was an *literarischen* Einsichten gewonnen ist, wenn wir etwa schließen, daß Goethe unbewußt seine eigene Mutter begehrte, daß Multatuli eine narzißtisch-paranoide Persönlichkeitsstruktur besaß, daß Karl May seine Leser erotisch an sich binden wollte oder daß Thomas Mann einer analen Fixierung mit homosexueller Tendenz unterlag. Wir befinden uns dann nicht mehr im literaturwissenschaftlichen, sondern im psychologischen, wenn nicht psychopathologischen Bereich. Niemand weniger als Hermann Hesse hat schon vor dieser Art von literarischer Deutung gewarnt, indem er sie treffend umschrieb als «literarhistorische Einzelbemühungen, die aus dem Dichterleben eine möglichst detaillierte Krankengeschichte machen».⁹ Dazu kommt noch, daß der Autor keineswegs der Patient des Interpreten und der literarische Interpret zudem meistens kein professioneller Psychologe oder Psychiater ist.¹⁰

Statt dessen hat die tiefenpsychologisch orientierte Literaturwissenschaft, die sich mit den unbewußten Triebregungen konkreter Autoren beschäftigt, denn auch – wie ich glaube – ein anderes, weiterreichendes Ziel: Zwar wird die Erforschung des unbewußten Seelenlebens eines Autors beabsichtigt – mittels einer Analyse seines Werkes (oder mehrerer seiner Werke) –, jedoch nicht aus unreflektierter Neugierde oder psychologisierender Anmaßung, sondern weil man ein

⁸ Booth 1991³, 73 ff. und 86. Siehe zum Thema des *implied author* oder abstrakten Autors auch Link 1980², 25, 34-36 und 40.

⁹ Hesse 1992, 236.

¹⁰ Für eine überzeugende Warnung gegen die naive Gleichsetzung von Autor und Patienten siehe Lorenzer 1981, 33 ff. Zum allgemeinen Thema des biographistischen Kurzschlusses siehe u.a. Link, 1980², 39 f.

erhellendes Licht auf den Werdegang der betreffenden literarischen Werke werfen möchte, wobei die Ergebnisse außerdem zur allgemeinen Theoriebildung bezüglich der Beziehungen zwischen Werk und Autor einen Beitrag liefern können. Letztere – wenn auch exopoetische – Zielsetzung unterscheidet sich von der eben genannten darin, daß sie dem Wortteil -poetisch' gerecht wird in dem Sinn, daß (Theorien über) psychologische Hintergründe und Vorbedingungen des literarischen Schaffens für die Literaturwissenschaft natürlich relevant sind. Es ist allerdings erforderlich, daß Vermutungen bezüglich der unbewußten Triebregungen eines Autors in genügendem Maße anhand biographischer Gegebenheiten aus unabhängiger Quelle überprüfbar sind (und dann auch tatsächlich überprüft werden):¹¹ Mangelhafte oder unsichere Informationen über einen Autor machen Hypothesen bezüglich seines unbewußten Seelenlebens, wenn nicht rein spekulativ und beliebig, dann doch in hohem Maße unzuverlässig. Das Anwendungsgebiet der Deutung *in absentia* ist m.a.W. relativ beschränkt.

Endopoetische tiefenpsychologische Literaturinterpretationen dagegen – m.E. das eigentliche Interessengebiet der tiefenpsychologischen Literaturwissenschaft –, sind nicht auf eventuell vorhandene Kenntnisse bezüglich eines Autors angewiesen, da Zusammenhang und Sinn des literarischen Kunstwerkes durchaus ohne Bezugnahme auf einen Urheber erläutert werden können. Literarische Werke haben ja meistens unabhängig von der Person des Autors für ihre Rezipienten Wert und Bedeutung. Zum Vergleich: Um die 'Sonnenblumen' Van Goghs schätzen zu können, erübrigt es sich zu wissen, wie der Künstler sich zu Sonnenblumen verhielt. Für die Würdigung der Bach-Suiten für Cello solo ist es kaum dienlich, den genauen Lebenslauf des Komponisten zu studieren oder sich zu fragen, was ihn zum Komponieren dieser Stücke veranlaßt haben mag. Vor allem bei literarischen Werken, die zur Weltliteratur gehören, liegt es nahe, sie als (verhältnismäßig) autonom zu betrachten.¹²

Daß der Literaturwissenschaft, wenn es darum geht, das Wirkungspotential eines (anerkannt wertvollen) literarischen Textes zu erforschen, mit Kenntnissen bezüglich der *bewußten* Absichten des Autors nur wenig geholfen ist, ist längst bekannt. Ebenso wenig können, wie ich glaube, *unbewußte* Absichten des Autors – angenommen, diese konnten überhaupt auf vertretbare Art und Weise ermittelt werden – als maßgebend für die Bedeutung literarischer Werke gelten. Das heißt freilich nicht, daß man sich bei einer vorgenommenen endopoetischen Deutung einzig und allein auf das Studium des Textes zu beschränken habe: Insofern sie zur Verfügung stehen, kann und soll man sich auch relevanter biographischer Informationen über den Autor bedienen, aber nicht, weil diese an und für sich das allgemeine Interesse verdienen, sondern weil sie als Denkanstöße die Entschleierung des Wirkungspotentials womöglich fördern können.

Das Modell der 'Deutung *in absentia*' eignet sich m.a.W. als Interpretationsmodell zwar für eine gewisse Art von exopoetischen Literaturinterpretationen – nämlich die, welche die Beziehungen zwischen Werk und leiblichem Autor zum Thema haben –, nicht aber für literarische Interpretationen *stricto sensu*, die sich primär darum bemühen, Kohärenz und Sinn des Werkes darzutun.

Auch das Interpretationsmodell, das durch die Bezeichnung 'Gegenübertragungsanalyse'¹³ nahegelegt wird, ist als Beschreibung dessen, was sich während des endopoetischen Interpretationsverfahrens abspielt, m.E. nicht adäquat, da es, genauso wie das Modell der Deutung *in absentia*, den leiblichen Autor als methodisch notwendig voraussetzt.

Der Gedanke ist der folgende: In der therapeutischen Situation appelliert der Analysand durch seine Bekenntnisse an die Person des Analytikers, auf die er sein unverarbeitetes Innenleben – vor

¹¹ Es genügt m.a.W. nicht, unbewußte Triebregungen eines Autors – sagen wir seinen Ödipuskomplex – ausschließlich aufgrund des von ihm geschaffenen Werkes zu rekonstruieren und dann den Schluß zu ziehen, daß es nicht verwunderlich sei, daß gerade er, der ja einen Ödipuskomplex habe, ein so ödipal geprägtes Werk hervorgebracht hat. Diese Vorgehensweise, die man als die Suche nach den von einem selbst versteckten Ostereiern bezeichnen könnte, ist leider ziemlich weit verbreitet.

¹² Siehe zu diesem Thema auch J.J.A. Mooij 1979, 35-36 und 54-55.

¹³ Siehe zum Thema 'Gegenübertragungsanalyse' Pietzcker 1991 und 1992.

allem kindliche Phantasien – projiziert. Dieser Vorgang wird ‘Übertragung’ genannt. (Übertragung ist somit ein Sonderfall von Projektion, nämlich die Projektion, die im Kontext einer Therapie stattfindet und auf den Analytiker ausgerichtet ist. Das Auftreten einer Übertragung wird in der klassischen Psychoanalyse als Voraussetzung für eine erfolgreiche Behandlung angesehen.) Der Analytiker reagiert auf die Übertragung des Analysanden mit Gegenübertragung, d.h. daß der Analytiker seinerseits (teilweise) unbewußt auf die Erwartungen des Analysanden eingeht, wobei er die Rolle, zu der er aufgefordert wird, unwillkürlich zu übernehmen oder abzulehnen geneigt ist.

Der Analytiker soll während der Analyse seine Gegenübertragung möglichst als solche erkennen und verarbeiten, damit sein Bild von dem, was der Analysand erzählt, so wenig wie möglich gestört wird. Insofern die Gegenübertragung in Unbewußtheit steckenbleibt, haben wir es mit einem störenden Faktor in der Therapie zu tun. Im Hinblick auf die Macht und die Eigengesetzlichkeit des Unbewußten ist es in der Übertragungssituation natürlich besonders wichtig, daß der Analytiker sich aktiv darum bemüht, sich nicht von unbewußten Inhalten überwältigen zu lassen. Unverarbeitete Gegenübertragung ist nichts als Projektion und verhindert, daß der Analytiker die Probleme des Analysanden richtig einschätzt.

Die Analyse der eigenen Gegenübertragung dient gleichwohl nicht nur dazu, ein Hindernis aus dem Wege zu schaffen, sondern ist auch eine Hilfe bei der Ermittlung dessen, worum es sich in den Geschichten des Analysanden ‘eigentlich’ handelt, da der Analytiker dadurch, daß er an den unbewußten Kommunikationsprozessen teilgehabt hat, den Analysanden viel besser versteht, als wenn er ein vollständiger Außenstehender geblieben wäre.¹⁴

Genauso sei es um die Analyse der eigenen Gegenübertragung im literarisch-interpretatorischen Kontext bestellt: auch diese diene nicht nur dazu, die eigenen Wahrnehmungsstörungen des Interpreten zu verringern, sondern führe zudem als Erkenntnisinstrument Interpretationsmöglichkeiten des literarischen Textes herbei. Mehr noch: (richtig durchgeführte) tiefenpsychologische Literaturinterpretationen seien mit (reflektierter) Gegenübertragungsanalyse identisch: Interpreten, die sich um tiefenpsychologisch relevante Bedeutungszusammenhänge eines literarischen Werkes bemühen, seien im Grunde damit beschäftigt, ihre eigene Gegenübertragung auf einen vom Autor ausgehenden Übertragungsappell zu analysieren. Letzteres erscheint mir jedoch eine eher gezwungene Konstruktion.

Zwar soll man bei der Literaturinterpretation nach Möglichkeit versuchen, sich über seine eigenen Vorurteile Klarheit zu verschaffen, da man sie sonst in den Text hineininterpretieren könnte. In den Worten Albert M. Rehs: «Das Problem ist [...] nicht die Subjektivität [...] als solche, sondern daß sich der Interpret die subjektiven Wurzeln dieser Urteile *nicht bewußt* gemacht hat. Würde er sein psychologisches Urteil als ein subjektives kennzeichnen und als solches *bewußt* in seine Analyse einbeziehen, wäre die Situation eine andere.»¹⁵ Und auch ist die Analyse der eigenen, nur teilweise bewußten Reaktionen auf den Text gewiß ein ausgezeichnete Ausgangspunkt, einer möglichst wertvollen, gut durchdachten und wissenschaftlich vertretbaren Interpretation des Werkes auf die Spur zu kommen.¹⁶

Es gibt jedoch, wie ich meine, keinen Grund, die von Interpreten im Rahmen einer literarischen Interpretation an sich selbst durchgeführten Analysen als ‘Gegenübertragungsanalyse’ zu

¹⁴ Ludwig Pongratz spricht in diesem Zusammenhang von ‘empathischer Gegenübertragung’. Ein gewisses Maß an empathischer Gegenübertragung sei eine notwendige Voraussetzung dafür, daß der Analytiker wirklich versteht, was der Analysand ihm erzählt. (Pongratz 1983, 181 ff.)

¹⁵ Reh 1990, 52.

¹⁶ Allerdings soll nicht vergessen werden, die durch Introspektion gefundene Interpretation auch einem Überprüfungsverfahren zu unterwerfen. Die heuristische Frage – die Frage, wie man zu einer Interpretation kommt –, gehört zum Bereich, der mit einer ursprünglich auf Hans Reichenbach zurückgehenden Unterscheidung oft als *context of discovery* bezeichnet wird, während Überprüfungsaspekte dem *context of justification* zugerechnet werden (Reichenbach 1976⁸). Auf die Frage, wie literarische Textinterpretationen eventuell zu überprüfen sind, kann im Rahmen des vorliegenden kurzen Aufsatzes leider nicht eingegangen werden.

bezeichnen. Erstens stehen Interpret und Autor ja nicht in einem therapeutischen Verhältnis zueinander. Zweitens ist nicht gesagt, daß es überhaupt eine Übertragung von einem (einzigen) Autor auf eine Leserschaft geben muß. Zur Illustration: Ein Halbäffchen könnte sich hinter einen Computer setzen und mit seinen Händchen zufällig ein kleines Gedicht eintippen. Die Chance, daß etwas dergleichen geschieht, ist zwar nicht groß, doch scheint es von Schimpansen gemalte Bilder gegeben zu haben, die es tatsächlich bis zu einer Kunstgalerie gebracht haben sollen. Oder eine Brise könnte einen Haufen papiererner Buchstaben aufwirbeln, so daß sich nachher auf dem Boden ein Sonnett bildet. Ein so entstandener Text kann, vorausgesetzt er eignet sich dazu, auf sinnvolle Art und Weise tiefenpsychologisch interpretiert werden, auch wenn es hier Übertragungsgefühle eines Verfassers gar nicht gibt. Desgleichen ist bei Werken, die aus einer unentwirrbaren Zusammenarbeit mehrerer Autoren entstanden sind – allen Volksmärchen, der Bibel, der Dreigroschenoper –, keine Übertragung im herkömmlichen Sinn vorhanden, womit auch der Begriff 'Gegenübertragung' problematisch wird.

Ich möchte nun nicht abstreiten, daß unbewußte Beweggründe eines Autors oder mehrerer Autoren normalerweise beim Zustandekommen eines literarischen Werkes eine Rolle spielen, und sogar eine entscheidende Rolle spielen (denn das Gedichte produzierende Halbäffchen ist zugegebenermaßen ein wenig skurril), doch scheinen mir eventuelle Kenntnisse bezüglich dieser Beweggründe bei der Ermittlung der Textbedeutung methodisch unwichtig. Statt von einer 'im Werk enthaltenen Wirkung, die von einem bestimmten Autor oder mehreren Autoren mit bewußter und/oder unbewußter Absicht in das Werk hineingebracht worden ist' kann, meine ich, besser unmittelbar von einer 'im Werk enthaltenen Wirkung' gesprochen werden.¹⁷

Es soll denn auch womöglich eine befriedigendere Analogie zwischen der (endopoetischen) literaturpsychologischen Praxis und der therapeutischen Situation formuliert werden als die, die in den Bezeichnungen 'Deutung *in absentia*' oder 'Gegenübertragungsanalyse' ausgedrückt wird, eine Analogie nämlich, die dem besonderen Charakter literarischer Werke eher gerecht wird.

Nach tiefenpsychologischer Auffassung wird das Schreiben eines literarischen Werkes als ein Versuch des Autors betrachtet, unbewußte seelische Konflikte zu bewältigen. Auch für den Leser ist Konfliktbewältigung ein essentieller (unbewußter) Impuls, Literatur zu lesen. Die Frage ist, ob es die persönlichen unbewußten Konflikte des Autors oder aber Konflikte von allgemeinerer Bedeutung sind, die in der Literatur dargestellt werden (wobei diese beiden *de facto* zusammenfallen können).

Nehmen wir einmal an (fiktives Beispiel), wir treffen – mit Hilfe des psychoanalytischen Begriffssystems interpretierend – in einem bestimmten literarischen Werk als wichtigstes Thema eine ungelöste ödipale Konfliktsituation an. Es ist uns ferner bekannt, daß der Autor dieses Werkes auf eine unübliche, besonders ödipal geprägte Weise erzogen worden ist und übertrieben an seiner Mutter hängt. In diesem Fall gibt es eine gute Chance, daß der im Text nachweislich dargestellte ödipale Konfliktsituation einerseits und die ödipal geprägte Erziehung und Persönlichkeitsstruktur des Autors andererseits in engem Zusammenhang miteinander stehen, und daß somit etwas über den Werdegang des Werkes, nämlich über die unbewußten Motive, die den Autor zum Schreiben des Werkes veranlaßt haben, herausgefunden wurde. Tatsächlich können wir gut nachempfinden, daß gerade er, der eine solche Erziehung genossen hat, für ödipale Tücken und Probleme sowohl ein mehr als normales Interesse als auch ein gutes Gespür besitzt. Nehmen wir zudem an, es gibt eine umfangreiche und leidenschaftlich begeisterte Leserschaft des Romans, dann gibt es auch eine

¹⁷ Der Unterschied zwischen einer von einem leiblichen Autor bewußt oder unbewußt beabsichtigten und der tatsächlich im Text vorhandenen Wirkung ist freilich auch Freud nicht entgangen. Er schreibt: «Was uns so mächtig packt, kann nach meiner Auffassung doch nur die Absicht des Künstlers sein, *insofern es ihm gelungen ist, sie in dem Werke auszudrücken und von uns erfassen zu lassen*» (meine Hervorhebung, MK). Und wenige Zeilen weiter: «Das Werk selbst muß doch diese Analyse ermöglichen, wenn es der auf uns wirksame Ausdruck der Absichten und Regungen des Künstlers ist. Und um diese Absicht zu erraten, muß ich doch vorerst den Sinn und Inhalt des im Kunstwerk Dargestellten herausfinden, also es deuten können.» (GW X, 173)

gute Chance, daß durch das Aufzeigen der für den Text wesentlichen ödipalen Thematik etwas von allgemeinerer Bedeutung als die persönlichen unbewußten Motive, die den Autor zum Schreiben des Textes geführt haben, ans Licht gebracht wurde. Die Leserschaft erkennt, dürfen wir annehmen, (unbewußt) den im Text dargestellten Konflikt, aber nicht weil jeder Leser die gleiche Persönlichkeitsstruktur besäße oder dieselbe unübliche Erziehung genossen hätte, denn das wird ja nicht der Fall sein: Der Leser hat zwar auf irgendeine Weise teil am im Werk dargestellten Konflikt, aber dieses kann nicht in Termini von zufälligen lebensgeschichtlichen Ereignissen, sondern muß allgemeiner formuliert werden. Die scheinbar ganz private ödipale Thematik, so wie sie im Text dargestellt ist, rührt offenbar an etwas kollektiv Ödipales, das in der Kultur bis dahin noch keine befriedigende Lösung gefunden hat (denn der Text freut sich, wie gesagt, der allgemeinen Faszination). Wenn ein Interpret der Bedeutung, die der literarische Text für seine Leserschaft hat, gerecht werden will, wird er daher nicht auf die Ermittlung strikt an die Person des Autors gekoppelter unbewußter Inhalte, die im Text vorhanden sind, sondern auf die Ermittlung einer unbewußten Dimension des Textes, die von allgemeinerer Bedeutung ist, abheben müssen, wobei natürlich sämtliche Einzelheiten des im Text dargestellten Konflikts sorgfältigst zu berücksichtigen sind, denn diese werden sich ja nicht umsonst im Text befinden.

Anders gesagt: Analytiker beabsichtigen mittels dessen, was ihnen erzählt wird, die persönliche Problematik des Analysanden zu verstehen, um dadurch therapeutische Fortschritte herbeizuführen. Leser eines literarischen Textes beabsichtigen dagegen, den für sie wertvollen Text so gut wie möglich zu verstehen, um ihre eigene Einsicht in die Welt im allgemeinen und in die menschliche Seele insbesondere zu erweitern. Literarische Werke könnte man als brauchbare Projektionsfläche für eine größere Leserschaft bezeichnen. Das Werk ermöglicht es uns, auf eine angebrachte – eigens dafür bestimmte – Weise unbewußte Wünsche, Ängste usw. in das Werk oder in einen Teil des Werkes zu projizieren – diese Projektionen kann man, wenn man will, mit dem Phänomen der Übertragung in der Therapeutischen Situation vergleichen –, und wir bekommen mehr Selbsterkenntnis und menschliche Tiefe, wenn wir verborgene Aspekte von uns selbst unbewußt im Werk erkennen, deswegen am Text einen lebhaften Anteil nehmen und uns dieser verborgenen Aspekte der eigenen Persönlichkeit bei der Lektüre (einigermaßen) bewußt werden. Wir erleben durch das Lesen literarischer Texte unsere unbewußten Prozesse nicht auf subjektivem, sondern auf distanzierterem oder, wenn man will, objektivem Niveau.¹⁸ Dadurch können wir einen Teil des bei gezielter Introspektion auftretenden Widerstandes umgehen und uns anhand des literarischen Textes durch (implizite) Analyse unserer Projektionen beschleunigt und mit geringstem Schaden Menschenkenntnis c.q. Selbsterkenntnis aneignen.

Wir sind daher, tiefenpsychologisch betrachtet, als Leser eines literarischen Textes sozusagen Analysand und Analytiker zugleich. Nicht der Autor ist unser Patient, wir selbst sind unsere eigenen Patienten: Es ist die eigene Seele, die wir anhand des Textes erforschen. Literarische Texte eignen sich aufgrund ihrer schillernden Qualität und ihrer Tiefe – im Gegensatz zu nichtliterarischen Texten – zu einer (meist impliziten und unreflektierten) 'Selbstanalyse' vieler Rezipienten. Diese Selbstanalyse kann man, wenn man will, auch Übertragungsanalyse oder Analyse der eigenen projektiven Identifikation nennen.

Interpreten können uns bei dieser Analyse behilflich sein, indem sie versuchen, den möglichen tiefenpsychologisch relevanten Sinnzusammenhang, den der Text für viele Leser oder, besser noch, für den 'idealen' Leser haben kann, zu formulieren. Der ideale Leser ist von konkreten Rezeptionsfällen durchaus abzugrenzen: Er ist mit einer maximalen Aufmerksamkeitsgabe ausgestattet und verfügt obendrein über alle externen Kenntnisse, die er braucht, damit ihm keiner der mög-

¹⁸ Das Begriffspaar 'subjektiv-objektiv' wird hier nicht im philosophischen, sondern im psychologischen Sinne verwendet: Eigenes Seelenleben des erkennenden Subjektes wird von ihm an einem Objekt erlebt. Das Subjekt kann sich auf diese Weise mit Seelenleben, das ihm bei direkter Introspektion nicht zugänglich wäre, 'objektiv', d.h. als ob es sich in einem Objekt befände, befassen.

lichen Textzusammenhänge entgeht. Der ideale Leser bildet das Gegenstück zum schon erwähnten abstrakten Autor und überblickt daher das ganze Wirkungspotential des Textes. Er versteht also nicht nur weit mehr als der konkrete Autor oder der real existierende Leser, sondern auch als der Interpret. Poetisch gesagt: nur er vermag es, die musische Fülle des Werkes zu erfassen.¹⁹

Die hypothetische Konstruktion eines idealen Lesers dient einerseits dazu, der Dynamik der sich im Laufe der Zeit weit ausfächernden Rezeptionsmöglichkeiten allen Raum zu geben, erinnert aber andererseits auch daran, daß die Literaturinterpretation *stricto sensu* grundsätzlich darauf ausgerichtet sein sollte, das Werk – wenngleich aus einer notwendig beschränkten und zeitbedingten Perspektive – als ein in sich zusammenhängendes Kunstwerk darzutun. Je sinnvoller und einheitlicher der literarische Text aus der Interpretation hervortritt, desto mehr wird, wie ich meine, der Interpret der literarischen Qualität des Werkes gerecht.²⁰

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¹⁹ Der Terminus 'ideale Leser' wird nicht immer eindeutig verwendet, aber oft, so wie hier, wird er so definiert, daß das Textverständnis des idealen Lesers mit dem, was der abstrakte Autor ausdrücken will, identisch ist (vgl. Link 1980², 28 und 41 ff.). Das literarische Werk schließt sowohl den idealen Leser als den abstrakten Autor ein, nicht aber eine konkrete Leserschaft oder einen konkreten Autor. Literaturinterpretationen, die auf letztere zwei Untersuchungsobjekte ausgerichtet sind, d.h. sich primär mit Genese oder Rezeption des Werkes befassen, sind exopoetischer Art, während das primäre Objekt der endopoetischen Literaturinterpretation beliebig mit 'idealem Leser', 'abstraktem Autor' oder 'Wirkungspotential des Textes' angedeutet werden kann. Die gelegentlich anzutreffende Einteilung in autororientierte, werkorientierte und leserorientierte Interpretationskategorien tendiert m.E. dazu, zu vergessen, daß – wenn diese Einteilung einen Sinn haben will – die theoretischen Instanzen des idealen Lesers und abstrakten Autors selbstverständlich dem werkorientierten, und nicht den beiden anderen Interpretationsformen zugerechnet werden sollen.

²⁰ Ich bedanke mich herzlich bei Herrn Dr. Johann-Peter Haas für seine wertvollen Bemerkungen.