

LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS



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EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Writers and Recurrent Depression

ANTHONY STORR (*)

I would like to begin with a quotation from Graham Greene's autobiography, *Ways of Escape*.

Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation.¹

Graham Greene's proneness to recurrent depression was recognized by his friends, who, in the 1950s, assumed that he was bound to commit suicide. Fortunately, this gloomy prognosis proved inaccurate. However, Graham Greene's melancholia and his remark about writing being a form of therapy may serve as a point of departure for this lecture.

Although, as I shall hope to persuade you, liability to severe mood-swings is particularly common amongst writers, we should be rash to assume that everyone shares Graham Greene's conviction that melancholia and panic fear are inescapable aspects of the human condition. No-one who survives childhood escapes disappointment and bereavement, and hence some degree of depression; but many people lead reasonably equable lives in which happiness predominates over sadness, and in which panic fear plays little part. This is even true of some writers. In a recent book, I gave as an example the historian Edward Gibbon. Lytton Strachey begins his essay on Gibbon with the following words:

Happiness is the word that immediately rises to the mind at the the thought of Edward Gibbon: and happiness in its widest connotation — including good fortune as well as enjoyment. Good fortune, indeed, followed him from the cradle to the grave in the most tactful way possible; occasionally it appeared to fail him; but its absence always turned out to be a blessing in disguise.²

«I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son», may appear to contradict this; but, given Lytton Strachey's temperament and tastes, it is not surprising that he regarded the failure of Gibbon's intention to marry Suzanne Curchod as a lucky escape. However, as Gibbon's autobiography attests, Strachey is surely right in portraying him as well-balanced, successful, and predominantly happy. Gibbon was not a neurotic, nor was he subject to extremes of mood. I begin with him because I want to repudiate any idea that, because I am a psychiatrist, I regard all

(*) 45 Chalfont Road, Oxford OX2 6TJ, England.

¹ Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape*, (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 211.

² Lytton Strachey, *Gibbon*, in *Portraits in Miniature*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p. 154.

writers or other creative artists as unbalanced. Writers are of every personality type, from the grossly disturbed to the placidly stable. We do not know precisely what function writing served in Gibbon's psychic economy. His reference, at the end of his autobiography, to «the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings» bears witness to his ambition. A plethora of early illnesses steered his interest toward study rather than toward athletics; and we may speculate that this short, fat, rather ridiculous-looking man may have felt impelled to compensate for his physical deficiencies by mental achievement on a colossal scale. We may also wonder whether that lucid, balanced, mannered eighteenth-century style was something of a facade; a persona deliberately adopted to conceal any possible inner turmoil from both his readers and himself. But these are no more than guesses. What matters is that research and writing gave him what he wanted; an occupation which he greatly enjoyed, a position in the world, the esteem of all who read him, and the immortality which religion could not offer him.

Gibbon enjoyed a well-merited confidence in his own intellectual abilities from an early age. Although it was not until he was twenty-seven years old that «the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city» first started to his mind, we can be fairly sure that he knew that his gifts as a writer combined with his immense learning would ensure that he made his mark upon the world.

However, many of those who devote themselves to creative pursuits have no such certainty. Writers and artists may struggle on for years without gaining either fame or money; but nevertheless feel impelled to continue producing work, even if it is never published. For example, the Greek composer Nikos Skalkottas, who was a pupil of Weill and Schoenberg, left behind him a huge quantity of music, of which very little was played during his lifetime. He died in 1949; but it was not until the 1960s that his stature began to be recognized. Creative work must be impelled by drives which have nothing to do with worldly success, but which serve some interior function within the psyche of the individual, as Graham Greene is suggesting when he calls writing a form of therapy.

I said that writers were of every personality type, and I am not withdrawing that statement. But there is reason to suppose that liability to extremes of mood, both to depression and to exaltation, afflicts a rather high proportion of writers and other creative artists.

Every human being has some fluctuations of mood — there is often a noticeable increase in smiling faces when the weather changes from overcast skies to sunshine — and no-one escapes some degree of depression in response to bereavement, disappointment, or failure. But some people have such striking fluctuations in mood that they are considered mentally ill with what psychiatrists call *affective disorder*. For example, there are many people who become severely depressed in response to what appear to be minor precipitating factors, like failing an examination, or a transient quarrel with a spouse; and, in such cases, the depth of the depression, the feeling of utter hopelessness, is far beyond anything which the average person experiences, and is rightly regarded as a form of mental illness. Take, for example, Boswell's account of Dr. Johnson.

He felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness and impatience and with a dejection, gloom and despair which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved and all his labour and all his enjoyments were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.³

Johnson battled with depression all his life. The various obsessional rituals and compulsive movements which so disturbed his friends were ways of trying to ward off the morbid

³ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D.*, 3d ed., Vol. 1, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1887), pp. 63-4.

thoughts which assailed him as soon as he was unoccupied. As Sir Joshua Reynolds observed:

Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind; and for this reason, any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself; this disposition he considered as the disease of his mind, which nothing cured but company.⁴

From time to time, depression overwhelmed Johnson's defences. According to Jackson Bate, Johnson suffered a prolonged period of severe depression beginning around the time he left Oxford in December 1729, when he would have been twenty years old. Bate writes:

The next two years, to some extent the next five, were perhaps the hardest in the whole course of Johnson's difficult life.⁵

He experienced feelings of utter hopelessness combined with intense lassitude, and at times came close to suicide. Another severe period of depression followed in 1761; and this seems to have persisted even longer. Is it not appalling that a man who achieved so much, whose writings still give us so much pleasure, should say of himself,

«I have lived totally useless.»

Although many of Johnson's writings were composed at immense speed, there appears little evidence that he experienced any sustained periods of exaltation. Indeed, recurrent depression without any admixture of mania is much more frequently encountered than what psychiatrists now call «bipolar» affective disorder. For every patient admitted to hospital with recurrent attacks of mania or mania alternating with depression, there are about ten who suffer from recurrent depression alone. This is partly because swings of mood in the direction of mania or hypomania have to be very marked to constitute obvious mental illness. If a man feels unusually energetic and confident, full of creative ideas, with an enhanced capacity for work and pleasure, and a decreased need for sleep, neither he nor his friends and family are likely to consider him ill, unless he also exhibits some of the wilder forms of extravagant financial or sexual behaviour characteristic of mania. Periods of intense creative activity and mild hypomania have much in common; but when elation and excitement become more intense, disciplined mental activity and the organization required by creative work become impossible.

Much of the evidence that writers are particularly liable to suffer from affective disorders is anecdotal; but there are some objective studies which confirm this conclusion. One investigation of a group of 30 writers at the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop found that 80% had suffered from an affective disorder which was sufficiently severe to meet the diagnostic requirements of «illness» compared with only 30% amongst a matched group of controls. There is strong evidence of hereditary predisposition to affective disorders, so that it is not surprising that, amongst close relatives of the writers, 21% had definable psychiatric disorder, compared with only 3% of controls. In view of what I have just said about the prevalence of recurrent depression it is particularly interesting to note that 43% of the writers had had some form of bipolar illness in comparison with 10% of the controls. In addition, 30% of the writers suffered from alcoholism, compared with 7% of the controls. 2 of the 30 writers committed suicide during the fifteen year period covered by the investigation.⁷

⁴ James Boswell, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, pp. 144-5.

⁵ Walter Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 115.

⁶ James Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

⁷ Nancy C. Andreasen, *Creativity and Mental Illness: Prevalence Rates in Writers and Their First-Degree Relatives*, *Am. J. Psychiatry* 144: 10, October 1987, pp. 1288-1292.

In a recent study of 47 British writers and artists, who were selected for their eminence by their having won major awards or prizes, Dr. Kay Jamison discovered that 38% had actually received treatment for affective illness. Three-quarters of those who received treatment had been given anti-depressant drugs or lithium, or had been admitted to hospital. There were 18 poets amongst Dr. Jamison's sample, and over half of them had had psychiatric treatment. Biographers were less susceptible to severe mood swings than were novelists, playwrights and poets.⁸

Poets seem particularly likely to suffer from recurrent episodes of depression which are severe enough to rate as mental illness. William Collins, John Donne, William Cowper, Thomas Chatterton, John Clare, Christopher Smart, Samuel Coleridge, Edgar Allen Poe, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Alfred Tennyson, Edward Lear, Edward Thomas, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Anne Sexton, Hart Crane, Theodore Roethke, Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, and Robert Lowell all suffered from well-authenticated periods of severe depression. Clare, Collins and Smart were all admitted to «madhouses». Donne was recurrently tempted by suicide, and wrote the first English defence of suicide, *Biathanatos*. Lowell was in and out of hospital with both mania and depression. Five of these poets committed suicide (Plath, Berryman, Sexton, Crane, Jarrell).

Amongst prose writers, Lamb, Goethe, Mary Wollstonecraft, Balzac, Tolstoy, Conrad, Ruskin, Jack London, Hemingway, and Virginia Woolf were afflicted with severe depression; and the last three writers all killed themselves. Many writers have tried to stave off depression with alcohol or drugs; and some, like Dylan Thomas and Brendan Behan, drank themselves to death. Hemingway's father and Berryman's father both committed suicide. That their sons did likewise may be taken either as evidence of genetic transmission, or as evidence of delayed reaction to trauma. Both factors probably played their part. Genetic predisposition is evident in Mary Wollstonecraft's family. Her sister Eliza suffered a severe episode of depression after the birth of a daughter. Mary Wollstonecraft herself made two serious suicidal attempts. Her first child, Fanny Imlay, killed herself.

The Tennyson family is riddled with mental illness. The poet was the fourth child of twelve. His father was a severely disturbed clergyman who suffered from recurrent depression, epilepsy, and addiction to both alcohol and laudanum. Of Alfred's ten surviving brothers and sisters, one brother spent most of his life in an asylum, another was almost as incapacitated by mental illness, another was an opium addict, and another an alcoholic. All the others had at least one mental breakdown. The evidence that there is a genetic factor in both recurrent depression and in bipolar illness is overwhelming.

But why should liability to affective disorders be linked in any way with being a creative writer? You will recall that Charles Lamb had a mentally ill sister who killed their mother. Although he himself was in an asylum for six weeks at the end of 1795 following a disappointment in love, he firmly believed that mental illness and creativity were incompatible, and expressed this conclusion in his essay *Sanity of True Genius*. It is certainly true that being in a state of severe depression makes writing or any other creative activity impossible. It is also true, as I pointed out earlier, that manic excitement makes the sufferer so restless that he cannot order and express his thoughts and feelings in disciplined fashion. But, as you all know, affective disorders are intermittent. Those who experience extremes of depression and elation usually have long periods of intermission in which their mood is relatively normal. Extreme mood-swings interfere with creative production when actually present; but, when recollected in tranquillity, may provide depths of insight otherwise unobtainable. Some people who have been through the hell of severe depression, or the crazy whirlwind of mania (which

⁸ Kay Redfield Jamison, *Mood Disorders and Patterns of Creativity in British Writers and Artists*, *Psychiatry*, May 1989, 2(52): 125-134.

can be equally hellish), acknowledge that their illness provided experiences of an emotional intensity which are denied to the normal person.

This particularly applies to writers whom we value for their depth of understanding and psychological penetration. For a journalist or a romantic novelist, affective illness is nothing but a handicap; but for a Tolstoy or a Conrad, it may open doors of perception which might otherwise have remained closed. Before the Renaissance, writers and artists were valued for their skills rather than for their individuality. Today, the originality of creative writers, whether they be novelists, playwrights, or poets, is inescapably linked with self-exploration. The writing we most value is that which makes an authentic, individual statement; which conveys the writer's personal vision of life, even though it may contain no obviously autobiographical passages. For this kind of writer, even the experience of mental illness can prove illuminating.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

Gerard Manley Hopkins could not have written those lines unless he *had* hung there.

There are certainly some manic-depressives who, in spite of the suffering which they have been through and which they have inflicted on those close to them, feel on balance that they would rather have had their illness than not. It is chiefly the periods of exaltation which they miss, rather than the periods of depression. It has been suggested that depression, by stopping production, affords an opportunity for new, half-formed ideas to incubate. But the evidence so far does not support this notion. Depression, whilst it persists, is generally regarded by creative people as totally barren and unfruitful. It is only when it has lifted that creative use may be made of the experience. Writers' block, which many writers fear, and which periodically afflicts a high proportion of those writers I know, may be due to a period of depression, and disappears when the depression lifts or is abolished by treatment.

There are also other causes for this common problem. Inability to complete work may be due to fear of exposure, rather than to depression. The city in which I live, Oxford, is renowned for the number of scholars who have been working on a particular book for years, but who somehow never deliver it to the publisher. In some instances, this is because obsessional concern with accuracy has become pathological. Exactitude is partly rooted in scholarly pride, in the admirable desire to «get it right»; but when it becomes exaggerated, it is often an expression of fear that academic colleagues will delight in picking on those errors which no human being can entirely avoid.

A third possibility is that the writer has invested so much of him or her self in a particular piece of work that it is dangerous to complete it in case it fails. Writers sometimes embody more of their true identity in their work than they ever reveal in social life. When this is the case, rejection of the work becomes rejection of the most intimate parts of the self, and may be felt as more painful than rejection by a lover. When a piece of writing becomes so desperately important that it is felt as a matter of life and death, the writer feels constrained because he can no longer bring to it the elements of play and of impersonal craftsmanship which seem to be integral aspects of creative achievement. It is only when the writer can regard the work more objectively that completion becomes possible.

This phenomenon is rather characteristic of writers who are prone to depression. A person whose self-esteem is shaky, who is afflicted with guilt, and who habitually reproaches himself, is unlikely to reveal himself frankly and openly in social life. Writing, therefore, may have a particular appeal because it affords an opportunity for self-expression which is indirect, controllable, and which avoids the unpredictability of face-to-face encounters.

Virginia Woolf is one example of a writer who was hypersensitive to criticism because she invested so much of herself in her work. In addition, she exemplified another hazard

with which writers prone to depression have to contend. Whether or not a writer has difficulty in finishing a piece of work, its actual completion is often followed by a period of depression. Virginia Woolf, after completing *The Pargiters*, writes in her diary:

I am so sleepy. Is this age? I can't shake it off. And so gloomy. That's the end of the book. I looked up past diaries — a reason for keeping them, and found the same misery after *Waves* — after *Lighthouse* I was, I remember, nearer suicide, seriously, than since 1913. It is after all natural. I've been galloping now for three months — so excited I made a plunge at my paper — well, cut that all off — after the first divine relief, of course some terrible blankness must spread.⁹

It has been suggested that writing is often a form of self-analysis in which the writer is compelled to revive painful events and perhaps face unpleasant truths about himself, much as a patient does during the course of psychoanalysis. It has therefore been supposed that the act of writing may actually provoke depression. My own experience, both as an author and as a psychiatrist, does not support this idea. Although recalling losses and failures may temporarily cause mental pain, it is far more likely that writing helps the writer to come to terms with unhappy periods in life. Every psychiatrist knows that avoiding what has been painful and repressing trauma is a potent cause of neurotic symptoms. We have all seen cases of incomplete mourning in which an individual has adopted a stiff upper lip and a «business as usual» pose, only to find that he suffers from insomnia, anxiety, and depression. But when such an individual has allowed himself to re-experience the intense pain of his bereavement his symptoms usually disappear. Cover-up produces more disturbance than recall.

Anecdotally, I remember the case of a social worker who experienced several episodes of acute mania for which she had to be admitted to a mental hospital. She came to see me at a period when she was relatively well. I suggested that, instead of trying to forget all about her episodes of mental illness, as she had been advised to do, she should write something about them. She did so; the book was published; and I have a letter from her written after years of freedom from mental illness in which she acknowledges that writing the book was a help to her.

The depression which follows bereavement is a familiar experience to nearly everyone who reaches adulthood. In those who are liable to depressive illness, bereavement can be so poignant a loss that they never wholly recover from it. It can also be another spur to creative production. This was clearly the case with William Cowper, who lost his mother when he was six. Over fifty years after her death, he was still writing about her.

Many of you will remember Cowper's poem *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture Out of Norfolk*. He hung the portrait in his bedroom so that it should be the last thing which he saw at night and the first when he woke in the morning. The poem seems to me a revealing example of how the creative act both expresses loss, and also helps the bereaved person to come to terms with it.

And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief —
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream, that thou art she.

The last verse runs:

⁹ Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*, (London: Granada, 1978), p. 221.

And, while the wings of fancy still are free,
And I can view this mimic shew of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft —
Thyself remov'd, thy power to soothe me left.

Writing can achieve more than compelling the writer to face facts in the way that I have just described. By creating a new unity in a poem or novel, the writer is attempting to restore a lost unity, or to create a new unity, within the inner world of his own psyche. It is a symbolic form of healing. An obvious example, which I quote in my book *Solitude*, is of Tennyson writing *In Memoriam*. This poem, which was not originally designed for publication, was intermittently to engross Tennyson for nearly seventeen years. As Robert Bernard Martin observes in his biography of the poet:

In creating the harmonies and the symbolic order of the poems, he was able to perceive momentarily some kind of unity and wholeness that was applicable to his own life, and so it remained until his death.¹⁰

When life seems meaningless, meaning can be restored by the use of creative talents in a way which is not available to the untalented.

Episodes of depression immobilize the sufferer, as well as plunging him into gloom. He generally feels helpless, as well as hopeless. However, if he possesses creative talent, this may prove a way of restoring the sense that he can cope. Jung encouraged his patients to paint, draw, or write down their phantasies and feelings, partly as a way of uncovering them, but partly also because the act of portraying objectifies. An emotion portrayed is to some extent an emotion mastered. Those who feel that grief and despair threaten to overwhelm them find that, if they can record what they are feeling on paper, they feel less threatened. This is another motive which may account for the link between liability to depression and the urge to write.

I have already referred to the fragility of self-esteem which is characteristic of those who are prone to attacks of depression. Most people possess inner resources of self-esteem which see them through the inevitable ups and downs of life. If misfortune afflicts them, they assume that they will recover and live to fight another day. But depressives have no such inner resources, and no such confidence in the future. What, to the normal person, might be a minor set-back, plunges these people into a profound state of gloom from which they can envisage no escape. Avoidance of depression becomes a major endeavour, and so does the quest for external sources of self-esteem which can compensate for their inner emptiness. Success and public recognition can temporarily serve this function. Some writers, like Balzac, seem driven to keep depression at bay by overwork. It may well have been the case that Balzac's constant accumulation of debts was a device which he used to force himself to go on writing. Liability to depression is a powerful spur to production in those who are gifted enough to make use of this way of coping with their vulnerability.

Other writers take every opportunity offered of keeping their name before the public, including lecturing, journalism, and television appearances; seductive «enemies of promise» which may interfere with the production of more serious work. Such writers need their «fix» of self-esteem just as an addict needs his «fix» of a narcotic. Public recognition can become addictive, and may have done so for Dickens. The exhausting public readings which were a feature of his last years were followed by total prostration, and sometimes by more ominous symptoms of partial paralysis presaging the stroke which finally killed him. But the readings were so rewarding, both emotionally and financially, that he hastened his own death rather than abandon them.

¹⁰ Robert Bernard Martin, *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 140.

Dickens is a good example of a writer who, like Balzac, defended himself against depression by feverish overactivity. In psychiatric jargon, he employed a «manic defence». In early life, he suffered intensely from his father's imprisonment for debt, and from the disgrace of his own consequent employment in a blacking factory when he was twelve years old; although this penitential employment lasted for only four months. A period of intense depression followed his rejection by his first love, Maria Beadnell, whom he first met when he was seventeen, and with whom he was infatuated for four years. Edgar Johnson thinks that he never fully recovered from this. He writes:

All the rest of his life he lay under the shadow of this lost love, which in its darkest places merges with the shadow cast by the spiked wall of the Marshalsea and the imprisoning shades of the blacking warehouse.¹¹

Another period of depression occurred in 1848, and was reinforced by the death of his sister Fanny from tuberculosis. Edgar Johnson notes that, during almost the whole of 1848, Dickens undertook no new work of fiction. In August 1849, Dickens described himself as suffering from

Extreme depression of mind, and a disposition to shed tears from morning to night.¹²

Whatever the reason for Dickens's liability to depression, the way in which he usually dealt with it was by keeping himself ceaselessly busy; a tactic which, as in the case of Balzac, was for the most part highly effective. Often, he was working on several projects simultaneously. For instance, he began writing *Nicholas Nickleby* before he had half finished *Oliver Twist*. Dickens was not only a productive novelist, but also an indefatigable journalist and editor, an accomplished amateur actor and producer, an active social reformer, and a tireless walker who thought nothing of striding fifteen miles or more through the countryside when he had nothing better to do. However, as Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie point out in their biography:

The euphoria of effort was always followed by the reaction of despair.¹³

They also quote a percipient remark of Dickens's closest friend John Forster who wrote that Dickens

had not in himself the resources that such a man, judging from the surface, might be expected to have had... There was for him «no city of the mind» against outward ills, for inner consolation and shelter.¹⁴

I referred earlier to the fact that those liable to depression lack inner resources of self-esteem.

In summary, I have suggested that the apparent link between liability to affective disorder and creative writing is both convincing and comprehensible. The German psychiatrist Bumke wrote:

If we could extinguish the sufferers from manic-depressive psychosis from the world, we would at the same time deprive ourselves of an immeasurable amount of the accomplished and good, of colour and warmth, of spirit and freshness. Finally only dried up bureaucrats and schizophrenics would be left. Here I must say that I would rather accept into the bargain the diseased manic-

¹¹ Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 65.

¹² Quoted in Edgar Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 351.

¹³ Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *Dickens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 306.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

depressives than to give up the healthy individuals of the same heredity cycle.¹⁵

Writing can be valuable both as a defence against depression and also as a way of overcoming it. It can help the writer to come to terms with loss, and restore a sense of being able to cope. It can bring a new sense of meaning to a life which has lost significance. Writing can be a means of self-affirmation and self-expression for those who find these difficult to achieve in the give and take of ordinary social life. It can also be a means of self-exploration. If successful, the writer may gain recurrent boosts to his morale through public recognition; although, by «going public» he is also risking rejection.

Can psychiatric treatment of depression impair creativity? Edward Thomas, who suffered terrible periods of depression, wrote:

But seriously I wonder whether for a person like myself whose most intense moments were those of depression a cure that destroys the depression may not destroy the intensity — a *desperate* remedy.¹⁶

Lithium has proved to be an effective treatment for controlling extreme mood-swings; but there are a few patients who refuse to take it on the grounds that it impairs their creativity. Mogens Schou of Denmark, who, more than any other man, has been responsible for establishing lithium as an effective treatment, collected twenty-four cases of manic-depressive artists who were treated with lithium. The sample included composers, painters, and writers of both sexes. Twelve reported increased productivity whilst taking lithium; six reported no change in productivity; and six reported a diminution. Those who felt that lithium impaired their creativity sometimes did so because they no longer experienced the mild elations in which new ideas flow freely. In other cases, lithium caused a diminution in drive and energy which made it more difficult to express new ideas, even when these continued to appear. Still others blamed lithium for a decrease in productivity which in fact turned out to be due to other causes. On balance, controlling extremes of mood benefited creative production; but individuals vary, and only trial and error can reveal how any particular artist will respond.¹⁷

I want to end by considering some more general factors which may be operative in linking creative production with what, at first sight, appears to be failure in adaptation.

Human beings are distinguished from other animals by their superior intelligence, by language, and by the development of their imagination. Subhuman primates certainly display some evidence of imaginative activity. Because we can record the electrical activity of the brain, we know that animals dream; and experiment has shown that apes can be imaginative in solving problems which involve using familiar objects in unfamiliar ways, like twigs for tools, or boxes as stepladders. But man's imagination ranges far beyond such mundane concerns; and it is surely because of this that the human species has been so successful in dominating the earth. Every scientific hypothesis begins as phantasy, although it is only those hypotheses which stand up to criticism and are susceptible of proof which survive and lead to real advances. Einstein did not attribute his creative success to his abilities as a mathematician and physicist, but to the boldness of his imagination. Great paintings and great works of literature not only give us pleasure, but also enrich our understanding of life and thus enhance our adaptation to it.

It hardly needs pointing out that man's capacity for imaginative invention also has a negative aspect. The whole species is threatened by the invention of nuclear weapons:

¹⁵ Quoted in A. Myerson and R.D.Boyle, *Incidence of manic-depressive psychosis in certain socially important families*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 98: 11-21, 1941.

¹⁶ Quoted in R. George Thomas, *Edward Thomas*, (Oxford: 1985), p. 162.

¹⁷ Mogens Schou, *Artistic productivity and Lithium Prophylaxis in Manic-Depressive Illness*, Brit. J. Psychiatry, (1979), 135: 97-103.

modern technology pollutes the atmosphere and destroys the forests upon which our continued existence ultimately depends. Man is more destructive of his own species than any other animal; and this is in part related to his imaginative capacity. When Hitler represented the Jews as wholly evil, as possessing magical powers for harm, as being both despicable and dangerous, he was calling up the worst and most potentially destructive side of the human imagination: the side which longs for black and white simplicity, and which can imagine a particular group as wicked conspirators whose extermination will rid the world of evil. The Holocaust could not have taken place without an appeal to the human capacity for paranoid phantasy.

This «other side» to human imagination does not invalidate the idea that imagination is biologically adaptive. There are a number of examples which demonstrate that natural selection may emphasize a particular characteristic which is advantageous under some circumstances, but disadvantageous under others. The female argus pheasant reacts sexually to the large secondary wing feathers of the male. These are therefore highly developed; but so huge that the bird can hardly fly. It follows that the male with the largest wing feathers enjoys an advantage in regard to reproduction, but suffers a disadvantage when trying to escape from predators. In this case, the advantage outweighs the disadvantage; and so it is with the development of the human imagination.

Freud would not have agreed with my view that imagination is adaptive, for Freud regarded phantasy as essentially escapist; a turning away from reality rather than an attempt to find new ways of coming to terms with reality. Freud thought that phantasy was derived from play. He wrote:

The growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of *playing*, he now *phantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called *day-dreams*.¹⁸

Freud believed that infants begin life by imagining or hallucinating what they require, and only gradually come to terms with the real world when they find that such imaginings bring no lasting satisfaction. Freud thought that dreams represent a persistence of this hallucinatory activity, and linked dreaming, play, and phantasy together as escapist phenomena which he considered to be childish forms of mental activity. Although Freud recognized that no-one completely abandons these childhood habits — we all dream, we all have phantasies, and most of us play — he nevertheless considered that, ideally, the mature person should adapt to reality by conscious deliberation and rational planning rather than by using imaginative mental processes.

This is why Freud's writings about art and artists are, for the most part, so profoundly unsatisfactory. Although Freud was an exceptionally well-read man, whose favourite authors were Goethe and Shakespeare, his conceptual scheme made it inevitable that he should regard creative writers as suspect figures. Freud wrote:

An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy.¹⁹

Although Freud did refer to the artist as finding his way back to reality by moulding his

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*. Standard Edition, IX, (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 145.

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, Standard Edition, XII, (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 219.

phantasies into what he called «truths of a new kind», he never discarded the idea that phantasy ought to be superseded by hard-headed rationality.

In his early paper, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, from which I have already quoted, Freud wrote:

Let us now make ourselves acquainted with a few of the characteristics of phantasying. We may lay it down that a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of an unsatisfying reality.²⁰

When I first read this passage, I thought it ridiculous. We all know that everyone phantasies, and surely *some* human beings — just a few, perhaps — count themselves as happy? However, I eventually realized that Freud had a point; although he did not pursue it to its logical conclusion. Freud's conception of happiness was of a Nirvana-like state of satisfaction resembling that of a satiated breast-fed infant; a condition in which neither external nor internal stimuli disturbed its utter peace. Freud treated all powerful emotions as disturbances which must be got rid of, rather than as pleasures to be sought. I don't think that Freud was right in supposing that happiness consists in having no unsatisfied wishes — think of having nothing to which to look forward — but I appreciate what he means when he says that the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes. For is not man a creature whose wishes are never fully satisfied? Like *Oliver Twist*, we always ask for more.

It seems to me that dissatisfaction is itself adaptive, just because it stimulates the use of the imagination. If we, like certain insects, were governed by pre-programmed instinctive responses which ensured automatically perfect adaptation to a particular set of environmental conditions, we should have no need of phantasy. In Freud's sense, we should be «happy», with reproduction ensured and every other need taken care of. We should not even realize the sterility and dullness of our existence.

But, as Dr. Johnson pointed out, the «hunger of imagination preys incessantly upon life, and must always be appeased by some enjoyment.» Even those who call themselves happy can always imagine something still better. The immensely rich seldom stop trying to make money because they have enough to satisfy their wishes. Writers, composers, and other artists are never content to rest on their laurels; and those who are liable to recurrent depression are particularly likely to see the flaws in their own work and strive to do better next time. Samuel Beckett aptly illustrates the point in *Worstward Ho*.

All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.²¹

If we accept the notion that being less than perfectly adapted to the external world is part of man's biological endowment which stimulates his imagination, it is unsurprising that many of the people who develop the most fertile imaginations seem to be driven by inner tensions. Provided these tensions are not so extreme as to prevent the subject making creative use of them, he or she should not be labelled neurotic or psychotic. As we have noted, there are extremes of affective illness, and these can and should be treated; but the liability to mood-swings, which cannot be abolished, has advantages as well as disadvantages. It is a truism to say that there is no hard-and-fast line between mental illness and mental health. Many of the most valuable human beings who have ever lived have shown clear evidence of recurrent depression. What matters is that those who exhibit this liability should

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, Standard Edition, IX, (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 146.

²¹ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, (London: Calder, 1983), p. 7.

be able to use it productively. Like Tennyson's Ulysses, they «cannot rest from travel»; and their aim should be the same as his:

«To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.»

Freud: Between Fiction and Non-Fiction

LÁSZLÓ HALÁSZ (*)

With regard to the genius loci, I would like primarily to consider the last years of Freud's work. The work that Freud finished in London and could still publish in his lifetime was the third part of his book about Moses. Freud had begun this work in 1934, but as his letters (Letters, 1970) to Arnold Zweig show, although it absorbed him completely, he feared the scandal it might cause academic circles. At the same time, he realized that his study was not well-founded, and subsequently put aside the first chapter. Nevertheless, after some months he felt a continuing affinity with Moses, and wrote the second chapter, albeit conceding that its foundations rested «on clay». Freud had no doubt that the experts could discredit him as an outsider in the field (Jones, 1957, 3, 194); even so he could resist temptation no longer and in 1937 published the two chapters in the journal *Imago*.

«To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them. But we cannot allow any such reflection to induce us to put the truth aside in favour of what are supposed to be national interests; and, moreover, the clarification of a set of facts may be expected to bring us a gain in knowledge» — wrote Freud in the introductory lines of the first chapter (Freud, 1985, 243). But he knew that all this was hypothesis: «Even if one accepts the fact of Moses being an Egyptian as a first historical foothold, one would need to have at least a second firm fact in order to defend the wealth of emerging possibilities against criticism of their being a product of the imagination and too remote from reality... But this has not been obtainable» (Freud, 1985, 253). However he was unable to stop the work, despite the fact that «... it did not seem attractive to find oneself classed with schoolmen and Talmudists who delight in exhibiting their ingenuity without regard to how remote from reality their thesis may be. Notwithstanding these hesitations, which weigh as much with me today as they did before, the outcome of my conflicting motives is a decision to produce the present sequel to my earlier communication», wrote Freud (1985, 254-255) at the beginning of the second chapter.

Later, he continued (in the introduction to the third chapter): «With the audacity of one who has little or nothing to lose, I propose for a second time to break a well-grounded intention...» (Freud, 1985, 295) After moving to London, he again took up the theme: «There are no external obstacles remaining, or at least none to be frightened of... As regards *internal* difficulties, a political revolution and change of domicile could alter nothing. No

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less than before, I feel uncertain in the face of my own work: I lack the consciousness of unity and of belonging together which should exist between an author and his book. It is not as though there were an absence of conviction in the correctness of my conclusion» (Freud, 1985, 298-299). Freud was unshakable; even Shalom Jahuda failed to dissuade him from the publishing the work. (cf. Jones, 1957, 3, 234).

Freud wished to express his views at any price. In 1935 he had written: «... it suffices me (sic) that I myself can believe in the solution of the problem. It has pursued me throughout the whole of my life», (Letters, 1972, quoted in Jones, 1957, 3, 194) and he felt the same way in 1938. One does not need to be a Freudist to detect at the back of all this Freudian processes of defence, rationalization and identification as well as a personal identity theme.

Freud thought there in fact had been two Moseses: the first an Egyptian nobleman, the true founder of monotheism who was murdered by the Jews, and the second Moses who governed the Jews by exploiting their feelings of guilt. The revolt against Moses' severity was possibly known to Freud through personal experience. In his 1914 polemic against Adler and Jung he mentioned his 1890s expectation that «science would ignore me entirely during my lifetime: some decades later, someone else would infallibly come upon the same things — for which the time was not now ripe — would achieve recognition for them and bring me honour as a forerunner whose failure had been inevitable» (quoted in Roazen, 1979, 301).

The identification with the mythical hero who was an outsider and did not belong to his people was quite close to Freud. In 1933 Freud wrote of himself: «Here a piece of opposition to one's own Jewishness may still be hiding cunningly. Our great master Moses was, after all, a strong anti-Semite and made no secret of it» (quoted in Roazen, 1979, 301). There is an additional relationship. Freud characterized the first Moses as «slow of speech», in accordance with the Biblical tradition; and Freud's cancer was already causing him speech difficulties at that time.

Concurrently, Freud was forced to find his own family among the immortals — Leonardo, Goethe, Michelangelo and so on. He thought that Shakespeare must have been an aristocrat. «For Freud, things were never what they seemed on the surface, and therefore he transposed the Jew Moses, the son of slaves, into not only a Gentile but an aristocrat as well» (Roazen, 1979, 515)

Freud's birth and origins remained problematic for him. This must have lain behind his intellectual curiosity, directing him during his writing of the Moses book to try to break the bonds of generations and to free himself from fathers and ancestors who tied him to the scandalous margins of existence, or at least in the opinion of M. Robert (1974). She thinks that Freud, having worked on the story of Moses, wanted to put off the dreaded moment of the return of the repressed and of the return to the patriarchs. Freud's final message, therefore, is that he is no longer a Jew or a German. He wishes to be the son merely of his own works; like the slain prophet, he would let posterity worry over the secret of his identity.

Although the Moses book gives an outline, a laconic restatement, of psychoanalysis, the impersonal style is practically in accordance with the aims of a «family romance», which in Freud's opinion is created by each neurotic at a given period in his or her life. That is why, in Robert's view the real world of history and necessity is clearly eliminated. It is known that Freud entitled the first draft of his book: *The Man Moses, a historical novel* (Jones, 1957, 3, 193). But he admitted: «I am not good at historical romances. Let us leave them to Thomas Mann» (Jones, 1957, 3, 194) (Indeed, Thomas Mann did write novels of the type mentioned by Freud. Some years later, after publication of Freud's complete Moses book, Mann published another work, *The Law*, among others, dealing with the knowledge of Freud's «novel».) In any event, in 1934 and 1935 Freud blamed himself for not following the novelist's vocation. As it was, Freud explored in the depths

what Thomas Mann, using sophisticated artistic devices, proved at the heights (Letters, 1970).

In Freud's key work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, written forty years before, Moses makes an appearance. Interpreting one of his own dreams about Rome, Freud (1975, 501-2) mentions that the «seeing the Promised Land» theme was easily recognizable. Freud then began to write his «family romance», which he finished with a grandiose vision of Jewish parricide in *Moses and Monotheism*. Freud is dealing with Moses almost in the same way as he deals with his father, thinks Robert (1974). Jacob Freud is the real hero of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: a man who is certainly not suited to be a hero. Jacob Freud was loved and honoured, but was also hated insofar that he was a rival; moreover, he was worthy of the tenderest feelings, but unworthy in that his son found him weak: Freud was disappointed in him. The passages in *The Interpretation of Dreams* are well known in which Freud as a child confronts his admiration for Hamilcar, and contrasts his son Hannibal's heroism with his own father's meek behaviour in the face of an aggressive non-Jew. In the same context, together with Hannibal Napoleon also appeared (Freud, 1975, 286-7).

Freud continued with this «family romance» too, and just during his writing of the Moses book. «Napoleon's bellicosity, for Freud was intimately connected with the pangs of being a second son. 'To eliminate Joseph' Freud wrote later in 1936 to Thomas Mann, the author of the recently-published *Joseph in Egypt*, 'to take his place, to become Joseph himself, must have been Napoleon's strongest emotion as a small child' (Letters, 428). Napoleon's coronation as evoked by Freud in the crowning paragraph of his 'Acropolis' essay was a victory at once over father and elder brother — over a brother who was the namesake, as Freud reminds Mann, of the most celebrated Biblical dreamer and dream-interpreter. Thus Freud's self-comparison with Napoleon, having receded somewhat during the early parts of his letter to Mann (Freud was not a second son), reasserts itself at the end: both were in competition with Joseph» (Bowie, 1987, 183).

The issue of eminence with respect of his father to comes up in another well known passage of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In this Freud reports an awkward scene of his childhood: his toilet-training had lapsed and his father's insulting words about him («The boy will come to nothing», Freud 1975, 309) reappeared in his later dreams together with a listing of his achievements and successes.

The connection between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *Moses and Monotheism* is not arbitrary in the sense that Freud himself used the term «theoretical fiction» at the end of his first key book, since «no supporting evidence could be found» (cf. Bowie, 1987, 179). But to speak of fiction as hypothesis which is not solidly grounded is less than I wish to suggest. The main ideas of the Freudian «historic novel» (the two Moseses, the first an Egyptian nobleman and so on) are definitely unorthodox: even a science-fiction writer would envy them. And Freud's whole work is characterized by an unrestrained spirit showing that things are different from what they seem to be (cf. Roazen, 515). Jones (1957, 2, 429) also points out Freud's inclination to be open to the speculations and «even highly improbable ideas».

All this fitted into Freud's experience as a Jew fighting against the majority, conventions and anything else he finds unacceptable. He satisfies his vocation as a hero by giving a new direction to thought, in other words, he is someone who engenders significant resistance. In this way Freud was reinforced in following his own path. Freud was right in several meanings of the word when he wrote in one of his letters that if he ever saw the Almighty, «He could not complain that I had not made the best use of my supposed freedom» (quoted in Jones, 1957, 2, 417).

At the time of the first edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud stated in a letter written to Fliess that «I am not really a man of a science, not an observer, not an experimenter and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a Conquistador — an

Adventurer if you want to translate the word — with the curiosity, the boldness and the tenacity that belongs to that type of being» (quoted in Jones, 1957, 1, 348). And thirty-five years later, — while he was working on the first chapter of the Moses book, he remarked after a visit from Levy-Bruhl in accordance with his earlier self-characterization he remarked: «He is a real *savant*, especially in comparison with myself» (Jones, 1957, 3, 194).

Owing to the *extraordinary* originality and audacity of his ideas Freud attributed a great importance to the plasticity and aesthetic coherence of manner of expression: an elegant well-orderedness of form and content. And, in a paradoxical way, in London all these things were overshadowed by his above-mentioned temperament and together with it, by the personal identity theme. «The part of this study which follows cannot be given to the public without extensive explanations and apologies. For it is nothing other than... a repetition of the first part... I am aware that a method of exposition such as this is no less impedient than it is inartistic... Unluckily an author's creative power does not always obey his will: the work proceeds as it can, and often presents itself to the author as something independent or even alien» (Freud, 1985, 349-350). Though some years ago he wrote to Lou Andréas Salomé in a letter that «... despite what some people say, I am no artist; I could never have depicted the effects of light and color, only hard outlines» (quoted in Jones, 1957, 3, 453), the message is quite clear that his self-criticism quoted above is that of an artist, a novelist, a story-teller.

Apart from his own standards' he could think of those of Thomas Mann, for instance. The latter says in connection with *Totem and Taboo*: «It is without doubt the one of Freud's productions which has the greatest artistic merit: both in conception and literary form, it is a literary masterpiece allied to, and comparable with, the greatest examples of literary essays» (Mann, 1941, 92). And Mann added that it was not an everyday compilation of a scholar but rather a part of world literature.

In spite of similarities, Freud and Thomas Mann do not say the same thing. Although Freud gave up writing his historical novel, his invented fantasy-based story about Moses, he does not really consider his study to be the work of a *savant*: he is undecided about how remote his thesis from reality, undecided about the role of fiction in his study. He concedes unequivocally that he is writing a study, but as an author he speaks of it as though he were writing fiction. And — to give a more contradictory picture — Freud was called «the biologist of mind» with good reason (Sulloway, 1979). Freud himself had no doubt that psychology was one of the natural sciences. He found that he extended the scientific thinking that he had learnt primarily from Darwin to, a new sphere, namely to the life of the psyche.

In Thomas Mann's view — at least in the given context — literature stands higher on the scale of merit than does science. But he has no doubt about Freud's value as a researcher; he places Freud in the world of poets and writers, but does not regard him as an author of fiction. He considers Freud to be a scientist, but at the same time more than a scientist.

We could say that the trait of extraordinariness in Freud's oeuvre (which may be seen in the Moses book in a heightened form) virtually recalls the eighteenth — or nineteenth-century notion of «literature» as the collection of all written texts (cf. Hirsch, 1979). Accordingly, without exaggeration, the entire corpus of psychological writings would belong to «literature». How can we explain that the problem is particularly relevant to Freud? Here we begin to approach the real meaning of «literature»: a written (or verbal) product whose most important characteristics is its aesthetic quality.

But to see the difficulties in the use of this criterion one needs to refer neither to postmodern literature, which questions any kind of usual aesthetic quality, nor to the deconstructivists who proclaim the undefiable, Prothean nature of literature. As early as the 1920s a German literary historian, Czysars (1926) remarked that he experienced the release of less aesthetic

energy from contemporary literary works than from a textbook on ophthalmology. It is without doubt that some formal devices which deviate from the automatized use of everyday language (cf. Shklovsky, 1925, Mukarovsky, 1964) by themselves are not the sole bearers of literariness because they can be applied to non-literary texts as well. Nevertheless, literary texts are characterized by the type and ratio of integration of the foreground and background devices, and this is why they are cued to take part in literary communication to promote the use of aesthetic and polyvalence conventions (see Schmidt, 1982).

Thus, we recognize that a literary text has no specific characteristics which make it literary, yet the composite of constituents, which in themselves can be found in other texts as well, can function within a peculiarly complex, and multilevelled meaning of a text judged by our culture to be literary. Even in everyday communication primary meanings are usually connected with secondary ones. The specific nature of a literary text is that the perception of denotative meaning is not the most essential part of understanding: the reader activates a text comprising an intentionally («according to a program», Marcus, 1974) structured network of connotations and contextual meanings.

The knowledge the reader can mobilize is less limited by the task than it is for scientific, or more generally, expository discourse. And imaginative operations are far less strictly determined. But the most critical moment is the goal-state, as it is simply impossible to find a perfect solution (interpretation) and to predict exactly how many, and what kind of, equivalent solutions (interpretations) there can be. The reader of an expository discourse confronts a clearly defined problem, while in literary discourse the problem is «ill-defined» (cf. Reitman, 1965). All these factors allow scope for the reader's emotions, memories and thoughts. Relatively high degree of freedom may be a significant value of a literary work but it certainly is not a merit of a scientific one.

A literary work presents not only the world as a writer sees it but presents the writer himself as he sees the world. Moreover, an author's ability to observe and remember, clusters of his own desires and motives are objectified in the text, as are the abilities which are necessary to the shaping of it. In turn, a scientific text presents the result free (if possible) from the researcher's personal traits. The scientist objectifies human cognitive abilities, possibly in their pure form. To put it in another way, when the scientist objectifies his abilities he tries to exclude all the subjective factors which can endanger the exactness from the final product. Ohm's Law lies outside liking or antipathy; it would be inadmissible to take into account the personality of its discoverer when judging the meaning and the significance of this law. To show the success of disanthropomorphization, scientific work speaks exclusively about itself — in other words, about the relationships between natural phenomena.

But in the humanities, even if the author uses strictly scientific methods, the appearance of his relationship to life, to people, and to social engagement is hardly avoidable. Thus depending on the specificities of the branch of learning we can assume that, as in a literary work, some mediating factors stand between the product and its evaluation. The author's personal traits exercise certain effects on the work, and the characteristics of the work appear as the personal traits of the author. Scientific provability is not the strongest side of a non-Freudist psychology either (Hall-Lindzey, 1970, Jahoda, 1977), but the problem of Freud's oeuvre is more serious still. Among others Freud accentuates the difference between natural and hermeneutic sciences.

It is obvious from a hermeneutic point of view that the meaning of a text — either in the humanities or in literature — is not ready-made, and not unambiguous; it has to be unravelled with the help of interpretation. Freudian psychoanalysis itself is also an interpretive activity, helping the patient to organize his life events into a coherent life story. In his Moses book Freud shows an unusual — in fact an — extreme case of this narrative text /re/construction process. It is a unusual as a /re/construction since its basis is *Holy Scripture*, which is ab ovo a great hermeneutic challenge. *Holy Scripture* is itself a narrative reconstruction

in which non-fiction, historical events, legend, folklore and poetry have been mixed together by different authors in different times. Freud's text is also unusual in that psychoanalysis is used here for a narrative reconstruction of another reconstruction of a striking protagonist from the history of Jewish, and universal culture, combined with Freud's personal theme outlined above.

One cannot read literature as literature without literary competence because one cannot use the suitable conventions. Similarly, one cannot use psychoanalytical conventions in order to understand the patient's text without psychoanalytical competence (Spence, 1982). One such convention is thematic unity; things which seem to be isolated from need to be united. Multiple meaning is another such convention. On the surface things are always deceptive; this is why they are ambiguous.

The larger themes of narrative reporting impose «a hermeneutic pressure» on the isolated events. Remembering adjusts automatically to the patient's unfolding story. Although Freud regarded himself as an archaeologist who discovered hidden pieces of the past, it is clear that archaic experiences are formless. And Freud, in accordance with the narrative tradition, paid a great attention to creating a good story which was coherent, continuous and has an ending. During search for historical truth, however, it is important to ascertain precise time and place (cf. Spence, 1982).

As a result of the analyst's procedure, the patient attempts to understand himself. «The patient like the poet, must always be searching for just the right word and the analyst, using one of the conventions of analytic competence, must emphatically try to construct the patient's intended meaning» (Spence, 1982, 85). The conversational mode is contrary to the expression of innermost thoughts. Psychoanalytic accounts are a kind of biography and autobiography, the history of which is based on the Greek, Celtic and Germanic oral epic traditions (Ricoeur, 1977).

In the same way that a writer generally realizes who his audience are, a patient also tries to see who is listening to him. The content is not independent of the genre. For instance, when the patient wishes to use an ironical tone he is forced to emphasize some experiences and to omit others: free association is limited. At the same time, Hirsch (1967) warns us that the interpreter is able to organize a unity from different parts of the text only if he can make guesses about the meanings which can be expected. In other words, the ideas in the genre have some heuristic functions in the interpretation. So we can say that these ideas provide us with suitable schemata which direct the information processing.

The linguistic and narrative aspects of the interpretation may take priority over the historical truth. An interpretation satisfies us since it forms an unfinished piece of reality into a meaningful sentence; it finds a «narrative home» — says Spence (1982, 138). The power of language is shown by the fact that when something is formulated into words, it achieves some kind of authenticity — especially if the interpretation, however surprising it may be, can explain a great many things on account of its inventiveness.

Aristotle (1968) identifies the specificity of literature in its mediating cognitive (informative) function between history and philosophy. Like history, it describes individuals and events, but like philosophy, it generalizes them. Fiction can violate the factual (historical) truth, but not the laws of necessity or probability. Hirsch (1984) following Philip Sidney, says that the poet suggests the general principle (like the philosopher) and also gives an example (like the historian). Freud's astonishing case-histories and explanations are quite close to this example-giving function.

The danger of narrative is that a story seems to be true if it is adequate and accurate. Freud's constructions were often hypothetical and problematic, but nevertheless were reconstructions since they contributed to a coherent description of the patient's life. Unfortunately, adds Spence (1982), an account may be coherent in many ways, since it can be completed in different ways.

During the analytical procedure — as the Russian formalists would say — the fabula of an actual session is artistically reorganized as a subject. The proper context is brought about only by a suitable subject. So the reader comprehends the utterances and their meanings in the same way that the analyst does. The interpretation is creative (primarily in the artistic sense). Narrative truth can be extended by artistic truth (cf. Spence, 1982).

Searle (1979) points out that when a reporter writes an article he binds himself to the truth, and also to his intention to demonstrate the truth, and his belief in it. Again, a novelist pretends to satisfy these claims but does not actually do so. From the assumed point of view of a writer of fiction, sentences are neither true judgments nor are they solidly based hypotheses; they cannot be false judgments or falsifiable hypotheses either (cf. Markiewicz, 1966). So the suspense of disbelief is clear.

An analyst also binds himself to his belief in his own truth, but is less bound to the truth itself and is often unable to prove it, stresses Spence (1982). This is connected with the difference between construction and reconstruction. One believes that a construction contains some events which might have happened even when one has no certain way of checking them with regard to manner, place and time.

This reminds us of an artistically pragmatic model of fiction-writing and it is worth noting that at the time Freud was working on *Moses and Monotheism* he preferred this model: «Quite often we do not succeed in bringing the patient to recollect what has been represented. Instead of that, if the analysis is carried out correctly, we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of the construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory» (Freud, 1937, 265-66).

Freud tried to reach «an assured conviction of the truth of the construction» in his *Moses* book also — despite the absence of proof. He presented a possible world beyond the real world which builds on a narrative mode of constructing reality — as Bruner (1986) says. This mode concentrates on human intention and action. But we have to take into account that polar opposites mostly do not reckon with the abundance of transitional conditions. This is the case with the narrative and historical truth. After all, the historical truth does not appear in itself but rather in the writing of history. And so historical facts are not necessarily the polar opposites of literary fictions: «... a historiographic text has to continually reinvent history by interpreting in hindsight and imposing representational narrative, or dramatic criteria often carried over from literature» (Beaugrande, 1988, 8).

Freud's life-theme, motivation and cognitive style all contributed to establish the only psychological system which in its complexity, significance and tragic content could compete with the psychological knowledge accumulated in literature (Trilling, 1940). It is also clear why literature had such a great effect on Freud. But it is also to understand why Popper (1963) is not enchanted by these features and considers the lack of falsification unacceptable. However, the recent findings of the philosophy of science show that a theory cannot be rejected merely on the criteria of falsification, but only if it is unable to promote further academic discussion (Cosin-Freeman-Freeman, 1982). From this point of view Freud is inexhaustible: his ability to stimulate is closely connected with his full and irrefutable power of portrayal in his own way he described Man as a being beset by conflicts just as Shakespeare or Dostoyevski did.

Freud would not be right to reject the main ideas outlined in this paper, as he rejected those of Ellis at the time. Based on the fact that psychoanalysis primarily works with the material of the individual's life story, Ellis (1917) emphasized that Freud had more of an artistic vocation than a scientific one. Freud considered this «as a fresh turn taken by resistance and as a repudiation of analysis» (Freud, 1955, 263).

Even if on account of our psychology of literature point of view we have placed the emphasis on some relevant characteristics, we have attempted to show that Freud's psychology occupies a unique position between fiction and non-fiction. Surely, in the different periods

of a life's work not free from contradictions, Freud strove to construct a world which built on the logico-scientific mode dealing with general causality.

It is only one consequence of Freud's uniqueness that the literature, fine art and cinema of our century would be greatly diminished if one removed those works which owed a debt to Freud's oeuvre. The other consequence is that, in a paradoxical way, even among those researchers who deny the provability of Freud's fundamental theses, there are a good many who occasionally interpret psychological life in accordance with Freud's ideas. These ideas primarily function for science and within it. Even if one accepts — either on the basis of Freud's self-characterization or on the basis of a strict definition of the term — that Freud was not a scientist, one cannot deny that, if the most prominent figures of psychology had to be listed, Freud's name would normally be placed at the top — even by his strongest opponents.

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Desire and Mythic Surmise in the Writings of Sigmund Freud

JOAN MONTGOMERY BYLES (*)

1. THE MYTH OF OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX IN THE LIFE OF SIGMUND FREUD

There seems to be a prevalence for the mixing of animal and human forms in myth. The sphinx in both woman and winged lion. She seduces only to destroy. Her form is partly derived from Greek folk superstition, where she appears as a wanton strangler, (German *wurgerin*, throtter, or *wurgengel*, devouring angel) a demon, or a children's bogey. She is not unique to Greek mythology, but a composite figure. Such superstitions cluster around other half female monsters who set riddles and devour those who cannot answer them, such as the Midday Woman mentioned in *Das Ratsel der Sphinx* by Ludwig Laistner, a book in Freud's library which he seems to have read many times. As a sculpture, however, she has affinities with Egypt, where Pharaoh was represented as a sphinx after his death. The sphinx was, therefore, both female and male, malevolent and benevolent.

The sphinx was made famous in literature by Sophocles in his tragic drama, *Oedipus Rex*. All his life Freud was fascinated by the legend of Oedipus and the sphinx, and the mass of cultural ideas in the myth which goes back at least to Homer's *Odyssey* (Book XI). Freud probably first came across Oedipus and the sphinx at school where he graduated *summa cum laude* in 1873. In his Greek exam he translated lines 15-54 of Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Rex*. Much later in his life, after he had formed his theory of the Oedipus complex, Freud wrote that the unravelling of Oedipus's crime — delving into his past — was like the process of psychoanalysis itself. «While the poet, as he unravels the past, brings to light the guilt of Oedipus, he is at the same time, compelling us to recognise our own inner minds, in which these same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found.» (*S.E.* IV, 262). Well, who was the Sphinx? As everyone knows, the riddle was, «what is the being who has one name, but first four feet, then two feet and then three feet?» «Man», answered Oedipus, «for he crawls on all fours, then walks upright on two legs, and adds a stick to help him when he is old.» Solving the riddle of the sphinx with the right word dissolved her power, and for Freud language was of paramount importance. But for Freud the riddle of the sphinx suggested more than this solution or explanation. What, Freud asked himself, was the secret sense and content of the legend? The myth seemed to be constructed like a dream perhaps, where different episodes were different distorted versions of the same content and so the same meaning could be attached to success

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(solution of riddle) as to the reward (incestuous marriage). Freud suggested that the danger the sphinx represented (incest) could only be expressed as a riddle to be solved, that is, made conscious. Freud writes of Sophocles play that «The Greek drama, while retaining the crime, introduces indispensable toning down in a masterly fashion by projecting the hero's unconscious motive into reality in the form of a compulsion by a destiny which is alien to him.» (S.E. XXI, 188) That is to say the phantasy of incestuous desire for the mother is hidden by the writer and so made acceptable. What cannot be satisfied in dreams can be ritualized in tragic drama, hence its artistic, social and psychological significance for the audience. Of Sophocles himself, Freud writes, «He reacts to the myth as though by self-analysis he had recognized the oedipus complex in himself and had unveiled the will of the gods and the oracle as exalted disguises of his own unconscious.» (S.E. XVI 331). In other words *Oedipus Rex* is a drama of self-analysis. The concentrated way in which Freud studied the Oedipus legend and its literary expression is evident from some of the books in his personal library which have many marginal underlinings.

In 1940 Freud summed up the cardinal importance of Oedipus and the sphinx: «I venture to say that if psychoanalysis could boast of no other achievement than the discovery of the repressed Oedipus complex, that alone would give it claim to be included among precious new acquisitions of mankind.» (S.E. XXIII, 192-193). The riddle of the sphinx, Freud said, was the riddle of mankind. «Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us well seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood.» (S.E. XVI, 331). There is a nice literary echo here as Freud uses the dominant Sophoclean imagery of sight, insight, and ignorance or blindness. We are all more or less ignorant or blind to our own unconscious, and particularly to our unconscious childhood. Freud suggests the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex* sprang from primaevael dream material, the content of which is the distressing disturbance of a child's relation to his parents owing to the first stirrings of sexuality. At a point when Oedipus, though he is not yet enlightened, has begun to feel troubled by his recollection of the oracle, (and although she thinks it has no meaning) Jocasta consoles him by referring to a dream which many people, Freud says, dream:

Many a man ere now in dreams hath lain
 With her who bare him. He hath least annoy
 Who with such omens troubleth not his mind.
Oedipus Rex, Sc.iii.60-63

Whatever we may think of this assertion, it is clearly the key to Sophocles tragedy and the complement to the death of the dreamer's father. The tragedy dramatizes these two dreams. And just as in life with these dreams come horror and outrage, so the drama includes horror, self-punishment, and scapegoating.

In his essay on «Dostoyevsky and Parricide» (S.E. XXI, 188) Freud notes that the most straightforward treatment of the subject is in Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* for it is still the hero himself who commits the crime. But the naked admission of the intention, Freud writes, is toned down, as it would not be in analysis. The hero does the deed unintentionally and unknowingly, and uninfluenced by the woman; but this is taken into the dramatic account of the unconscious content because «the hero can only obtain the queen mother after he has repeated his deed upon the monster who symbolizes the father.» (188) Here Freud has switched his sphinxes and is probably thinking of the Egyptian male sphinx, the Pharaoh, not the half lion and half woman creature of Greek legend. Perhaps he was influenced by the print he had facing him on one of his study walls of the great Sphinx of Gezeh, Abu el-Houl, or «Father of Fear» in Arabic-Harmakhis is the Greek for Horm-akhet which means «Horus who is on the Horizon» (*New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*). It is the proper name of the huge bearded sphinx sixty feet high and more

than a hundred and eighty feet long sculptured nearly five thousand years ago (2.600 BC) in the image of King Khephren in a rock near the pyramid which it guards. The beard is an interesting point. Some one thousand years after the Sphinx at Gezeh was made, the ever shifting desert sands had covered it completely. Thutmose IV (1425-08 BC) cleared away the sand and restored the great beast. According to an inscription on two stele which stood between its paws, the buried sphinx spoke to Tutmose in a dream as the sun god and the god of kingship, Hor-emakhet, prophesying that Thutmose would be made king and free the god from the sand. Here is another manifestation of the unconscious voice of the past and of the father speaking in a more straightforward way to Tutmose than to Oedipus. But I was speaking of the missing beard of the Great Sphinx at Gezeh, and Freud's print showing its lack, and of Freud's reference to «the monster who symbolizes the father». Of course the Sphinx at Geza has been reworked many times over the millenia, but it was probably not until 1818 that parts of the beard were found by a Genoese sea captain, Giovanni Caviglia and some sent to the British Museum in London. In a recent National Geographic article (April 1991) Mark Lehrer describes how he has mapped the face of the Sphinx by computer and that from every angle the beard is clearly evident.

That the sphinx and Oedipus were almost life-long presences for Freud is clear even in his personal life. He surrounded himself with images of the sphinx, especially in his consulting rooms. At the foot of the famous couch in Vienna there was a print of Ingres' painting of Oedipus questioning the legendary creature, and on the wall facing was a print of the great Sphinx of Geza. Freud's bookplate of 1910 also bore this mythical image. In a letter (Oct. 19, 1885) from Paris to his young wife, Martha, Freud wrote of his excitement at seeing «a real sphinx» in the Louvre, and of Assyrian Kings, «tall as trees, holding lions as lapdogs in their arms.» Freud was especially fond of dogs, and female chows in particular. In her *Tribute to Freud*, Hilda Doolittle recalls that Freud's chow Jofi, used to sit at his feet «heraldic» and «emblematic» (p. 147) during her psychoanalytic sessions in 1933, and that Freud called Jofi his lioness. The three of them made «an ancient circle, wise man, woman and lioness.»

Perhaps the most remarkable symbolic constellation of Freud, Oedipus and Sphinx is in Freud's Reaction to a medallion made in his honour and in his image by the Austrian sculptor, Schwerdtner, in 1906. On one side of the metal medallion was an engraving of Oedipus talking to the Sphinx, with a transcription from the last lines of Sophocles' play: «He who knew the famous riddle and was a very powerful man.» Ernest Jones, one of Freud's biographers, who was present when the medallion, a gift from Freud's pupils and colleagues, was presented to Freud, recalls that Freud went very pale when he read the transcription and demanded in a «strangled voice» to know who had thought of it. Freud behaved as if he had experienced a revenant — and so indeed he had. Upon hearing that it was Federn who had chosen the quotation from Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, Freud revealed that as a young student at the University of Vienna he used to hope that one day he might see his own bust in the courtyard of the University along with other famous professors. But more than this, «he then had the fantasy, not merely of seeing his own bust there in the future», which as Jones says, «would not have been anything remarkable in an ambitious student, but it actually being inscribed with the identical words he now saw on the medallion.» (Jones, 2, p. 15) The medal was made to celebrate Freud's fiftieth birthday (1906), and in replying to a request from C. G. Jung for a photograph of himself, Freud wrote, «The best and most flattering [portrait] of all is probably the medallion that K. M. Schwerdtner made for my fiftieth birthday.» (Sept. 19, 1907) Freud would have appreciated the uncanniness of history, for now, in the courtyard at the University of Vienna, there is indeed a bust of him, with those portentous words, fragments from a mythic and literary past, and a psychoanalytic present.

2. EROS AND FREUD

The founder of psychoanalysis was deeply interested in antiquity, reflecting the intellectual world in which Freud had grown up. During the Renaissance Europeans became fascinated by the heritage of antiquity, especially that of ancient Greece and Rome. In the 18th century in Germany Johann Winkelman (1817-68), the famous archeologist, declared that the only way Germany could become great was by imitating the Greeks. This credo became an educational manifesto and cultured Europeans all learned Greek and Latin, Classical Literature and Law in school and at university. This was the intellectual framework in which Freud grew up, and it suited his temperament and influenced his life very greatly. His intellectual interest and understanding of antiquity was broad and deep, as was his passion for collecting.

Freud bought this spectacular large winged «flying» terracotta Eros from Robert Lustig in Vienna on 6th September 1934. Robert Lustig was the Viennese art dealer who sold Freud over «two hundred antiquities» between 1928 and 1938 when both men had to flee from Vienna and the Nazis. Freud went to London, and Lustig went to New York, where he eventually formed another antiquities business on Madison Avenue at 88th Street. When I interviewed Mr. Lustig in May 1988 at Fleischmanns, New York, he told me he had «a Grecian-Turkish friend, a Dr. Kurasaki, who, when they both lived in Vienna, brought him a lot of ancient things, including this angel.»

«Angel» is one popular way of referring to the love God. Thus the most ancient of cosmic forces, the eros of pre-Homeric Greece becomes an aspect of Christian imagery, representing a divine spirit that is connected with earth and heaven, an intermediary, poised like a dancer on tip-toes between the world below and the world above of medieval art, those categories that influence so powerfully the cosmology of the Western imagination. The significance for Greek art of winged figures such as Eros inspired erotic scenes of flight on vases as well as narratives like Cupid and Psyche. The Freud collection contains many of these Eros figures of the Hellenistic period, both large and small. As Freud told Lustig when he took him this Eros, «I have a few of those already.»

The Gods of the Greeks were more human than most; apart from their supernatural powers, they behaved like ordinary men and women and were regarded so, without disrespect, by the poets. The gods were not, for example, regarded as creators of the world. In the beginning says Hesiod, there was Chaos, a sort of huge black hole, a void, then came Earth, called Gaea. It is not clear how Earth emerged from Chaos. Another tradition has Oceanus — Water — in place of Chaos. From Chaos also appeared Eros, the generative force, or Love, as well as Erebus (Darkness and Night, who together produced Air and Day) yet another version says that Eros sprang from an egg laid by Night. It is astounding how frequently Freudian psychology applies to Greek myth. Eros was often associated with Aphrodite, sometimes as her son, and sometimes as her attendant. In Homer eros is the irresistible attraction between two people; but as a personification he is as old as Earth herself, according to Hesiod. It was only in late Hellenic times that he became a rather ridiculous, chubby child, with his darts of romantic love.

The concept of Eros is very important in Freud's thinking and writing. He derived his original ideas about Eros from his reading of Plato's *Symposium*, where he read the theory propounded by Aristophanes, told as a poetic fable, that the original human beings were cut up into two halves — a man and woman — and how these are always striving to unite again in love. Later in the *Symposium* Plato defines Eros as a more inclusive and all-sustaining force, and it is this that Freud means when he writes about the importance of Eros in the life of individuals and civilization. Eros is the force which creates and preserves unity between individuals and groups, it is that which binds them together. Eros builds communities, cities, civilization itself. The importance of Eros in mental life is something, Freud insisted, that was often underestimated.

Freud's study of the pervasive force of Eros in human life led him to recognize another, equally strong force, that of aggression, and this force he called the death instinct (*thanatos*), which he later identified with evil and with aggression, both internal and external. Thus Freud thought the phenomenon of life could be explained from the mutually opposing action of these two instincts. Indeed he described the evolution of civilization as «the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction as it works itself out in the human species.» (*S.E.* XXI, 122)

In his essay «Why War» which was part of a correspondence with Albert Einstein, Freud wrote: «According to our hypothesis human instincts are of only two kinds: those which seek to preserve and unite — which we call 'erotic' exactly in the sense in which Plato uses the word in his *Symposium*, or sexual, with a deliberate extension of the popular conception of sexuality — and those who seek to destroy or kill and which we group together as the aggressive or destructive instinct.» (*S.E.* XXII, 209) Freud was well aware that the concept of a death instinct would and did meet with immense resistance — since many people do not believe, or do not want to believe, that man is born inherently bad, destructive, sinful or wicked.

Culture arose, Freud often pointed out, at the expense of natural instincts/impulses, and civilization has arisen at the expense of the free development of impulses. As far as Eros goes, this is both a good and a bad thing, since eros released might prove to be too anarchic, and yet it might also lead to new interpretations and understandings of life. The communal life of human beings Freud wrote, has a two-fold foundation: the compulsion to work, and the power to love. In pre-civilized times, before there were distinct family units, it was women who laid the grounds of civilization by the claims of their love and the necessity of caring for the young. Freud writes that in no other way does Eros show so clearly the core of his being, his purpose of making one out of more than one; but when «he has achieved this in the proverbial way through the love of two human beings, he refuses to go further.» But civilization won't allow these two in one, or the double individual to live exclusively for each other, civilization drives these individuals to identify with others in the community and to establish friendships. To do this, and to strengthen communal bonds, it summons up vast quantities of aim-inhibited libido. In this way, Freud concludes, civilization places restrictions on the erotic life of individuals.

Yet civilization is a process «in the service of Eros» Freud tells us, whose aim or purpose is to combine single individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of humanity. The work of Eros is precisely this, though we do not know why. But work of Eros is precisely this, though we do not know why. But opposed to this libidinal bonding of each to all is man's natural aggressiveness — the «hostility of each against all and all against each.» But one thing Freud knows for certain: humanity's judgements of value follow directly their wishes for happiness.

«The fateful question for the human species is to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the human instinct of destruction and aggression. It may be that in this respect precisely at the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. And now it is to be expected that the other of the two powers eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can forsse with what success and with what result?»
(*S.E.* XXI 145)

In 1931 Freud added the last sentence to his 1930 text when the threat of Hitler was becoming

apparent. Moreover, it was painfully clear that civilization as Freud defined it, and even psychoanalysis itself, had failed to lead to self-control. In 1938 Freud and his family had to flee for their lives from the evil of Nazism, but not before Freud had endured the invasion of his home by the Gestapo, the seizure and eight hour interrogation of his beloved youngest daughter, Anna, and witnessed the destruction of his printing press and the burning of many of his books.

In spite of all this, Freud had the courage to create a new life in London, where he continued writing and healing his patients, until a few days before his death on September 23rd, 1939. Freud was blessed with a poetic mind that intuited the immense significance and truth in Greek and Egyptian mythology for the study of the human psyche. He was in the habit of reading Shakespeare over and over again, as the books in his library in London clearly testify, and he would not, I think, have been averse, had he been given Antony's lines, to speaking them with deep recognition:

Thou teachest me, O valient Eros,
.....
Come, then; and, Eros,
Thy master dies, thy scholar; (IV.xiv.100-101)

Antony and Cleopatra

3. NARCISSUS, THE MIRROR, AND FREUD

Mirrors are lonely things, until they catch a reflection, hold on to it, yet give it back to that which is being reflected. The myth of Narcissus, the beautiful Greek youth who fell in love with his own reflection in a fountain and remained gazing adoringly at his own image until he died of languour is a familiar one.

Many mirrors, such as this bronze Etruscan one of the late 4th or early third century BC accompanied their feminine owners to their graves; these little mirrors were considered a necessity if the soul was to live on after death. Thousands of these Etruscan mirrors survive today. In an interview with Robert Lustig, (June 1st 1988) the Viennese dealer who sold Freud «several hundred» antiquities between 1928 and 1938, he told me the story of how he came to exchange «a bunch of these mirrors» which Freud had in his desk drawer, in part exchange for a gold Egyptian Mummy mask.

Once a fortnight Lustig would visit Freud during his Wednesday afternoon open sessions, when anyone could drop in and consult him, without an appointment. (Even so, Anna was inclined to hurry Lustig in and out he told me, allowing him about ten minutes with Freud.) It was Lustig's unenviable job to find a valuable and new piece for Freud's already selective but large collection of antiquities. Freud had been passionately collecting Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities since at least the turn of the century and so he was «difficult to please». He didn't want duplicates he told Lustig. He also required Lustig to first take the antiquities to the appropriate department at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna to have them authenticated before bringing them to him. (This may be one reason why Herr Demel, the Director of the Egyptian Antiquities, was able to help Freud with the assessment of his collection for refugee tax, a necessity before Freud and his family could leave Vienna in June 1938. Herr Demel grossly undervalued the collection, and so Freud's refugee tax amounted to only 400 Austrian schillings.)

Lustig arrived with «a beautiful gold cartonnage mummy head» and Freud's face lit up, he was «flabbergasted», — yes, that was indeed worth possessing — but the price was rather high. Lustig reported once Freud was really interested in a piece, his (Lustig's) next problem was to second-guess Freud — not an easy task. On this occasion Freud opened

his desk drawer and «pulled out a bunch of these little Etruscan bronze mirrors». Lustig took six or seven of them «out of a bunch of seven or eight» in part payment for the gold Mummy mask. He also took in part exchange «a pre-historic terracotta primitive figure of mother and child», and the sum of 500 Austrian schillings. When I asked Robert Lustig if Freud minded giving up the pre-historic piece he said no for he had a large collection from all over the world, «including even Chinese things». The gold cartonnage mummy mask, a spectacular piece, which Freud later came to call «the one with the nice Jewish face» is now in the Freud Museum in London.

Freud's seminal essay «On Narcissism: An Introductio» (1914) is yet another testimony to the inspiration Freud drew from mythology and classical literature. The dangerous infatuation with self that Narcissus mirrors Freud called primary narcissism. Mythology preserves for the faithful, Freud said, explanations of primaevael phantasies of our ancestors, and provides ways of exploring and explaining the deeper psychological and cultural realities behind or beyond the mythic figure. Thus the figure of Narcissus expresses or mirrors the idea of auto-eroticism, of dangerous self-love. Freud saw that this self-love is dangerous because it tends to greater and greater withdrawal from reality and it may then become pathological.

To be a primary narcissist means never to have loved anyone intensely, but only under the most infantile conditions of being loved and cared for, for example by the mother. Some people seem to be born with not enough love to go round, they have just enough for themselves and they therefore cannot establish their own firm individuality and identity by relating to loved ones and to their own society. According to Ernest Jones, Freud had used the term narcissism as early as November 10th 1909 at a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (*S.E.* XIV 69). At this time Freud was of the opinion that narcissism was a necessary intermediate stage between auto-eroticism and love of others (object love).

The first full emergence of the term is in Freud's published study of Leonardo da Vinci in May 1910; the first published reference to the term was earlier in the same year in a footnote to the second edition of Freud's «Three Essays on Sexuality» (*S.E.* VII 145n).

Freud's interest in Leonardo went back a long way, at least to the time of his friendship and correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess. On October 9th 1898 in a letter to this important friend and colleague, Freud writes, «Leonardo — no love affair of his is known — is perhaps the most famous left-handed person. Can you use him.» (*G. Masson The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904* p. 331) The main topic of this fascinating psychoanalytic biography of Leonardo's early life, (which Freud first titled an historical novel) is the analysis of one of the great artist's childhood phantasies, but it is also interesting in its general discussion of the mind of the creative artist, the outline of a particular type of homosexuality, and, of course the concept of narcissism. Writing of Leonardo's love for his mother and the way that it is substituted when the young man grows up, Freud writes, «He finds the objects of his love along the path of narcissism, as we say; for Narcissus, according to Greek legend, was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else and who was changed into the lovely flower of that name.» (*S.E.* XI 59)

Freud's monograph of the great artist met with considerable resistance in the artistic world of his day; and when reading Peter Gay's recent cultural biography of Freud, I was struck by his choice of a prologue from Freud's «Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood»: «There is no one so great that it would be a disgrace for him to be subject to the laws that govern normal and pathological activity with equal severity.»

This 1914 essay on the concept of narcissism is extremely important and represents a new line of thinking which was to have many applications. It is a summary of Freud's previous thinking on the subject of narcissism in sexual development, but it goes beyond this to a consideration of the relation between the ego and the external world. Falling in love, Freud tells us, illustrates very clearly the way in which one's love of self can be given up and invested in the loved one, in technical terms «the antithesis between ego-

libido and object-libido. The more of the one is employed, the more the other becomes depleted.» (S.E. XIV 76) Freud is implying here yet another development in his concept of narcissism, the transition from love of self to love of another, and that both these kinds of love are sexual. Furthermore, the essay also introduced the concept of 'ego ideal' which was to develop into the concept of the super-ego in *The Ego and the Id* 1923 (S.E. XIX 3). Perhaps I should add here that since Freud's time the concept of narcissism has been extensively developed by Heinz Kohut, Otto Kernberg and Robert Stolorow, *inter alia*.

As Strachey points out, the essay seemed over-compressed and its frame-work seemed «bursting from the quantity of material it contains.» (S.E. XIV 70) Freud himself was not entirely satisfied with it and Jones tells us that Freud wrote to Abraham that «The Narcissism had a difficult labour.» (S.E. XIX 70) But the paper was, as Strachey puts it, «one of the pivots in the evolution of his [Freud's] views.» (S.E. XIX 70)

Peter Gay tells us that the word narcissism gained «a rapidly enlarging sphere of signification, first at Freud's hands and then far more irresponsibly in general usage, much to its damage as a diagnostic term.» (*Freud A Life for Our Time*, 340) Freud used the term in the «general» way in his 1917 essay «A Difficulty of Psychoanalysis» (S.E. XVII 137) Here Freud is addressing himself to those who are unsympathetic to the new science of psychoanalysis not on intellectual grounds, but on affective ones. As he says, «where sympathy is lacking, understanding will not come easily.» (137)

Freud attempts to win these unsympathetic readers and listeners to the cause of psychoanalysis through the analogous use of the general term narcissism. He writes, «I shall now describe how the general theory of narcissism of man, the self-love of humanity, has up to the present been three times severely wounded by the researches of science.» (139) These «wounds» are moments of momentous discovery in the history of mankind's place on earth. The first blow to man's self-love is the discovery that the earth is not the centre of the universe, and this is the «cosmological wound». The second blow is Darwin's discovery that mankind is not a being different or superior to the animal, but is himself derived from the animal world, this is the «biological wound». The third wound to mankind's self-love and «probably the most wounding» is that given it by the vital discovery of psychoanalysis, the recognition of unconscious mental processes, that as Freud puts it, «the ego is not master in its own house» (143), and that sexuality plays a vital role in all mental functioning.

Freud sums up his defence: «Psychoanalysis has this advantage only, that it has not affirmed these two propositions which are so distressing to narcissism — the psychical importance of sexuality and the unconsciousness of mental life — on an abstract basis, but has demonstrated them in matters that touch every individual personally and force him to take up some attitude to these problems.» (S.E. XVII 144)

The self-regarding urge is still strong in our own day, even if we do not take mirrors, be they bronze antiquities, silver or gold, with us into our graves. Yet it is to be hoped that the modern, post-Freudian Narcissus gazes at him/herself not so much with adoration as with curiosity, and an intense need to know him/herself, so that he/she can then relate to the other/s and to the cosmological, and psychic worlds of which he/she is but a reflection.

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True Thought in Search of a Thinker in Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism: An Homage to W. R. Bion (*)

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Truly, I say unto you, whosoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

The New Testament — Luke: 18:17.

«A is not A, therefore, it is called A.» This conclusion or judgment may be explained or understood thus: «The world grasped through our senses and reason... does not exist as it is comprehended. When one realizes this one may call it the world.»

Zen for the West — Sohaku Ogata

My intention in this article is to delineate briefly Wilfred R. Bion's contributions to psychoanalytic thought in general and to discuss four interrelated and somewhat recondite components of Bion's psychoanalytic theory in particular. Subsequently, I explore the possibility of how one may incorporate these components into the existing ensemble of psychoanalytic critical theory and practice. These four components are formulations of the concepts of thought, memory and desire and the necessity of the suspension of memory and desire by the analyst in the space-time of the psychoanalytic session, and the act of faith. Accordingly, I have divided the essay into six parts.

1. BION'S LEGACY AS A PSYCHOANALYST

Bion's contributions to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis and to the world of thought

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is a whole have been considerable. The existing 108 critical and appreciative books and articles devoted to Bion's work in eight languages attest to the continuing interest of the international community of psychoanalysts and scholars in his work as an authentic source of psychoanalytic thought and insight.¹ He also remains a rare and admirable figure of intellectual and cultural mediation on three intersecting planes of interdisciplinary, clinical, and theoretical research.

Bion's psychoanalytic theories directly draw upon an impressive multitude of other disciplines. Bion possessed a remarkable culture of literature, the arts, philosophy and logic, anthropology, theology and mythology as well as the sciences (medicine, biology, mathematics, and physics). This wide array of interest and knowledge that integrate the humanities and natural sciences for the specific purpose of enlarging the scope of psychoanalysis enable him to make of it a truly interdisciplinary study. The wealth of connections he finds between psychoanalysis and these seemingly disparate fields deepen his psychoanalytic thinking and its rich web of implications and significance.

Even though highly theoretical and complex, Bion's work always interweaves the clinical observations of a keen practitioner of the art of psychoanalysis with the remarkable skill of a theorization. The well-known Anglo-American penchant for the empirical and the pragmatic is solidly present in Bion's work, but he brings to them a refreshing dimension of intellectuality so highly esteemed by the Continental and Latin American traditions and deemed indispensable by them. As a psychoanalyst who is capable of welding theory and practice Bion plays a mediative role among these cultures in the world of thought.

Indeed one may characterize Bion's theoretical research as the formulation, that is, generalization of his clinical observations and experiences. His theoretical formulations are always *rigorous* because they emerge from the space in which an enviable fusion between the concrete and the abstract takes place. The dialectic between the experiential and the abstractive characterizes Bion's work. His genius (and no less a figure in the psychoanalytic community than D. W. Winnicott has referred to him as such) resides precisely in this nimble dialectical acrobatics that his mind effects between the concrete and the abstract, between the particular and the universal. This quality of his work has created a veritable intellectual bridge between the Anglo-American, Continental and Latin American cultures.

An important testimony to Bion's effective mediative role comes to us from the pen of the French psychoanalyst André Green. Green, who personally knew both Bion and Jacques Lacan and was admittedly influenced by their work, compares the two with admirable insight. Writes Green (1986):

W. Bion gave orthodox Kleinianism... new impetus by linking her work with that of Freud. Completely absorbed with exploring the most unconscious phantasies and the most archaic anxieties in psychotic structures, Melanie Klein did not seem to realize fully that each had an incidence on the thought processes. This is what Bion understood. His *considerable theoretical* (my italics) acumen permitted him to blend Freudian and Kleinian thought. His endeavour to link knowledge gained through psychoanalysis to other modes of learning (philosophy, logic, mathematics, physics, biology) found its accomplishment in the works of his mature years, from *Learning from Experience to Attention and Interpretation*.... I found in Bion an author who could measure up to Lacan. I think that each from his own angle, had a common project, with completely different clinical and theoretical references: the hope of reformulating psychoanalytic theory within a contemporary epistemological framework which

¹ For more information please refer to the computer Psychology and Literature Disc.

would allow one to overcome that which, in Freud's work, was hampered by the thinking of his time, which is no longer ours. (pp. 10-11)

This is an important comparison inasmuch as the common project of the two psychoanalysts is defined by Green in, by, and through the field of the problematics of Freudian epistemology. I should think that there would be common agreement that such a project presents a daunting task, because it has to embrace a dialectic of theoretical adherence to Freud in «spirit and letter», to use Lacan's phrase, as well as the fundamental epistemological critique of such an adherence. In other words, by virtue of its own critical operation, this project has to consider its success in the space of the paradox of the simultaneous affirmation and modification of the *unsurpassable* validity of Freudian psychoanalysis as a whole. Furthermore, the claim of veracity and legitimacy of such a critique demands that it articulate the Freudian epistemology as having been already *surpassed* in this very act of critical articulation.

It is noteworthy that Green (1986) goes on to add that «while Lacan took his stand on the side of language and structural linguistics, banishing affect from his theory, Bion started with the most primitive emotional experiences and lead up to to the most intellectual concepts (p. 11).» In the immensely difficult task of coming to grips with the problematics of Freudian epistemology, Green does not only give Bion an edge over Lacan, he declares him the *winner*. «Today», writes Green (1986), «I would say that Lacan made the error of excessive abstraction, whereas Bion, with his constant reference to affect and the process of transformation, is the more authentically intellectual, in the best sense of the term (p. 11).»

Our awareness of Lacan's present extensive international influence on contemporary psychoanalysis as a theoretician, renders Green's high praise of Bion particularly noteworthy. What Green implicitly admires in Bion's work is Bion's appreciation of *the complexity of the complexity* of psychical reality and its mystery, rather than a proclivity toward mystifying theorization. There is no doubt a differentiation to be made, on the one hand, between the intimations of true mystery and the approximation of its truth(s) and, on the other hand, obfuscation and mystification. That differentiation opens up an entire zone of discovery that encourages us to make new interdisciplinary forays into the territories of the psyche charted by Bion. No doubt such new forays are as exciting as they are anxiety-provoking.

The upsurge of these new territories for psychoanalytic research and its attending concerns were detected by members of Brazilian psychoanalytic community such as Leon Grinberg, Dario Sor and Elizabeth Tabak de Bianchedi, who attentively studied Bion's work and incorporated it in their psychoanalytic practice. They write:

One of Bion's greatest merits is that he had placed psychoanalytic theory and practice in a new dimension, preserving the most valuable classical contributions of Freud and Melanie Klein while approaching them from different perspectives (or «vertices»). He adds freshness and originality to them and stimulates a new attitude in the analyst by encouraging him to abandon rigid schemes and old clichés, thus opening up new ways of psychoanalytic thinking. The richness of his hypothesis, the scope of his theories, and the flexibility of his models, together with his advice of approaching the task of observation and investigation «without memory and desire», exercise an enormous attraction while at the same time provoking some uncertainty. All this tends to increase creative capacity, common sense, and the development of intuition, helping the investigator to get himself into what we would call «the state of discovery.» (1977, p. xvi)

Immense penetration into the mysteries of the human psyche through considerable acts of observation, of intuition, of theorization, of creativity: these are Bion's legacy to the international community of psychoanalysts, thinkers, artists and literary critics.

2. BION'S CONCEPT OF TRUE THOUGHT

Bion (1983) contends that

It is necessary to postulate «thinking» without supposing a thinker to be essential... All thinking and all thoughts are true when there is no thinker. In contrast to this, for lies and falsities a thinker is absolutely necessary. In any situation where a thinker is present the thoughts when formulated are expressions of falsities and lies the only true thought is one that has never found an individual to «contain» it. (p. 117)

Bion (1983) reiterates that «the difference between a true thought and a lie consists in the fact that a thinker is logically necessary for a lie but not for the true thought» (102-3). To put it somewhat differently, *to think truly is to be thought*, as it were, because what we ordinarily call thinking can only be regarded as inventions and creations of the mind itself without any necessary connection with the truth. The truth is intimated to the thinker but forever escapes the thinker in its entirety because it is infinite and cannot be contained by any mind or cluster of minds. That is the reason why Bion (1983) believes that «The lie and the thinker are inseparable» (p. 103). Following Bion, one may say that *whoever thinks lies; whoever is thought reveals the truth*. This is so because «True thought requires neither formulation nor thinker» (1983, p. 104). In contrast to true thought «The lie is a thought to which a formulation and a thinker are essential» (1983, p. 104). I would say that at this stage in the development of his thought Bion leaves the realm of humanism and enters the *kerygmatic* tradition of truth as revelation.

These statements make manifest certain key characteristics of Bion's concept of thought. For him, true thought is *objective* in origin, in the sense that it is independent of the human mind and subjectivity and, by definition, *exterior* to it. As we shall see in due course, true thought can under specific circumstances disclose itself to the mind, but only from *without* and as infinite and uncontainable. In contrast, the «lie» is subjective, because it is dependent on the mind, contained in it and *interior* to it. It would then follow that what is ordinarily referred to as the process of thinking should no longer be expected to provide an instrument for the discovery of the truth. Quite the contrary, it becomes a systematic approach to fabrication of *untruth* and *falsities*.

Bion (1983) theorizes that «Nobody need think the true thought: it awaits the advent of the thinker who achieves significance through the true thought» (p. 103). The independence of the true thought from the thinker constitutes the novelty and complexity of Bion's theory of thought. What appears in the place where this drastic and unbridgeable split between the thinker and the true thought takes place demolishes the role that traditional philosophies of consciousness have assigned to subjectivity. Bion considers subjectivity and consciousness as a *receiver* of true thought rather than its initiator. He discards the notion that human beings bring meaning and order into the world and thereby reveal the mystery of being as coincidental with this meaning and this order.

Following Bion's theory of thought, one would have to assume that mathematics and physics, for example, had always existed as independent objective and systemic intimations of the true thought and that they had been respectively awaiting the appearance of Thales and Galileo for breaking through into conception and formulation. Insofar as mathematics and physics are true they have nothing to do with Thales and Galileo save that of having been revealed to these exceptionally sensitive and receptive individuals. The sensitivity and receptiveness of Thales and Galileo enabled them to recognize the promptings of the *as-yet-unthought* and heretofore unthinkable. Their state of availability to such promptings finds its analog in the concept of being in the state of grace as the Christian doctrine defines it.

Let us situate Bion's theory of thoughts within the context of more familiar vocabularies of contemporary philosophical thought. For instance, in terms of one of the philosophies of consciousness, Sartrean existentialism, it is as if the «for-itself» (*pour-soi*) or human consciousness had no other function in appearance and evolution but to allow «in-itself» (*en-soi*) to manifest itself and be formulated as knowledge, provided that «in-itself» were to be taken as no less than the totality of all the existing material and immaterial objects. To provide another theoretical analog, Bion's concept of the true thought may be understood as comparable but not coextensive with the Marxian concept of consciousness as evolved matter become aware of itself for the single and unalterable purpose of self-revelation. It would seem to me that for Bion, too, the upsurge of the human existence on earth may have no greater function than revealing the infinite mysteries of existence as a whole on the condition that the human psyche be receptive to the promptings, intimations and potential revelations of such mysteries. The concept of the true thought may then be designated as the foundation of a new cosmology, because human beings and nature are located within it as an ever-expanding universe of discovery of the unknown and eventually unknowable mysteries. In such a universe the unthought and the unthinkable become immensities distinct from the miniature nature of the «lie» or the secretions of human mind.

These theoretical observations are also reminiscent of Hegel's *Science of Logic* in which, as Vincent Descombes (1988) remarks, «The author is God, or if we prefer, 'Logos', or 'Reason'; in any case it is not Hegel» (p. 44). Such a *Logos* for Bion (1983) is the «absolute truth», the «ultimate reality», the «thing-in-itself», a «non-human system, the O domain» (p. 103), where the infinite mysteries of material and psychical existence dwell and precede partial human awareness of them.

3. O AS THE DOMAIN OF ABSOLUT TRUTH

For Bion, the O «stands for the absolute truth in and of any object [material or immaterial]; it is assumed that this cannot be known by any human being; it can be known about, its presence can be recognized and felt, but it cannot be known. It is possible to be at one with it» (1983, p. 30). As I have already touched upon it briefly, one may call O the initiator of all thought but exterior to thought itself. In a limited but significant sense, one may now consider Bion's attack on philosophies of subjectivity and consciousness as attempts to equate being with its meaning may be compared with the anti-humanist enterprise associated with the structuralist and poststructuralist schools of thought in contemporary French anthropology, philosophy, psychoanalysis and literary criticism.

To follow this comparison a little further, I would point out that one of the primary features of the «lie» for Bion (1983) is that «It focuses attention on something that is not invariant...» (p. 99). In contradistinction, one may then say that true thought focuses attention on the invariant or the O. Invariance is a fundamental dimension the concept of O and its evolution inasmuch as O finds its definition within the concept of invariance. It also provides a fruitful kinship with the concept of «mathematical structures» as axiomatic that the (Nicolas) Bourbaki school of mathematicians in France has offered. In this perspective, the concept of mathematical structures embraces the abstraction of eidetic images of Husserl's phenomenology that may eventually be transformed to noetic concepts as the irreducible given of reality. Such an abstractive enterprise is no doubt a search to associate «structures» with universal codes or invariants.

It is clear that the O domain takes up a highly significant space in the fundamental binary opposition of the lie and true thought. Bion (1983) states that «O ... is an absolute, inhering in ('incarnate' in) everything and unknowable by man» (p. 101). He claims that «In any object, material or immaterial, resides the unknowable ultimate reality, the 'thing-

in-itself'» (1983, p. 87) the noumenon, the absolute essence, or the O. It is critical to remember that the «thing-in-itself» for Bion defines the opposite of the concrete sensuous presence of the object that presents itself to human consciousness. For him, the «thing-in-itself» comprises an ever-receding horizon which will forever elude the sensuous apprehension of any object and precedes any thought; it is infinite. He points out that «Objects have emanations or emergent qualities or evolving characteristics that impinge upon the human personality as phenomena. Of these qualities the personality may be consciously or unconsciously aware; they differ from the ultimate reality» (p. 86).

For Bion (1967), this is a logical assertion because «The idea of infinitude is prior to any idea of the finite. The finite is 'won from the dark and formless infinite'» (p. 165). That is why the noumenon will remain unknown and unknowable by definition.

To summarize: O is the *noumenon*, the unknown and the unknowable. It occupies an infinite space which will forever be simultaneously inherent in all objects and will transcend them. Since no object can seize its own noumenality within its borders as a perceived object, the O possesses no sensuous qualities. It dwells beyond the senses. Hence the difficulty of its translation into the realms of experience and its formulation as conceptual knowledge.

If the «O does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally», if it «cannot be known», it «can be 'become'» (1983, p. 26). O can «evolve» out of its own «darkness and formlessness», out of its ghostlike noumenal state, and enter «the domain K [that of knowledge] when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience, and formulated in terms derived by sensuous experience; its existence is conjectured phenomenologically.» (1983, p. 26). In the zone that issues from the impossibility of an epistemology based upon O and the possibility of its becoming «through knowledge gained by experience», one can discern the initial stage of a dialectical process of the becoming of O. This dialectic is made possible by experiential knowledge, or primary sensuous contact with the «thing-in-itself», which one may interpret as the intuitive knowledge of the evolution of O. The evolution of O miraculously paves the way for the *intuitive grasp* of the way the infinite brushes against the finite and renders the unthinkable thinkable.

Intuitive knowledge can be characterized as «wild knowledge.» This wild knowledge is preverbal and ceases its existence as such as it enters into the verbal domain. Wild knowledge would then coincide with what Bion (1967) refers to in his paper «A Theory of Thinking» as «pre-conceptions» that eventually evolve into «conceptions or thoughts, and finally concepts» (p. 111). Preconceptions form the ground of emergence all subsequent thoughts and conceptions and «may be regarded as analog in psycho-analysis of Kant's concept of 'empty thoughts'» (1967, p. 111). Such «empty thoughts» are far from conceptual formulations «conceptions» that constitute, say, geometry, or mathematics.

In the chasm that results from the impossibility of direct knowledge of O and the possibility of the intimation of evolution of O entering K, «at-one-ment» with O becomes possible through experience. By situating Bion's notion of «at-one-ment» within contemporary Continental philosophy, one would find traces of commonalities between Sartre's notion of «*le vécu*» (lived experience) and «*non-savoir*» (nonknowledge) or Husserl's *Lebenswelt* and *Erlebnis*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *ambiguous perception*, and even Louis Althusser's definitory transformation of «ideology» («*idéologie*»). In contrast, O itself falls in the province of abstract or unlived experience («*l'invécu*») with which may then be at one intellectually or spiritually, as is the case of the mystics.

In the evolution of O one can locate something of the commencement of a pure dialectical process not dissimilar to the promptings of the unconscious. This dialectic is primarily initiated and sustained by the sensuous contact with the phenomena. It then leads to an intuitive knowledge of the evolution of O inherent in every phenomenon and object as its essence, its noumenon. However, this originary intuition is *primitive*. Its abstract conceptual

formulation(s) as one would find, say, in Pythagorean theorem or Einsteinian nuclear physics demands a total divestiture of its sensual dimensions and a transformation of its primitive sensuous qualities to the abstractive processes of its conscious intellectual formulation(s).

Bion (1983) places the concept of O and its evolution more specifically in their psychoanalytic context by claiming that «The platonic theory of Forms and the Christian dogma of the Incarnation imply absolute essence which I wish to postulate as a universal quality of phenomena such as ‘panic’, ‘anxiety’, ‘fear’, ‘love’. In brief, I use O to represent this central feature of every situation that the psycho-analyst has to meet. With this he must be at one; with the *evolution* of this he must identify so that he can formulate it in an interpretation» (p. 89). Bion (1983) also contends that the act of «interpretation is an actual event in an evolution of O that is common to the analyst and the analysand» (p. 27). However, according to Bion (1983), since truth as such is unknowable, the success of psychoanalytic activity, of necessity, «depends on the closeness with which the interpretative appraisal approximates to truth» (p. 28). He then makes it abundantly clear that certain states of mind obstruct this [approximation to truth in the interpretative appraisal]» (1983, p. 28). These states consist of the twin phenomena of memory and desire. He affirms elsewhere that

What matters is the unknown and on this the psycho-analyst must focus his attention. Therefore ‘memory’ is a dwelling place on the unimportant to the exclusion of the important. Similarly, ‘desire’ is an intrusion into the analyst’s state of mind which covers up, disguises, and blinds him to, the point at issue: that aspect of O that is currently presenting the unknown and the unknowable though it is manifested to the two people present in its evolved character. This is the ‘dark spot’ that must be illuminated by ‘blindness’. Memory and desire are ‘illuminations’ that destroy the value of the analyst’s capacity for observation as a leakage of light into a camera might destroy the value of the film being exposed. (1983, p. 69)

4. THE SUSPENSION OF MEMORY AND DESIRE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

If conceptual knowledge may be defined as a wresting away of the mind from its sensuous referential ground of operation, all the activities of the mind that may be regarded as tendencies to draw it back to that primary ground impede the emergence of the process of conceptualization and theorization. For Bion, chief among such impediments are memory and desire: two forms of foreknowledge. Bion considers desire to be parallel and coextensive with memory. Memory and desire for him are two sides of the same coin. He insists that «‘Desire’ should not be distinguished from memory, I have tried to express this by saying ‘memory’ is the past tense of ‘desire’, ‘anticipation’ being its future tense» (1983, p. 45). He adds that

«The problem of differentiating desire from memory lies in the fact that it [desire] is ‘located’ in a ‘place’ which cannot be determined any more than can the ‘place’ where parallel lines of a railway-track meet. ‘Where’ is a term with a background of sense impressions. The difference between desire and memory has no background of sense impressions and cannot be discussed adequately in terms that have such a background.» (1983, p. 45)

Nevertheless, if the difference between memory and desire has no background of sense impressions, the two phenomena in themselves distinctly possess such a background. Bion (1983) states that «They [memory and desire] are two facets of the same thing: both are composed of elements based of sense impressions; both imply the absence of immediate

sensual satisfaction; one supposes a store of sensual objects, the memory being the container, and the other a conjunction of satisfactory objects.» (p. 41) However, both indicate a state of absence of lack. Bion's definition of memory and desire coincides with Jean-Paul Sartre's definition of it as «lack» (*manque-d'être*) in *Being and Nothingness* (1956).

But, as «lack», both memory and desire are saturated with sensuousness which prevent the evolution of O to K and have to be suspended. Bion (1983) stresses that «The first point is for the analyst to impose on himself a positive discipline of eschewing memory and desire. I do not mean that 'forgetting' is enough: what is required is a positive act of refraining from memory and desire» (p. 31).

Bion (1983) repeats that «The analyst who comes to a session with an active memory is therefore in no position to make 'observation' of unknown mental phenomena because these are not sensually apprehended» (p. 107). He emphatically reiterates that «the capacity to forget, the ability to eschew desire and understanding, must be regarded as essential discipline for the psycho-analyst. Failure to practice this discipline will lead to a steady deterioration of the powers of observation whose maintenance is essential» (1983, p. 51). Bion (1983), however reminds us that «There is something that has often been called 'remembering' and that is essential to psychoanalytic work; this must be sharply distinguished from what I have been calling memory» (p. 107). Here, I believe Martin Heidegger's remarks on forgetting shed some light on Bion's demand that the analyst forget memory and desire. Heidegger writes that «forgetting is not nothing, nor just is it a failure to remember; it is rather a 'positive' ecstatic mode of one's having been.... Only on the basis of such forgetting can anything be retained.... Just as expecting is possible on the basis of awaiting, *remembering* is possible only on that of forgetting, *and not vice versa...*» (1962, pp. 388-89).

Since the suspension of memory and desire as an act of divestiture is a negative mode of activity, Bion (1983) proposes a new act of investiture to take its place. He writes:

It may be wondered what state of mind is welcome if desires and memories are not. A term that would express approximately what I need to express is 'faith' — faith that there is an ultimate reality and truth — the unknown, unknowable, 'formless infinite'. This must be believed of every object of which the personality can be aware: the evolution of ultimate reality (signified by O) has issued in objects of which the individual can be aware. (p. 31)

However, these «objects of awareness» are all derived from the mental functions that are dependent upon sensuous characteristics of objects and do not require faith. That is exactly why Bion (1983) theorizes that «The analyst is not concerned with such sensuously apprehended objects or with knowledge of such objects» (pp. 31-2). The analyst *is* concerned with such objects only insofar as he is concerned with «the working of the analysand's mind» (p. 32). In this context, «memories and desires are worthless but inevitable features that he [the analyst] encounters in himself and his work» (p. 32).

Bion (1983) raises the suspension of memory and desire to the plane of a rigorous and necessary discipline for the analysts. He argues that the «avoidance of memory and desire... increases [the analyst's] ability to exercise 'acts of faith'» (p. 35). It is on this basis that Bion insists that in the psychoanalytic situation «The analyst must focus his attention on O...» because «Every object known or knowable by man, including himself, must be an evolution of O. It is O when it has evolved sufficiently to be met by K [knowledge] capacities in the psychoanalysis» (p. 27). Bion (1983) concludes that «The psychoanalytic» interpretation is an actual event in an evolution of O that is common to the analyst and the analysand» (p. 27). However, being in itself unknowable, the success of psychoanalytic activity, of necessity, depends on approximating O inasmuch as it is possible by eliminating whatever hampers this approximative enterprise from taking place.

5. THE ACT OF FAITH

An act of faith for Bion is the belief in O, The infinite and the unknowable. In turn, Bion (1983) states that «The 'act of faith' (F) depends on the disciplined denial of memory and desire» (The suspension of the intertwined phenomena of memory and desire then becomes the prerequisite for a state of mind in which Bion conceptualizes that the «at-one-ment» of the analyst with O might occur. He affirms that the «avoidance of memory and desire... increases [the analyst's] ability to exercise 'acts of faith'» (p. 34).

Borrowed from the realm of religion, the «act of faith» for Bion has a different and specific meaning. He explains that

An 'act of faith' is peculiar to scientific procedure and must be distinguished from the religious meaning with which it is invested in conversational usage; it becomes apprehensible when it can be represented in and by thought. It must 'evolve' before it can be apprehended and it is apprehended when it is thought just as the artist's O is apprehensible when it has been transformed into a work of art. (1983, p. 34-5)

As a result, the act of faith may be said to be similar to the act of creative intuition. They essentially emerge, unfold and finally operate and make their effects manifest in the same fashion. The act of faith brings forth the intuition of the evolution of O in a way comparable to that of the creative process from which the artistic intuition, the artistic hunch, as it were, issues. Bion (1983) makes it clear that «The 'act of faith' has no association with memory or desire or sensation. It has a relationship to thought analogous to the relationship of *a priori* knowledge to knowledge. It does not belong to (+ —) K but to the O system» (p. 35).

Therefore, for Bion the act of faith is a belief that inaugurates an abstractive activity frees the mind from dependence on the sensuous dimensions of experience and raises it from the level of the concrete and individual to that of the general and universal. This activity is of considerable significance to the psychoanalyst because «The central phenomena of psych-analysis have no background in sense data» (Bion 1983, p. 57).

At the precise point where the mind acquires its own freedom from its sensuous perception of the phenomenon, it gives birth to theoretical formulations that can already be considered as having entered the realm of K. Thus the evolution of O is accomplished, because an evolution is «based on experience which has no sensuous background but is expressed in terms which are derived from the language of sensuous experience. For example, I 'see' meaning I 'intuit' through the medium of sensual impression.» (1967a, p. 279).

This passage from intuition to the language of sensuous background delineates the boundaries of both evolution of O and its formulation for Bion. Formulation is by definition abstract and is fundamentally different from memory and desire which are extensions of sensuous perceptions. «A formulation has the quality of an abstraction», writes Bion (1983), «only in so far as it is divorced from the sensuous background inherent in and essential to memory and desire. The abstract statement must not stimulate memory and desire though memory and desire have contributed elements to its formulation» (p. 33).

6. PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND CRITICAL THEORY

What are the consequences of Bion's formulations of concepts of thought, memory and desire, the necessity of the suspension of memory and desire and the act of faith for critical theory? In what follows I briefly sketch out some of their possible effects.

Here, in the spirit of Bion's contributions as a mediator between Anglo-American

and Continental intellectual cultures, I find it helpful to conjoin Bion's psychoanalytic concepts with Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of the poetic image. I believe the ideas of the English psychoanalyst and the French scientist and psychoanalyst complement and considerably augment one another to the benefit of literary critical theory.

First, what Bion calls the «true thought» seems primarily to be not active cogitation or ratiocination but rather the passive process of one's *being thought* by O, as I have already mentioned. I would say that it approximates to two concepts advanced by Bachelard in his introduction to *La poétique de l'espace*.

First, Bion's definition of the true thought approaches Bachelard's explication of the *unimaginable* («*l'inimaginable*»)² or «the poetic image» as the unique act of the sudden and gratuitous, that is, spontaneous emergence of an image in the «imaginative consciousness» (Bachelard 1957, p.19).³ The unimaginable can only be thought («être *pensé*»), in the sense of being passively received, by imaginative consciousness. There is no question here of the unimaginable following the theories of causality or conscious symbolic construction or structural innovation. This is so because the ontology of the unimaginable or poetic image «rises from a *direct ontology*» (Bachelard 1957, p. 2). This ontology is foundational and originary. It is unmediated by anything but its inexplicable appearance in the consciousness from *nowhere*, from *nothingness* and the *void*. That is the way of revelation of a truth that is exterior to the mind.

Second, Bion's concept of the receptiveness to the true thought and the evolution of O in the psyche, «achieved by denudation of memory and desire» (1983, p. 36), may also be equated with Bachelard's concept of «the consciousness associated with the soul», which he considers to be «more relaxed, less intentionalized than a consciousness associated with the phenomena of the mind» (1957, p. 5). Bachelard maintains that «In poems forces are manifested that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge» (1957, p. 5).

In this context, one may assign Bion's concept of the «lie» to the domain of the mind, which precisely constitutes the «circuits of knowledge» and consciously *modifies* reality to suit its pragmatic purposes and goals. Situated and defined as such, the mind in itself becomes no more and no less than a means for accomplishments of pragmatic ends beyond itself, a domain comparable to that of operations applied sciences in contradistinction to the purely theoretical operations in sciences. Accordingly, one may assign the «true thought» to the much vaster domain of the soul that is characterized by its transcendent passivity, lack of pragmatic ends, and, therefore, heightened sensitivity and receptivity, or «*disponibilité*», to borrow a term from Gabriel Marcel, within which the evolutions of O may occur.

However, as Bachelard (1957) reminds us both «soul and mind are indispensable for studying the phenomena of the poetic images and, above all, for following the evolution of them, in their diverse nuances, and for pursuing their evolution from their original state of reverie to that of execution» (p. 5). I believe that this original state of reverie or *the dreaming consciousness* («*la conscience rêveuse*») or the «soul» (Bachelard 1957, p. 4) coincides with that of *true thinking* or being at one with O.

Bachelard (1957) also points out that the «the poetic act has no past, at least no recent past along whose traces its preparation and appearance could be followed» (p. 1). The poetic image is not even «an echo of the past» (Bachelard 1957, p. 1). Once again, if one considers the sudden emergence of the poetic image in the dreaming consciousness as coincidental with the intimation of the evolution of O, one realizes that memory has no bearing on grasping a phenomenon without a past and, consequently, beyond desire;

² All translations from Gaston Bachelard's *La poétique de l'espace* are mine.

³ In the context that Bachelard provides in his «*Introduction*» to *La poétique de l'espace* I find it justifiable to use the terms «unimaginable» and «poetic image», and the terms «poetic consciousness» and «imaginative consciousness» interchangeably.

indeed, it may drastically change and deform it. One may say that the poetic image as the evolution of O breaking into the conscious mind represents the origin of origin, the beginning of beginning, an absolute dawn of understanding.

Since the soul or the dreaming consciousness exists as openness, as receptivity, as non-causal passivity, as *disponibilité*, the poetic image or the evolution of O *reverberates* in it.⁴ This *reverberation* («*retentissement*») is an intimation of O beyond memory and desire, which may be taken as two modes of fore-knowledge, prejudgment and prejudice that masquerade as «understanding», that tend to destroy «the primitivity of imagination» (Bachelard 1957, 10). In a striking passage, Bachelard (1957) tells us that a psychoanalytic approach to the poetic image may be more precisely articulated if «we are able to delineate a sphere of *pure sublimation*, a sublimation that sublimates nothing, which is relieved of the burden of passion, and freed from the pressure of desires» (p. 12).

The twin suspension of memory and desire, therefore, may create an aperture where a mode of nonknowing may surface. It allows oral or written discourse to be considered as an authentic manifestation of the as-yet-unknown. As Jean Lescure has said in relation to the work of the French painter Charles Lapicque, this «'Nonknowing' is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of 'knowledge'», which permits us to seize a work of art or literature as «a sort of pure beginning» (Bachelard 1957, p. 15).⁵ Lescure adds that «Knowledge, therefore, ought to be accompanied by an equal forgetfulness of knowledge.»

The conscious appropriation of this «pure beginning» takes place at the intersection of two functions of the human psyche, the «*function of reality*» and the «*function of unreality*» (Bachelard 1957, p. 16). The «function of reality» is the consciousness of the phenomenal world, the «function of unreality» is the awareness of the imaginative discovery of a world beyond the phenomenal, the sphere of the noumenal, which may under certain circumstances of receptivity appear ghostlike in the consciousness of the thinking subject (without thinking in terms of ratiocination and intellectualization) and then be articulated. This articulation of a pure beginning may be considered as the moment of birth or rebirth of a truly authentic speaking subject. Such a subject speaks the true thought and reveals the evolution of O within the human consciousness. As a result, the birth or rebirth of the individual is concomitant with that of the true thought: they both come to be *known*, to enter the realm of knowledge and recognition.

Since the discovery of a «pure beginning» by definition falls into the category of the universal invariant, it offers an *absolute freedom* that defies any mode of predetermination, including memory and desire. It designates the act of faith, the state of «at-one-ment» with O and charts the course of the evolution of O as it passes from a zone *preceding logos* — that is, a zone prior to language, a preverbal zone — into *logos*, into language, and becomes something very specifically human. The articulation of such a movement in interpretative activities may then become the task of both psychoanalytic theory and critical theory. I firmly believe that Bion's thought can assist us considerably in such an articulation.

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⁴ Bachelard borrows the word «*retentissement*» from Eugène Minkowski's *Vers une cosmologie*, chapter IX.

⁵ Bachelard here quotes from the book *Lapicque*, edited by Jean Lescure, p. 78.

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The Golden Arrow: Bion and Lacan

ROBERT SILHOL (*)

The question of the status of psychoanalysis has always been a moot one, and while there are only a few today who consider Freud's theories as wild, unwarranted speculations, many nonetheless still refuse or at least strongly hesitate to grant psychoanalysis the name of science.¹

The disagreement, I think, comes from the fact that we do not all give the same meaning to the world «science». Indeed, the concept has to be redefined. And in our attempt at a new definition, Freud's discovery — and Einstein's, and the works of the present day physicists or astro-physicists — must be taken into consideration. I am of course referring to the end of nineteenth-century positivist thinking, and to the epistemological change which emerged at the turn of the century. With the findings of psychoanalysis and the introduction of concepts which were so contrary to the logic which had so far prevailed, the existing scientific frame of reference became obsolete and had to be replaced.

Now, if psychoanalysis is a science, and by that I mean a «conjectural» science, one for which «truths» are no longer absolute but only relative and paradoxical, we should be able to discern a correspondence between the most recent theories held forth by some of the contemporary psychoanalytical schools. My hypothesis is that between the British school, for instance,² we might find out that, up to a point, confrontation is simpler and clearer than we should have believed.

With this in mind I wish to propose my reading of Wilfred Bion's *Learning from Experience* (1962) in what amounts to a comparison with some of the concepts developed by Jacques Lacan.

This will necessarily be a brief examination of the thoughts of both theoreticians, and I shall have to limit myself to a few major notions; it is also obvious that such a comparative study should have included other analysts who seem to have developed independently a line of thinking similar to that of Lacan in France.³

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¹ Karl Popper being perhaps the best example of this.

² Why restrict oneself to the British and French schools and not include the American school of Ego Psychology in the comparison? Quite simply because it is between the first two that I found points of encounter, while comparison, and the attempt at bridging differences, between Ego Psychology and French Psychoanalysis as it had developed since the Fifties seemed far less easy. One will also remember that the confrontation between Ego Psychology and *L'école française de psychanalyse* was taken up by Jacques Lacan as early as 1953 (See his «excommunication» from the I.P.A. in 1953).

³ I particularly have in mind *Medical Orthodoxy and the Future of Psychoanalysis* by K.R. Eissler.

Bion and Lacan then. And we can begin with the general remark that they were equally concerned with epistemology, and that both wished to formalize psychoanalytical thinking.

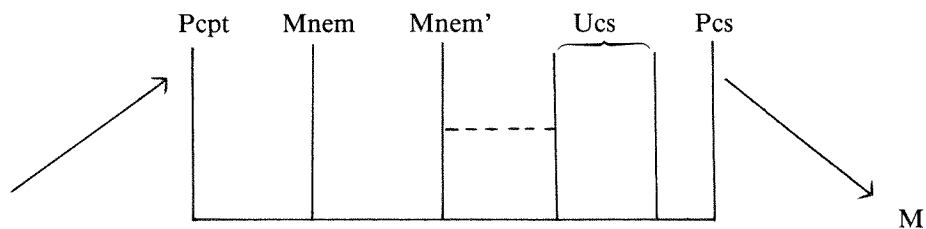
One of Bion's central notions is his «alpha-function»; it constitutes the starting point of his inquiry into our thinking process and *Learning from Experience* devotes a large place to it. Endeavoring to understand how thought comes into existence, Bion resorts to what is, at first, an unknown factor:

The term alpha-function is, intentionally, devoid of meaning. (3)

Alpha-function is the name given to an abstraction used by the analyst to describe a function of which he does not know the nature, until such time he feels in position to replace it by factors for which he feels he has obtained evidence in the course of the investigation in which he is employing alpha-function. (25-26).

Starting with the axiomatic proposition that between emotional experience and our awareness of it «something» has to take place, he attempts to probe the workings of this elaboration of experience which indeed is indispensable to our conscious thinking. For him, this elaboration of experience (which amounts, I think, to a construction of meaning) is seen as the establishing of a contact. A «contact»: a word which we shall meet again. It is this contact which permits the storage of experience and afterwards, the relegation of thoughts into the «unconscious». In other words, having been produced and «digested», the alpha-elements can be stored, that is placed at the disposal of our thinking activity. When alpha-function is perturbed, no alpha elements are produced, facts are not digested and the patient has no contact with himself/herself or with living objects.

The model, which at this stage mainly consists in an interrogation, somewhat brings to mind Freud's own model in the last chapter (III) of *The Interpretation of Dreams*:



(Standard Edition 5, 541)⁴

In the 1900 model, which has a sensory end and a motor end, psychical processes advance «in general from the perceptual end to the motor end» (537), and at first sight Bion's illustration of the transformation of sense impressions into alpha-elements does not seem to improve on Freud's model.

The notion of *contact*, however, might help us to understand what Bion was trying to do. I am of course associating with «contact» and reading it as something akin to what

Obviously, Lacan's «*Rapport de Rome*» (1953) must have reached most psychoanalytical circles; analysts may also have read some of the articles he published before 1960, and I might add that at that date the seminar he was holding in Paris each wednesday was fairly well known. Whether Eissler is a brilliant theoretician who developed ideas similar to those of Lacan or the first American «lacanian» is in any case of little interest. What matters is the concordance of ideas. I am well aware that Eissler speaks of himself as an «ego psychologist» and does not use concepts that can be called specifically lacanian (*imaginaire, symbolique, béance, Autre*, etc.); I am only referring to his response to Freud's works and his rendering of it.

⁴ I am using Freud's third picture, I take it to be the most complete.

I call *representation*, that is to say the way in which I apprehend reality, the world out there.⁵ This might be a first acceptance of Bion's word «contact»: the manner a person relates to objects, the manner in which we produce meaning. But as we already have this in *The Interpretation of Dreams* it is not here that I place Bion's originality. Indeed, I can read Freud's model as a description of the way in which humans elaborate, transform, in other words filter and interpret what is coming to them through their senses (whether it is from outside or from inside themselves).

What is original in Bion's model, therefore, is not what he says about elaboration and transformation, but lies in the way he asks the question: for his question is about the existence of the «bar», this radical separation between conscious and unconscious on which the whole of Freud's discovery rests. Needless to say, this reminds me strongly of Lacan's preoccupation with the same problem: the concept of unconscious.

Alpha-function — which is a concept-to-be-constructed, to be filled — is an interrogation aimed at what happens to our sense impressions, as if Bion had been directing his attention to the «very front» of Freud's «apparatus», the one which «receives the perceptual stimuli but retains no trace of them and thus has no memory» (538). It is an interrogation, then, directed at what occurs even before «the momentary excitations of the first system» have been transformed «into permanent traces» (538).⁶ We might, or should, object to a vision which does away with memory and memory traces as Freud understood them, and I will take this up later, but it helps us to understand Bion's preoccupation with what constitutes the heart of psychoanalysis: the very possibility of *thinking*, the bar, the possibility of conceiving the human person as split, made of what is conscious and unconscious. And this, in spite of appearances, is no small matter: for we may believe there is no difficulty in conceiving humans as acting unconsciously or, better, as being led by unconscious «motives», but psychoanalysis has taught us that saying so and being consciously convinced of it is not sufficient. Realizing the split in us and acknowledging unconscious desire is no easy task. Bion's question concerns the cause, the existence, *Ursache, raison d'être*, of a split between conscious and unconscious processes, in short the condition of apparition of what Freud called the unconscious in each of us. And what is new in Bion's approach is that his point of view is a practical one (experience). It follows that his question can also be taken as an interrogation on the condition of production of Freud's discovery: how can we ever think a concept if the process it refers to is unconscious (or since it refers to an object that is not conscious)?⁷

Perhaps all this will become clearer when we come to Bion's next step. Having stated the problem (alpha-function as an abstraction), he completes his model: alpha-function creates, elaborates, a *contact barrier*.

This contact barrier, thus continuously in process of formation, marks the point of *contact and separation* between conscious and unconscious elements and originates the distinction between them. (17) (italic mine)

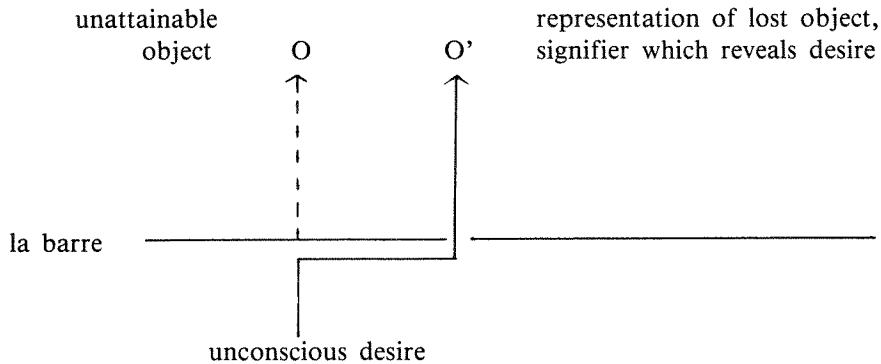
I take this barrier, which is conceived as a separating agent — Bion even says it serves «the function of a membrane» (21-22), — to be a representation of Bion's acknowledgment

⁵ Silhol, 1988.

⁶ Freud's complete sentence reads: «We shall suppose that a system in the very front of the apparatus receives the perceptual stimuli but retains no trace of them and thus has no memory, while behind in there lies a second system which transforms the momentary excitations of the first system into permanent traces.» We can see how Bion restricted his interest to Freud's first system thus somewhat disregarding Freud's model of the unconscious or at least of the part of the apparatus (and hence concept) designed to represent the transformation of stimuli into permanent traces, the «second system» where the inscription takes place.

⁷ The answer is of course that there are *manifestations* of what is *unconscious*, manifestations which psychoanalysis manages to analyze.

that there is something unconscious in us. Bion's barrier is his own signifier for *la barre* we find in Lacan, a philosophical extension of Freud's concept of *repression*.



At first, the problem with Bion's formulation of the now classic model is that he speaks of a *contact* barrier. The contradiction between the two terms of his formula needn't worry us however. It is a contradiction that perfectly expresses the paradoxical nature of psychoanalytic knowledge. Again, we can turn to Freud's inaugural formula: Cs/Ucs. Between conscious and unconscious, the separation is total, there is no going over the bar; the whole system indeed rests on such a radical distinction. Otherwise the concept of unconscious is meaningless and devoid of interest. But once this necessary precaution is taken, what must be added is that if there is no *direct* passing of the bar, there nevertheless exists a possibility of passage, of communication. Such communication is never clear, always «jammed», and before Freud it had no recognized existence, but it is thanks to this «detour» brought to our attention in *The Interpretation of Dreams* — and which has the structure of the metaphor — that some information can make itself known. There remains to interpret this *indirect*, symbolical information, but for this it must first be acknowledged as a manifestation of what is below; behind, on the other side of the bar. This is what Freud did when he discovered that the manifest thoughts of the dream were simple the secret expression of latent, unconscious, thoughts. Naturally, he had to account for the circulation of this masked information that had necessarily to take place between the two separate «areas», and for this he thought out the notion of *preconscious*. Bion's notion of «contact» has the same function. It represents the «holes» in the bar (which we can then describe as a paradoxically impassable barrier liable nevertheless to let symbol, or symptoms, go through), and the contradiction we noted between «contact and separation» need not bother us any longer. Bion's contact barrier is a way of illustrating the very first apparition of the bar in the infant facing the breast; with him, we witness as it were the building, the construction, of a mental apparatus made of conscious and unconscious «thoughts». The mental operation Bion describes in the infant very precisely corresponds to the functioning of the human psyche as Freud elaborated it.

Desirous, however, to give an account of the actual construction of the barrier, he offers us a description where we can observe it materially appearing. His contact barrier owes «its existence to the proliferation of alpha-elements» and serves «the function of a membrane which by the nature of its composition and permeability separates mental phenomena into two groups one of which performs the functions of consciousness and the other the functions of unconsciousness» (21-22). What is clearly stated here is that the contact barrier is constituted by alpha-elements which are themselves produced by alpha-function. What is not said is why such a construction (of the bar, made of alpha-elements)

was needed in the first place. What I find missing in Bion's system is some information, and at least an hypothesis, as to the nature of the x he started out with. Alpha-function, the abstraction devoid of meaning he devised at the beginning, is not eventually replaced by anything; its value, at the end of the operation, is still unknown.

It was of course the difficulty of the problem he was trying to solve which incited Bion to resort to an abstraction «devoid of meaning» (3). This done, he was able to resume his observation of reality, and came up with a lot of interesting evidence: erection of a contact barrier, production of alpha-elements, existence of beta elements. Such important results are not to be disregarded; they contribute to our better understanding of mental life. But in spite of this wise handling of the problem it seems that the original question put by Bion still begs the answer. Also, hasn't the same question been given a satisfactory solution by Lacan? I think so. In any case, as I will now try to show, it is easy to see that the paths followed by both psychoanalysts are quite close and even merge at times, even though it is my «scientific» conviction that Lacan carried his search a few steps further.

Let's go back to the criticism of Bion I have just made. We are left without a answer. Granted, if we still do not know according to what law(s) alpha-elements are produced, at least we are now convinced of their existence. We can even say that with Bion we have gained something like a physical apprehension of the mechanism at work in the infant: alpha-elements, which constitute Bion's barrier, are, so to speak, the palpable evidence that there is a «bar» and brilliantly uphold Freud's theories. But the system will take us no further.

Perhaps, with an object so ambiguous, so paradoxical as the human psyche, this was to be expected. It is one of the merits of Lacan to have taught us, in what I take to be a strict Freudian line, that the object of psychoanalysis is unthinkable and that we cannot hear what psychoanalysis has to say, the only solution left being to acknowledge our resistance and our unawareness. Thus can we become less deaf by knowing how deaf we are.

In Bion's system, then, we have the evidence (alpha-elements) — and I would prefer to speak of «effect» — when what we are looking for is the cause (x , alpha-function). For it alpha-elements are the place, or the sign of the existence, of a bar, they must not be confused with it (it being an abstract construction, of course, but not devoid of meaning), or only in as much as in psychoanalysis «*il n'y a que des effets de l'inconscient*» (Lacan). Bion's formulation is therefore quite germane to lacanian psychoanalysis: alpha-elements are indeed signifiers; there is no bar, only signifiers of it. As for the «cause», the nature of alpha-function, it cannot clearly be conceived if it is not first differentiated from its effect. In short, the referent must not be mistaken for the sign,⁸ if only because the sign, in the present case, only carries information about other possible aspects. Because the same object, or referent, may be given several interpretations, particularly if it is an abstraction, there is nothing surprising in the fact that it should come to be represented by several signs. Alpha-function is undoubtedly the necessary condition of our discovery of the «bar», but it is not the bar (the abstraction). At least not the one which I think can be built out of the lacanian model.

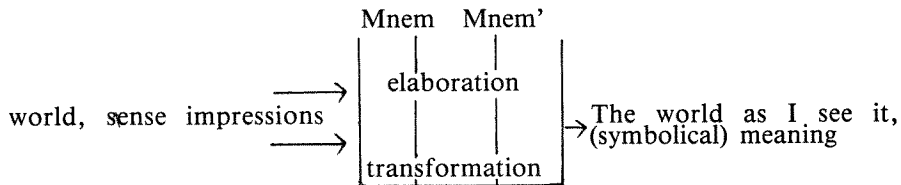
What I find lacking in Bion's model, or at least insufficiently developed, is the notion of *distance*, or separation. And yet, I am well aware that Bion carefully studied frustration (the infant and the breast), and I even went as far as interpreting «contact» in «contact barrier» as a possible representation of the way in which we relate to reality. Yes, Bion does take separation into consideration, but this does not seem his main concern.

What he starts with, what he places at «the very front» of his own model is emotional experience, sense impressions; then he proceeds to find out what happens to this «given», how it is elaborated and in what way a contact barrier is erected which permits the storage of experience and the distinction between conscious and unconscious.

⁸ And since «*il n'y a que du signifiant*», this referent, which here is an abstraction, is also a representation...

world, sense impressions → | alpha-function | → alpha elements as contact barrier

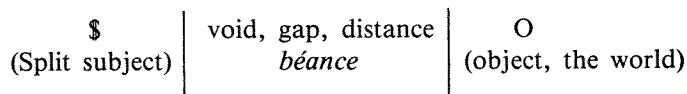
We saw how this was close to Freud's model, which we can briefly illustrate thus:



And at this point a difference appears. By applying his attention mostly to the left end of Freud's little box, and not to the whole of it, Bion by-passes what he is precisely looking for: the locus where all transformations take place. What we have in the end with Bion is the bar between conscious and unconscious, a representation of it, a convincing demonstration of its existence; but it seems to me we had something else in mind when we started out, something more, namely a wish to understand what took place during the elaboration a wish to know how the transformation came about and what its possible cause was. This is what I meant when I said that the alpha-function model, in spite of appearances, left no place to distance.

The confusion between (the possibility of) our conception of a bar between conscious and unconscious and «bar» as a signifier which might correspond to another concept (namely that of distance or *béance*) is probably the reason for this. In Bion's system, a contact barrier is erected thanks to alpha-function whereas I think we should assume a bar was there in the first place, if only because, by definition, an unbridgeable gap keeps subject and object separated.

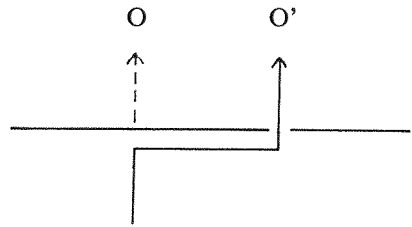
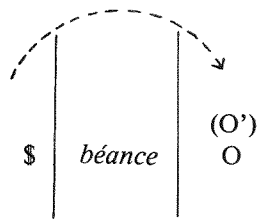
Bion's contact barrier is a representation of the bar psychoanalysis places between conscious and unconscious; it seems that, with Lacan, we can go a step further. I interpret Bion's contact barrier as a veiled, hence incomplete, representation of what can be understood by «unconscious» and find Lacan's *béance* more helpful.

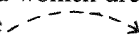


This illustration of the human condition enables us to understand fully Freud's concept of *repression*, valid in itself (in a dynamic interpretation of our mental functioning) and as a representation of the void or distance between subject and object.

Bion's contact barrier, on the other hand, can also be read as a representation of separation (rather than distance), but it is a representation that is denied in the very moment of its production: what partly engendered «contact» is a fantasy in which distance is erased. The concept does point to a preoccupation with relation and representation, but what is emphasized is rather the closing of the gap than the gap itself. Faced with the impossibility of having the object, or of being inside it, we fantasize that the distance that separates us from it can be bridged. This is language, representation (even before we use words). It is the structure on which language rests. What I cannot have I represent.

Bion's «first sense of contact» does correspond to my dotted line between subject and object (which illustrates the subject's unconscious desire), but I think much more will be gained if we work with a model where the notion of bar is not restricted to one interpretation and is given the two complementary meanings I have borrowed from Lacan. 1) A radical *line*, or split, between conscious and unconscious «areas» which entails the impossibility of direct communication between the two except by way of a secret symbolical code (cf.



the structure of the metaphor) and 2) a *gap* or separation never to be bridged except hallucinatorily. In the first instance, the idea of *barrier*, of impassable line is stressed; in the second, the idea of distance between subject and object is emphasized. In each case we are dealing with the same structure: Cs/Ucs, which so clearly illustrates Freud's discovery, and both are correct readings. But if we want to discover what takes place between the two areas conceived by psychoanalysis as separated we must concentrate on the second acceptation. In so doing we shall be using the model Freud introduced at the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which our early history (memory, mnemic traces) is seen filtering, interpreting, shaping our perception. Bion's concentration on the mental construction of the bar must then be completed by a reflection on the way men and women dream, hallucinate, the passing of the bar, the bridging of the gap. The dotted line  between \$ and O is my illustration of the subject's unconscious desire. It is only by accepting the idea of separation, of distance, that we can hope to learn in what way we symbolize, that is to say who we are. This is what Lacan teaches us when he speaks of the symbolic. Then, in the next stage, the way each of us symbolizes can be analyzed as desire, or discourse, of the Other, that is to say, as memory traces pointing to determinations, to an inscription which took place in infancy and made a subject of each of us.

Because it does not give distance its due, or perhaps because it by-passes it altogether, Bion's model leaves no room for a reflexion on our early determinations. In not discussing *la béance*, it loses the chance of encountering the concept of Other.

Needless to say, this brief discussion of one aspect of *Learning from Experience* does not close the comparison between Bion and Lacan. I hope I have shown how both researchers advanced on similar ground, and how, up to a point, their systems coincided, different words pointing to similar interpretations of our psychical reality.⁹ It is only when coming to the stumbling block of «*béance*» that their models diverged in a way which made me find Lacan's more fruitful.

The elaboration that occurs in the infant's psyche is not just the elaboration of a bar (even though one had to find out how such a bar could ever be conceived), but the elaboration of a symbolic response, determined by an Other, which enables him or her to deal with separation.

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⁹ I have stressed the differences, but a study of what Bion writes for instance about the incapacity of some infants to elaborate their emotional experience, thus producing «beta-elements» instead of alpha-elements, remarkably reminds us of Lacan's foreclosure. Only words differ here; what Lacan calls the impossibility to symbolize because the child has not entered the symbolic order, is perfectly described by Bion in his own terms.

Another interesting aspect of *Learning from Experience* is the author's research into the way thoughts, or preconceptions, are produced.

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Pattern, Perception and Presence: Issues in the Struggle for Narrative Meaning in the Writings of R. D. Laing

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We are acting parts in a play that we have never read and never seen, whose plot we don't know, whose existence we can glimpse, but whose beginning and end are beyond our present imagination and conception.

from *The Politics of the Family* (87)

As intensely as an experimental-fiction writer, the psychiatrist, R.D. Laing sought to expose personal and cultural narrative strategies and to propose — or explore — alternative structures. Writing as a witness to the dehumanization of healing, Laing finds arrogant detachment in the diagnoses of mental illness, and he expresses horror at many procedures and goals of treatment. He even questions the training which leads doctors to their empowerment. But he is most concerned with the neglect of the thoughts and feelings and words of the psychiatric patients. For Laing, the psychiatric response to the Other — the person labelled «schizophrenic» — exemplifies the split between thought and feeling which is deadening our awareness of ourselves and threatening the very existence of our world. Such microcosmography is characteristic of Laing's narratives: it gives a rhetorical and spiritual resonance to his respect for the experience of the individual.

My choice of alliteration in the title of this paper is an allusion to the terms «purpose, passion and perception» found in Francis Fergusson's essay on the recurring, intensifying structure of beginnings, middles and endings in *Oedipus Rex* (30-31). Freud, in his famous comments on the «action» of the play, finds that the dramatic «process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever mounting excitement», is «a process that can be likened to the work of psychoanalysis» (295). Nevertheless, jokes about interminable therapies and commentaries on Freud's case histories (See: Bernheimer and Kahane) indicate that the structure of the psychoanalytic process is not a narrative of Sophoclean clarity.

R.D. Laing suggests that the historical development of psychoanalysis has led, in fact,

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to uncertainty and conflict. When, in his own training, he sought to be supervised by Melanie Klein, he encountered a dispute at the London Institute of Psychoanalysis. The analysts did not agree about which of the analysts had themselves been «properly analyzed» (Evans, 3). In Francis Fergusson's terms, Freud's method led the analysts to passionate discord rather than shared, professional perception. Laing concludes, «It's very difficult to say what psychoanalysis means today, since there are so many people who call themselves psychoanalysts, and practice so many different things...» (Evans, 3). The narratives of psychoanalytic training and healing have, according to Laing, become uncertain. Speaking more broadly of psychiatry, he asks,

What do you do when you don't know what to do? No wonder there are more suicides among psychiatrists than in any other profession (*Wisdom, Madness, Folly*, 126).

As a result seeing of such historical uncertainty, Laing's own psychiatric work was eclectic and skeptical.

His early work in military hospitals exposed him to questions in the diagnosis and treatment of schizophrenia. The diagnostic term schizophrenia, became visible to Laing as a link between severely disordered mental patients, the doctors who imposed their treatments, and patterns of alienation in the wider society.

He wrote extensively on the clinical literature concerning the diagnosis and treatment of schizophrenia. In rejecting Kallmann's and Slater's «Genetic Theory», for example, he shows that their diagnostic procedures are flawed by theoretical presuppositions. Further, Laing notes that in his program for eliminating the «schizoid genotype» Kallman refers at one point to patients in whom

... such symptoms of schizoid abnormality as bigotry pietism, avarice, superstition, obstinacy or crankiness... [are] present in a striking and disproportionate degree (Evans, 108).

This, Laing observes, is «a vocabulary of vituperation and denigration», not the identification of symptoms. Here we glimpse what Laing sees as the actual narrative in diagnosing schizophrenia: the psychiatrist and/or the family members and/or other members of society find someone difficult or unpleasant or impossible to understand. The diagnosis is a first step in excluding and treating them. And, for Kallman, this would include recommendations for sterilization.

Laing parodies such a narrative of diagnosis in *The Politics of the Family*. Morel, the 19th century French psychiatrist, is seen to develop his case as a detective pursues a criminal:

... the mind police (psychiatrists) are called in. A crime (illness) is diagnosed. An arrest is made and the patient taken into custody (hospitalization)... A confession may be obtained (patient admits he is ill, displays insight). He is convicted either way (74).

For Laing, such structures of intervention link contemporary psychiatric practices to the brutalities of the Inquisition. Just as women were disproportionately the victims of being «tortured and burnt» in those witch hunts, so «the statistics for the number of women to men whose brains have been cut up [lobotomized] are 3 to 1, all *by men*» (*Facts of Life*, 123). Laing looks behind such statistics in discussing Ludwig Binswanger's post-mortem analysis of Ellen West (1958). Laing finds insensitivity to Ellen West's own wishes and writings, and he notes an uncritical acceptance of the opinions of her parents and her husband. Most important, he finds Binswanger's perceptions blinded by the term «schizophrenia», which had been used on Ellen West by Bleuler who «invented» the diagnosis. The conclusion of Laing's critique is a sardonic comment on the structure of Binswanger's analysis of Ellen West: «her existential Gestalt, like a horoscope in reverse, shows the unfolding of

a schizophrenic illness that was predetermined to destroy her» (*The Voice of Experience*, 62). For Laing, existentialism has something to do with human freedom and suffering, and the need for truth, and the struggles to perceive the musical, unreturning richness of experience. It is not the unfolding of a predetermined horoscope.

Throughout his writings, Laing rejects the clinical practice of suppressing the verbalizations of those diagnosed as schizophrenic. In conventional practice, he writes, talking to a schizophrenic is seen to be «like promoting a hemorrhage in a hemophiliac or giving a laxative to someone with diarrhoea» (*Wisdom, Madness, Folly*, 93). Talk is a symptom to be suppressed.

Perhaps Laing's closest link to students of literature is his willingness to accept utterance and communication — even screams and instances of «word salad» — as having human importance. Peter Sedgwick finds Laing's multivalent attention to schizophrenic speech to be incoherent and contradictory (95-96 and 99, for example). But Laing finds the tactic of clinical closure to unfamiliar language to be a dynamic of literary response which denies the humanity of the patient and even imposes the label of «schizoid psychopathology» upon significant works of literature and philosophy. He refers specifically to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Joyce and Hegel as authors whose works, because they are not acceptable or comprehensible to the clinician, are labelled as schizophrenic gibberish. Recognizing that he himself was an appreciative reader of these texts, he concludes, «I had been trained to diagnose myself as schizophrenic.» After a short quotation from Artaud, he exclaims, «I had been taught to diagnose myself psychotic» (*Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, 11-13). Having found such narrative irony in his psychiatric training, he tests and explores issues of narrative in his own writing.

At times, he speculates upon the gaps in language which contribute to our problems in perceiving the narratives in which we are participants. He observes, for example, that we have the word «paranoid» for those who believe they are being persecuted when they are not. But, he observes, we do not have a word for those who are being persecuted and cannot see it. Walter Laqueur observes that, among Jews in Poland, «Any rational analysis of the situation would have shown that the Nazi aim was the destruction of all Jews. But the psychological pressures militated against rational analysis...» (Felman, 258). Laing argues that the gap in the language for naming such an experience also helped to block rational analysis. In addition to this lack of semantic parallelism in the resources of language, Laing notes that we have no word for those who are persecuting others but cannot see what they are doing (*The Facts of Life*, 117). If we sometimes feel that Laing strains the structures of syntax in his writings, it is because he is attempting to reveal narrative relationships for which we have no name.

Word-play is an aspect of both Laing's prose writings and his verse, and it challenges the beginnings, middles and endings of linear narrative. In one passage, he discusses the structures of identity:

A line has been drawn between oneself and oneself, and between oneself and others. It is denied that a line has been drawn. No line is there, but do not try to cross it.

In part, this passage refers to the simultaneous, conscious and unconscious issues in the self-as-fact and self-as-product. The passive voice («has been drawn» and «is denied») imposes uncertainty about agency. The ending («No line is there, but do not try to cross it») asserts simultaneous perceptions of freedom and entrapment. The passage is followed by a page of play upon such words as «Forgetting/Remembering», «Pretending/Not Pretending», «knowing and Ignorance». Laing concludes: this is the process in «the achievement of the usual sort of normal ego boundary.» The normal ego-boundary is, then, a product of forgotten, denied, repressed and contradictory demarcations. The word-play is not word-salad. It is an attempt to take us inside a diachronic, continuing and largely invisible pattern

in which the issue of being «cut off» from ourselves and others is not simply an either-or of schizophrenic pathology. Such a normal individual, Laing adds, «may attack and destroy anyone who is not cut off like him, who remembers having forgotten, or who merely speculates that he might have or must have» been cut-off (*The Voice of Experience*, 163-4).

Such a capacity for dehumanizing and doing violence to each other is visible in the narratives of the family, the atrocities of war, and even in the case histories from our clinics of healing. For Laing, these are not separate from the structures of illusion by which we define and defend and even torture ourselves.

These are some of the issues which he addresses in the verse collection, *Knots*. In that volume he begins with schematic renderings of the patterns «of human bondage» experienced in childhood and ends by exploring the metaphysical challenges to the verbal and linear mind in such Zen images as «a finger points to the moon» (87-90).

Although the book has five sections, it does not proceed toward narrative closure. The sections are indicated with numbers rather than titles, and individual poems within each section are untitled and interconnected. For example, the child, Jack, feels possessiveness toward his mother, but he fears being devoured by her. These emotional conflicts recur in Jack's emotional responses to Jill. And Jill herself brings similarly conflicted needs and fears to her relationship with Jack (See: 14-17). Layers of needs and guilts, judgments and resentments are intertwined with the early conflicted desires of childhood.

In the poems, chronology and simultaneity are sometimes indicated with numbers, brackets and arrows, and with circular, shaped poems. Through such devices, Laing insists that the patterns of psychological experience do not correspond to the syntactic possibilities of verbal narration.

Nevertheless, the interpersonal knots narrow and simplify issues discussed in *The Politics of the Family*. In that book, he states that the ensnaring loops of perception and projection reach back for many generations, and they include uncles and cousins and siblings as well as mothers and children (86). For all its daring, *Knots* is a modest experiment in exposing the narratives of suffering. It is not simply the entrapped voice of «Mutterings» (*Do You Love Me*, 6-7), nor does it affirm the click of closure found in most of his *Sonnets*.

His *Conversations with Adam and Natasha* is a selection of uninterpreted dialogues from six years in his children's lives. It records the «interlace» (vi) of language between adults and children, including playful riddles and a series of developmentally interesting questions about comparative ages of family members, calendar dates and intervals of time. And sometimes there is a knot of intensity:

June, 1976

Natasha: «Can God kill himself?»

Mummy: «I don't know» (115).

The book is Laing's affirmation that the moments of experience need not be purposeful, in the narrative sense to have meaning. The book affirms the sincerity, and energy possible in communication between parents and children.

In discussing the electro-shock therapy which he witnessed in Army hospitals, Laing observes that the doctors seemed to be taking «the death and rebirth archetype literally» (*Wisdom, Madness and Folly*, 92). He rejected such aggressive methods of re-enactment, but Laing himself has taken mythic narratives quite literally.

He proposed, for example, that certain instances of extreme catatonic withdrawal could correspond to the trance by which the Shaman died and was reborn. He reports such a mythic journey as the «Coda» to *The Voice of Experience*. On Good Friday, his patient spontaneously designed a ritual space and entered a catatonic state. On Easter Sunday, she was reborn and returned to consciousness. The narrative reports a sharp contrast between the results of her earlier electro-shock treatments and the results of her ritual. After electro-

shock, when she was «cured», she «was in despair. She felt dead.» After her ritual, she emerged on Easter Sunday as «(... what she had nearly despaired of ever becoming) a normal woman» (170). Her narrative is an iconic rebuke to aggressive psychiatric intervention.

Laing reports seeing parallel, even more literal journeys of rebirth during his trip to the U.S. in 1972. He observed therapeutic «rebirthings» performed by Elizabeth Fehr, and he brought the procedure back to his practice in London (*Facts...*, 70-2).

These specific re-enactments of passing through the birth canal raised a number of issues for his colleagues («What about the transference? What about suggestion?»), but Laing appears to have been most interested in the infant's capacity for experiencing and remembering birth. Such a capacity for recording the constrictions in the birth canal and the shock of the cutting of the umbilical cord indicated possible sources in the narratives of suffering.

The medical practice of cutting the umbilical cord while it is still fully functional suggested, in particular, the schizophrenic perception of being «cut off» from the self and others. Furthermore, Laing proposes that much of the literary and dream imagery which is associated with the penis in psychoanalysis is more appropriately seen as umbilical imagery (*The Voice of Experience*, 135-7). By calling attention to the effects of premature cutting of the umbilicus upon breathing and the rhythm of the heart (*The Facts of Life*, 60), he attempts to locate the kinds of bodily memory-traces that the experience could impose.

But the issue of birth-memory led Laing deeper — into foetal development — in his quest for beginnings. In the foetus' relationship to the placenta, for example, he glimpses the «lost double, the twin, the Other» (*The Facts of Life*, 64). In the development of the zygote into the foetus, he finds analogues to the narratives of the hero in such works as *Gilgamesh* and the Biblical story of Moses. The sagas are, then, a bringing to consciousness of a vast and marvelous embryological adventure. And even this is not the beginning. He discusses the cellular biologists' speculative correlations between the fertilizing and dividing of the cells of the ovum and the Gnostic and Indian myths of creation (*The Voice of Experience*, 150-55).

For Laing, the plot of scientific, rationalist abstraction is the destruction of our selves and our world. This narrative hungry for closure is, perhaps, the Freudian death wish (See: Brooks, 280-300). Laing himself is concerned to clarify patterns of suffering, and he speculates about the structures of transformation by which people might deal with their suffering. In his correlations of embryology and mythic narrative, he suggests that to be human is to be wounded in vast journeys, and yet, in each instance, our humanity has behind it heroic achievements and beginnings co-equal with the creation itself. Laing's own narrative concerns do not seek for endings fore-shadowed and foredoomed, but rather seek to reveal the patterns of inception, the knots in the webs of Maya which are the vulnerabilities of being human.

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Literary Creation and Aesthetic Conflict

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We wish here to present some comments on the problems related to esthetics in literature with reference to our actual experience in the domain of child psychoanalysis.

The foundations set out by Freud proved for the most part remarkably pertinent. However, under the influence of new clinical experiences particularly in the domain of child psychiatry and the psychoanalytical treatment of adult psychosis, numerous new concepts have come to light. Psychoanalysis moves towards the study of structures in a perspective of development.

Our contribution suggests a particular point of view derived from the use in the study of literary creation of recent psychoanalytical concepts like those of the esthetic of conflicts recently elaborated by Meltzer from his experience in infant psychoanalytical observation. We have opted for a formulation, which might seem abstract, we have yet no practical demonstration to offer. This is only a preliminary work.

We must first wonder about the possibility of writing about the effect of writing. Indeed the study of the properties of some language constructions, (here these constructions which are emotions producing) is confronted with the logical impossibility of any metalanguage.

G. Granger (1990) has discussed the evolution of Wittgenstein's ideas on the subject.

«In the *Tractatus* language is primarily presented as the world's articulated image. As a consequence, any metalanguage, which should be an image of language as representation, would be no sense.» This point of view however is progressively being revised. In his *Philosophical Remarks* (1974) Wittgenstein writes that «No doubt common thought progresses among mixture of symbols, the proper linguistic symbols of which only constitute a small part perhaps.» As a result the refusal of the concept of metalanguage loses its strength.

G. Granger says «Apparently, nothing prevents us from conceiving a language whose rules would be such as to permit us to speak about other languages...»

This is not a formal problem, indeed the essential part of our reflexion lies upon the connection between thought and language, with reference to Bion's concepts about thought, which he expanded in «Elements of psychoanalysis» (1963). We consider that thought is in a «meta» position in relation to language, which means that all languages' properties from prosody to any signifying code are used for the transposition in language of elements which belong to a system of psychic events such as thought and affect. The differential qualities of these elements are analogic and not dialogic whereas as we know

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signifying codes are dialogic. In this respect we shall admit with the post-Kleinian analysts that thought is a set anterior to language and much wider. This assumption is in agreement with the last evolution of Wittgenstein's ideas.

Thought, according to Bion is a psychic activity following sensations and emotions. Its primal forms are less elaborated than Freud's «Thing presentations», they are primitive forms of thought corresponding to alpha elements or the proto-presentations described by M. Piñol (1984), they precede images and dream thoughts.

Language according to Bion can be considered as having reached a high level of abstraction corresponding to concept formation, it conveys if there is no pathology implied, affects as well as cognitive elements. There are different levels in language production and this does not appear in Bion's grid. We refer here mostly to Meltzer: «I suggest that language is primarily a function of unconscious phantasy... The substance of its communications are states-of-mind. Its means of communication are fundamentally primitive, namely song and dance. As its motive is the communication of states-of-mind, its information content relates primarily to psychic reality, and thus to the realm of experience relevant to art, religion courting and combat...» He thus suggests a two-step theory of language development: a first step consisting in «the realization by the child of its instinctual capacity for inner language, for the internal and external «public-ation» (Bion) of states of mind; and a second step consisting of the adaptation of this language to the description of external reality by means of verbalization, meaning the delineation morphemes within the «strings» (Chomsky) of phonemes.»

The multi-dimensionality of language, which is stressed here is confirmed by the study of its development as far as the young child is concerned. We quote Meltzer again «The child's relation to the world as a world of external objects is clearly secondary in interest to his preoccupation with emotional relations, particularly to parents as objects of emotive significance. Undoubtedly the child emits certain noises which are symptomatic of its states of mind and these may be intuited by the parent, but this process lies outside its urge-to-communicate. It is an unmistakable phenomenon that the small child begins to make the music of discursive speech long before it can pronounce individual words... The process of lalling or playing with vocal processes bears a striking connection with other processes of play and these we certainly know, deal with its emotional relationships and its attempt to think about them... The music command, inquiry, triumph, accusation and the rest is heard ringing through the house long before individual words make themselves clear.»

Thought being considered as a creation of sensations and emotions, language, as a product of thought is at least double: it communicates emotional psychic states and describes external psychic reality. When the verbal communication appears with its code, the most primitive aspects of language persist, they are in the background of every communication. But the specific properties of writing allow us to consider it as a kind of extension, an externalization of thought devices. Differing in this form speech, writing is an object, projected outside which his producer may take again and reshape. External and internal psychic world presentations and thought activity (which consist in establishing links between separate thoughts) are transposed in the game of signs when we write. Jean Guillaumin (1983) considers that thought «is an effort (in the sense of «arbeit») to change state of the 'I' in its relation to objects.» He describes writing as a kind of outside extension of thought work, which increases its possibilities. After concentration «in a kind of psychic crucible, protected against exciting impacts... potentialized and going through precise technical rules, thought-work is directed towards the pages of the manuscript. The next activity, which is an activity of reading may be described as «A new stimulation of the author by the text itself. This moment is organizing as it introduces in the system something which was not there while the writing was in action which can be taken as a projection produced by the author from

his thought. The successive projections follow one another according to specific laws which cannot be exactly predicted. They interact one with the other.»

But we have to consider other aspects of the production of writing, these aspects being necessary to study aesthetic problems. We agree with R. Silhol (1984) when he says that writing has nearly the same function as a dream. But while he considers that the dream work is a result of the interaction of desire and censorship (strictly Freud's conception), we refer to the clinical work of Bion and Meltzer and consider that dream (and writing) are presentations in the inner theater used to reduce psychic sufferings produced by conflicts.

Meltzer describes dreams as the «Theater for the generating of meaning» and says that dream work permits to tackle the conflict from different «vertices» and to make links between psychic experiences. We should add that dreams attempt to organize memories according to their dynamic weight and constitute an important function of writing. If we apply this conception to literature, the text appears as an exploration work of the conflictual aspects of the psychic world. Fantasms and conflicts determine the production of writing through thought work. This arouses in the reader a similar but non identical work as has been clearly shown by N. Holland (1975).

So far we have shown the connection between thought and language, and suggested that dream and literary production is a psychic activity at the service of development. The psychoanalytic study of emotional experience which takes place when one writes is tributary of Bion's conception of thought produced by and constituted with affect.

We shall now consider the complex feelings aroused by reading and the place of aesthetic emotion. As Lyotard (1974) stressed most psychoanalytic studies of literature has so far developed an interest in tracking down unconscious fantasy and disregarded the study of form in its most elemental aspects.

But let us cross our bridge when we come to them, and consider for now the role played by unconscious mechanisms in the work of the writer. We may wonder whether it is justified to limit the inquiry to what is unconscious in the text. The respective share of what is considered as unconscious fantasy and may be described as the latent meaning in the text, result of repression or splitting, and the share which is taken into account by consciousness (i.e. according to Freud by «this sense organ for the perception of psychic qualities») may be modified by alpha function (thought work) which determines the place of the contact barrier. This concept of contact barrier is very important for a new approach of the unconscious at work in writing. I quote Bion «The term 'contact barrier' underlines the institution of a contact point between conscious and unconscious and the selective passing through of elements from one side to another. The quality of this contact barrier determines the transposition of elements from consciousness to unconsciousness and reversely. So far as dreams give us direct access to its study, they keep the central position which Freud assigned to them.» (Bion 1962)

The study of literary writing involves, as dream study, the search of unconscious mechanisms, but in the present view of psycho-analysis the explicit part of the dream is as relevant as the latent part and both are constitutive of the inner conflict and producer of the drama. The emotions evoked by production of the text (or by the reading of the text) are not the product of repression and the half knowledge of pre-conscious elements. On the contrary, they produced «by virtue of binocular vision: simultaneous conscious and unconscious vertices which give the feeling that one seeing the truth, not of the thing in itself but of one's own emotional experience.» (Bion, *ibidem*) Thus our emotional experience, for instance as readers seems independent from the writer's lesser or greater insight. But the text must preserve the play with a binocular vision. And the reader takes part in the difficult struggle brought about by the writer's inner conflicts with echoes to his own struggle. As H. Segal (1947) has shown, these emotions may be linked to the dynamics between depressive and

schizo paranoid positions. The resulting feelings is one of hope and fear about the difficulties of any psychic progress.

To consider the formal aspects of language, rhythms of the signifiers, sonorities, phonation play, prosody, we must take the complex evolution of its formation in account.

The formal aspects of language are linked to the primitive parts of language formation according to Meltzer, they are equivalents of song and dance. He has shown how the infant's mouth is used in its play as a mean of differentiating smooth and rough, sharp and round. In moving the tongue, it creates an intrabuccal theater. This sensual part is directly connected with the first interaction experience between mother and infant. The first experiences of affect and sound productions with emotional forms related to the infant's encounter of the mother. Meltzer describes this encounter as an aesthetic shock: «This 'beautiful enough' mother confronts the baby with an object which overwhelms it because of its sensual quality; the infant is literally 'bombarded' with an emotional aesthetic experience». For this author, Miranda in *The Tempest* is a good representation of this shock when she describes the beauty of the world: «How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world that has such people in't.» But this aesthetic shock generates conflict from the very beginning. The contradiction implied by this aesthetic conflict can be understood as a result of the difference between the outside aspect of the mother (accessible to sensation) and the interior aspect, which must be interpreted and elaborated by the creative imagination: «The meaning of the mother's behaviour, of the apparition and the disappearance of the breast and of the light in her eyes, the meaning of a face on which emotions go by like shadows of clouds on a landscape, all this is unknown to the infant.»

I would like to sustain the view that the aesthetic conflict is part of the experience of writing. This point of view is also envisaged by Meltzer who says that «everything in art and literature emphasizes the persistence of this conflict throughout life.»

The formal qualities of the text are directly linked to these first experiences fraught with emotion. The sensual apprehension of the text (sounds, rhythms, colours) correspond to the first visual exchanges and echo the first sensual experiences (rhythm transmitted by the body of the mother for instance).

This formal level comes in conflict with the lexical aspects of the text which is apprehended on both conscious and unconscious level. The feelings which results from the confrontation of both levels of experience can be in harmony or not. We may hear for instance the soft music of words and the menaces implicitly contained in these words: this creates a paranoid situation.

We have tried to isolate one of many factors which constitute our literary experience and explored how these particular factors affect our pleasure. We end up with a model made up of several factors and we left aside the emotions which are the result of the act of creation itself. We know that this act implies epistemophilic instinct and learning processes, which produce affects and anxiety, narcissistic threats and pleasure as the result of sublimated genital sexuality.

But it is obvious that the complexity of the experience is such that the more we go and the more factors we find. This task is endless, which could make us say as Wittgenstein: «What cannot be said is better unsaid.»

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The Psychological Underpinnings of Art

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My wife and I have just finished writing a book (Hudson & Jacot, 1992) which argues that the male imagination has a distinctive twist, bias or spin. This derives from the steps each male child takes in separating himself from his mother and establishing a stable gender identity; the normal developmental processes of dis- and counter-identification (Greenson, 1968; also Chodorow, 1978, and Keller, 1985). It is this dislocation from the source of primitive connectedness and comfort that we have called the male «wound». (There exists a roughly analogous dislocation in the lives of women; but this we see as centring on the individual's object choice, not her gender identity, and its implications are consequently quite different.) The male «wound» gives rise, we believe, to a splitting of imaginative preoccupation: on the one hand, the perception of people as though they were things, and on the other, the perception of things as though they were people. It is the tension between these two imaginative regimes which underlies each emotionally significant discovery the male subsequently makes, whether in his public or private life. And it is in the light of this tension that he makes his entry into the systems of emotionally-charged but orderly thought on which imaginative activity in the arts and sciences depend.

1. THREE RULES-OF-THUMB

Implicit in the linkage between the events of childhood and the emotionally significant discoveries of an adult, there are the rudiments of a psychology of aesthetics. It is these rudiments that the present paper describes; first, in terms of heuristic principles or rules-of-thumb, and, second, by means of an example: that provided by the life and work of Thomas Hardy.

Psychologists are notorious for the crassness of their explanations of art (and of the forms of science that behave like an art), so one treads warily. Nevertheless, it does seem that if we are to make sense of images and texts which are deeply charged not just with personal but with erotic significance, three rules-of-thumb are going to be of special value. One is *inter-personal*. One *psychodynamic*. And one *technical* (in the sense that it is inseparable from the skills of those who bring images and texts into being). As you will see, these rules-of-thumb apply to both sexes, but have a special poignance in the case of the male: (1) *Asymmetry* — The pervasive aesthetic significance of relationships which are asymmetrical:

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e.g., Parent/Child and Artist/Model; (2) *Pleasurable Surrender* — Our capacity not just to enjoy art but to be seized, transported or transfixed by it; (3) *Ambiguity* — The harnessing, containment and wilful exploitation of perceived consonances and dissonances of form and meaning.

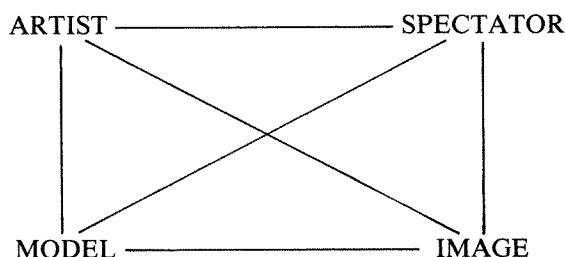
Briefly, I want to expand on each of these ideas in turn.

1.1. *Asymmetry*

At the risk of appearing dogmatic, I would want to claim that all personal relationships of aesthetic significance have asymmetries at their base; that asymmetry (and complementarity) are the stuff from which human creativeness is woven.

There is a famous photograph by Brassai of Matisse and his model in his studio (a print is in the Victoria and Albert Museum; Haworth-Booth, 1981). What seems at first sight a simple relationship turns out to be complex; and as you explore its complexities, you find not a single point of symmetry. There is a sense, for instance, in which the model is in Matisse's power; but there is also a more subtle sense in which he is in hers. As he said, he was absolutely dependent on his model's naked presence (Hobhouse, 1988); and without her, the transformation on which his art depended could not begin.

What seems a single relationship proves in fact to be six relationships rolled into one:



As those who enjoy them already know, even the simplest of diagrams have secret lives. This one harbours not only a six-fold traffic, but paradox and surprise (Hudson, 1982; Hudson & Jacot, *op cit.*). Among the paradoxes, perhaps the strangest is the part played by misogyny in the relation of Artist to Model: not only in images which attack or abuse the female body, but also in those which celebrate it. Degas, for example, was notorious for his profound distrust of women (Dunlop, 1979). Yet it was in his work that, for the first time in post-Renaissance Western art, the female body appears not as an element in one kind or another of mythological or erotic game, but as an object of contemplation in its own right. (Among the surprises is the relation of Spectator to Model — two people who rarely meet one another in the flesh. Apparently tenuous, mediated by the Image and the relevant technologies of representation, it is upon this relationship that the whole enterprise of the representation of the person depends.)

1.2. *Pleasurable Surrender*

Such enterprises need their engine, however: their instinctually constituted motor. The tendency in the past has been to think of such engines in terms of biological drives like sex, aggression or territoriality which are somehow sublimated or diverted. It is now widely believed, I think correctly, that this will not quite do. Especially illuminating in this respect are the theorists who point, in Leo Bersani's (1986) phrase, towards «an aesthetics of masochism».

In his last book *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes writes about the intimate personal significance of still, black-and-white photographs. In it, he distinguishes between *studium*,

our sensitive appreciation of beautiful things, and *punctum*, the beauty that pierces us through. 99.9% of the attentive looking and reading we do qualifies as *studium*. Advertently or otherwise, it was *studium* that Lacan had in mind when he remarked of the visual arts, «What I look at is never what I wish to see» (Lacan, 1977; Bowie, 1991). It is *punctum*, though, which gives art its force. Before certain people and certain works of art, as the surrealists sensed, our deliberative intelligence melts away. They puncture the membrane of commonsense with which we protect ourselves from our real fears and desires. It is in the realm of *punctum* that we see precisely what we wish, and for better or worse are left to count the cost.

1.3. *Ambiguity*

But how are certain works of art structured to effect such «puncturings»? A poem like Hardy's *In Time of «The breaking of Nations»* does not just grab us and release us; its effect is cumulative over the years. If we belong to the tribe over whom Hardy casts his spell, we return to it again and again, just as we return to Brassai's photograph or Degas's pastel nudes, its appeal becoming gradually more dense and deep. The key lies, I want to claim, in the poet's management of ambiguity. The poem's images — the man and his horse half-aleep as they harrow, the thin smoke rising from heaps of couch grass, the maid and her wight who come whispering by — create lattices of association as we read; some conscious, others barely graspable. However we construe them in detail, the themes Hardy propounds are those of love and war. He examines war's devastation and — the theme which came to obsess him in his old age — the life and love which survive devastation.

The ambiguity of such works is by no means boundless, however. It simply is not the case that Brassai's photograph of Matisse is arguably a photograph of Picasso; that Degas' nudes are really men; or that Hardy's poem is in truth one about urban renewal. What is at issue is not difference (or *differance*) in isolation, but the tension between two modes of apperception, the recognition of similarity-in-difference and of difference-in-similarity. *Pace* the freedom-fighters and, more recently, the *apparatchiks* of the Derridean revolution (Derrida, 1981), ambiguity becomes of aesthetic significance in as much as it is structured, bounded, contained.

2. HARDY

Thomas Hardy wrote *In Time of «The Breaking of Nations»* when he was 75, during the First World War. We know from his biography — in truth an autobiography — that in writing the poem, he harked back in his imagination to a mid-August day in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, when he was courting his wife-to-be, Emma. The emotion of that day, as he remarked, had been «buried in his heart or mind» all those years, but was «exhumed as fresh as when interred» (Hardy, 1962).

Echoes pass to and from within the semantic array Hardy sets in being; some literary, some personal. His title, for instance, directs us to the *Book of Jeremiah* and to God's judgement against Babylon. «Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations... with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid...» More intimately, there are echoes, too, of the astonishing reversal of sentiment of Hardy's last years. We know that he and Emma spent the later part of their marriage at war with one another, scarcely on speaking terms; and that Emma died in great pain, which Hardy refused to acknowledge. For a long while before Emma died, he had been in love with a much younger woman, Florence Dugdale, and Emma's death enabled him to marry her (Gittings, 1980). Yet Emma's

death released in Hardy the most astonishing outpouring of love poems. Addressed to Emma, not Florence, some would say they are among the finest in the language.

In the years immediately before Emma's death, Hardy's poems about love were those of a professional cynic; *At a Water-Place*, for example, *At the Draper's* and *In the Nuptial Chamber* (Gibson, 1976). In the poems written soon after her death, the tone is transformed. To begin with, as in *The Going*, he mourns her. But the others — *A Man was Drawing Near to Me* and *Lost Love* — he becomes Emma, seeing himself through her eyes. And in at least one poem, *Under the Waterfall*, he not only occupies his dead wife's shoes, but invades the fine grain of her imagination:

«Whenever I plunge my arm, like this,
In a basin of water, I never miss
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray...»

«...And why does plunging your arm in a bowl
Full of spring water, bring throbs to your soul?»

«Well, under the fall, in a crease of the stone,
Though where precisely none ever has known,
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,
And by now with its smoothness opalized,
Is a drinking glass...

...By night, by day, when it shines or lours,
There lies intact that chalice of ours,
And its presence adds to the rhyme of love
Persistently sung by the fall above.
No lip has touched it since his and mine
In turns therefrom sipped lovers' wine.»

Why does the sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day bring throbs to her soul? Because, when they were lovers, they had picnicked together, and lost a glass in the stream under the waterfall, where it lies to this day. It is hard to think of a more remarkable feat of retrospective possession.

As one of his biographers remarks, «what gave Hardy pain was precisely what provided the fuel for his art» (Millgate, 1985). His melancholy, too, was deliberately cultivated — creating «a kind of enclosed mental garden» in which his imaginative gifts could flourish and which he was able to enter or leave almost at will.

One good poem is worth a dozen psychological theories, needless to say; but it is pleasant to see how comfortably, these days, the arts, biography and a psychodynamically-informed psychology sit side by side. Psychological theorising has become less mechanical: not so much the design of machines to pump out predictions, more a question of ideas which move in and out of relationship with one another, much as people do, alerting us as they move to the play of similarity on difference and difference on similarity. And as heuristic devices should, the three rules-of-thumb I have mentioned do draw us back continually to the works of art themselves; to re-read poems like Hardy's — at once strange but eerily familiar — on their own terms.

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The Fragmentation of The Oedipus Complex in Chinese Literature

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The Oedipus complex is central to Western literature, as it has been a major theme in many famous literary works, ranging from its earliest form in Greek mythology, Homer's *The Iliad*, Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, through Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Pierre Corneille's *Oedipe*, down to D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and William Faulkner's «A Rose for Emily». Following Freud's lead in his analysis of Sophocles's *Oedipus*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Leonard da Vinci's childhood, many literary critics of various countries have discovered the existence of oedipal themes in literary works across a broad range of cultures.

Compared with Western literature, however, little has been reported about similar discoveries in Chinese literature, both modern and pre-modern. This does not mean that Chinese literature is an exception to the rule. Rather, it confirms the extraordinarily repressive nature of Chinese culture, with its deep-rooted Confucian moral system. There are two basic reasons for the seeming nonexistence of oedipal themes in Chinese literature. Firstly, it is due to the early maturity of Chinese culture which is marked by the systematization of ethics. The «secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind» (Freud, *Interpretation*, 294) occurred in Chinese culture much earlier than in the West and became increasingly formidable until recently. In ancient China, the dominance of Confucianism, which regarded any allusion to incestuous desires as strictly taboo, made it impossible for oedipal themes to find expression in literary works. Secondly, until modern times, Chinese literati paid little attention to the delineation of the psychology of literary characters. They seldom explored the inner worlds of characters, still less venturing into the unconscious.

Nevertheless, as the Oedipus complex is universal to all human beings, the Chinese writer's unconscious imagination did reserve a back-seat place for it. It has been so distorted and often so deeply disguised that it is beyond casual recognition. This paper proposes to examine, in relation to the oedipal themes in Western literature, similar disguised themes in Chinese poems and stories. My aim is not just to prove the validity of a Freudian concept in the context of Oriental culture but to see how oedipal themes in Chinese culture have been repressed by Confucian morality and turned into a muted and fragmented complex which, while retaining some basic features described by Freudianists, is characteristically Chinese.

Under the pressure of powerful repression, the Oedipus complex in Chinese literature

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has been fragmented into component complexes: father-complex, mother-complex, son-complex, and daughter-complex. All of them, growing out of the particular family structure in a morally repressive culture, are the twisted manifestations of the universal Oedipus complex. In this sense, Harry Guntrip's use of the «family complex» (*Personality Structure*) is perhaps more appropriate for the Chinese Oedipus complex. In the following, I intend to show how the «family complex» presents itself from the perspectives of father, mother, son and daughter.

1. THE FATHER-COMPLEX

The Oedipus legend is not just about a son's killing his father and marrying his mother; it also tells of the father's wish to kill the son. In the original Oedipus myth, it is Laius, Oedipus's father, who first attempts to kill the infant. The attempted infanticide is instigated by a prophecy from an oracle that Oedipus would grow up to kill his father and marry his mother. In realistic terms, the prophecy is absurd because the anticipated patricide is not in the unborn infant's head at all. Psychologically, the prophecy is a grown man's fantasy, whether of Laius, the prophet, or the teller of the myth. It serves as an excuse for Laius's attempted infanticide based on projection: the father views the coming child as a rival for his wife's love and wants to kill it, but he rationalizes by thinking that the child, when grown up, would kill the father. The Oedipus legend tells us a truth that has been confirmed by research. It is the father's unconscious wish to remove his son as a potential rival for his wife's love. Psychoanalytic research shows that aggressive and libidinal oedipal fantasies may arise earlier and more powerfully in parents, than in children, and especially in fathers rather than sons. Zilboorg argues that the *Totem and Taboo* myth demonstrated the primal father's narcissistic and sadistic motives for establishing sexual dominance over women and his anxiety over the ways the mother-child intimacy reduces his primacy. Children do not, at first, arouse feelings of tender paternity but feelings of resentment at intrusion: «There are the deep phylogenetic roots that hostility which even the civilized father of today harbors against his own offsprings. The unconscious hostility against one's own children is well nigh a universal clinical finding among men» (Zilboorg, 123). We may as well call a father's unconscious hostility and aggressivity towards his son the «father-complex».

Freud's idea that myths, legends and fairy tales «are distorted vestiges of the wish-phantasies of whole nations — the age-long dreams of young humanity» («Creative Writers», 442) has been confirmed by research. The Chinese nation does not have an equivalent to the Oedipus legend of Greek mythology. It has one legend, however, which reveals in what manner the Chinese Oedipus complex differs from its counterpart in Western literature. According to the Grand Historian Ssu Ma Chien's account, there is a legend about Shun, a predecessor of the Chinese nation. Shun was a very filial son. His father was a blind man. His mother died when he was still small. His father later remarried another woman who became his step-mother and gave birth to another child named Xian. Xian was arrogant and selfish by nature. He conspired with his mother to ill-treat Shun. They often spoke ill of Shun before the blind father, who, out of his infatuation for his second wife, wanted to kill Shun. They plotted several times to kill Shun but failed each time. After each murder attempt, Shun became even more filial and obedient, serving his parents with even greater care. Still, the father wanted to murder him. In terms of the psychoanalysis of racial psychology, this legend contains the elements of the father complex as revealed in the Oedipus legend. Shun was a filial and obedient son. There was no reason why his father should want to dispose of him. It seems to me, the father had a «father-complex» like Laius in the Oedipus legend. The father was blind, which might suggest a symbolic loss of male potency. He

was so set on killing his own son for no reason at all, perhaps because he secretly nursed the fear that his son might take his second wife. The legend sets the pattern for the relationship between father and son in ancient Chinese society: «Father is the ruler of the son» and «If a father orders a son to die, the son has to die.»

There is a motif of the «father complex» in a classic Chinese novel, *A Dream of the Red Chamber*, also known as *The Story of the Stone*¹, acknowledged as the peak of pre-modern Chinese fiction. Lu Hsun, father of modern Chinese literature, comments on the novel thus: «With the appearance of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, all the traditional ways of thinking and writing were shattered» (*Lu Hsun*, 128). One aspect of the breakthrough is the author's untraditional way of depicting the father-son relationship. Confucian filial piety stipulates that a son must respect and obey his father even if the father is not respectable. The father controls everything the son has, even his life. As a result of this rigorous morality, pre-modern Chinese literature is a gallery of filial sons and daughters; literary works centering on father-son conflict hardly exist. *Dream of the Red Chamber* is a rare exception. This classic novel of one hundred and twenty chapters is structured on a father-son conflict, which yields a faint oedipal motif.

Bao-yu, the male protagonist, is born into an aristocratic family. His father, Jia Zheng, is a Confucian scholar, the epitome of Confucian morality. Like any other Chinese son of his time, Bao-yu, lives anxiously in the shadow of his father. He is nevertheless doted on by his mother and grandmother, who are devout Buddhists. Tyrannized by his father, who forces him to pursue the Confucian way of life, Bao-yu can always evade his oppressive father by turning to his grandmother for help. Brought up by his mother and grandmother in the midst of female cousins and maidservants, he grows up to be an unconventional person with a rebellious heart. Naturally, he comes into conflict with his father, who also clashes with his wife and mother over their dotage of Bao-yu. It is in the description of the triangular conflict involving the son, the father, the grandmother and mother that the author touches on a faint oedipal theme.

In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the father's attitude towards Bao-yu is saturated with unconscious infanticidal strivings. From the time of Bao-yu's birth, Jia Zheng has ill feelings towards the infant, as he himself tells us towards the end of the novel: «Bao-yu came into the world with his jade, and there was always something strange about it. I Knew it for an ill omen. But because his grandmother doted on him so, we nurtured him and brought him up until now» (Cao Xueqin, Vol.V, 360). His words imply that had the grandmother not taken to the infant, Jia Zheng would have disposed of his son in some way long ago. Because of this confession, we have reason to believe that from the day of Bao-yu's birth, the father nursed the secret desire to remove him, in the same way Laius felt towards Oedipus. Thus, from the very beginning, the father-son relationship is characterized by a hidden oedipal antagonism. At the first birthday celebration, Jia Zheng wants to test his son's disposition. He puts many objects in front of Bao-yu and observes which the infant would pick up: «...he stretched out his little hands and started playing with some women's things — combs, bracelets, pots of rouge and powder and the like — completely ignoring all the other objects. Sir Zheng was displeased. He said he would grow up to be a rake, and ever since then he hasn't felt much affection for the child» (Cao Xueqin, Vol. I, 76). As Bao-yu grows old enough to understand human relationships, he instinctively feels that his father dislikes him. So, he tries, as much as he can, to stay out of his way. When his father's presence cannot be avoided, Bao-yu is always filled with anxiety and trepidation.

The father-son conflict comes to a head in a climactic episode in which Jia Zheng

¹ This classic Chinese novel has been translated into several English versions with somewhat different titles. The authoritative version seems to be the one entitled *The Story of the Stone*, translated by David Hawks and others. Please refer to Works Cited.

almost beats Bao-yu to death. There are several precipitating incidents leading to the beating. The major factor which infuriates Jia Zheng is the misinformation that Bao-yu attempted to rape one of his mother's maidservants. The maidservant reportedly resisted and Bao-yu gave her a beating. Humiliated, the maidservant committed suicide by drowning herself. The truth is that Bao-yu has nothing to do with the girls' death. Without any investigation of the report, Jia Zheng flies into a rage and orders his son to be beaten to death. It seems that he has at last found an opportunity to dispose of him. Fearing any interference with his aim from his mother and wife, he makes sure that the door is locked and no one is to disclose the order:

Jia Zheng turned a pair of wild and blood-shot eyes on him as he entered. Forgetting the 'riotous and dissipated conduct abroad leading to the unseemly bestowal of impudities on a theatrical performer' and the 'neglect of proper pursuits and studies at home culminating in the attempted violation of a parent's maidservant [the original Chinese is «mother's maidservant»] and all the other high-sounding charges he had been preparing to hurl against him, he shouted two brief orders to the pages.

'Gag his mouth. Beat him to death.' (148)

What infuriates Jia Zheng most seems to be Bao-yu's alleged attempt to rape his mother's maid-servant. His rage betrays an oedipal fear shared by Laius towards Oedipus. Jia Zheng must have suspected that Bao-yu chose his object by a way of displacement. Since the mother is a fond impossibility, the maidservant who is close to the mother is a good substitute for that which he fears to have. It is perhaps this unconscious fantasy in Jia Zheng's mind that throws him into an uncontrollable rage and makes his mind up to dispose of his son. Otherwise, it is rather unthinkable for Jia Zheng, a cool-headed, calculating Confucian scholar to believe in an unproved gossip, without going into any investigation.

Throwing overboard his usual benevolent facade of a Confucian scholar, Jia Zheng, not satisfied with the executioner of his order, who, he thinks, does not hit hard enough, kicks the servant impatiently aside, wrests the bamboo from his hands, and gritting his teeth, strikes his son with the «utmost savagery». When his literary colleague tries to intervene, he responds:

'Ask him what he has done and then tell me if you think I should spare him', he said. 'It is the encouragement of people like you that has corrupted him; now, when things have come to this pass, you intercede for him. I suppose you would like me to wait until he commits parricide, or worse. Would you still intercede for him then?' (148)

The fear of parricide has been on Jia Zheng's mind. The worst he fears may allude to the boy's incestuous desires, which find proof in Jia Zheng's strong reaction to his wife's appearance and pleading:

Her entry provoked Jia Zheng to fresh transports of fury. Faster and harder fell the bamboo on the prostrate form of Bao-yu, which by now appeared to be unconscious, for when the boys holding it down relaxed their hold and fled from their Mistress's presence, it had long since ceased even to twitch (p. 149).

The beating with renewed savagery may have been prompted by his recollection of his wife's pampering of his son. But it may also have been provoked by his oedipal jealousy, which reveals itself in the following passage:

'Don't try that sort of talk with me!' said Jia Zheng bitterly. 'Merely by

fathering a monster like this I have proved myself an unfilial son; yet whenever in the past I have tried to discipline him, the rest of you have all conspired against me to protect him. Now that I have the opportunity at last, I may as well finish off what I have begun and put him down, like the vermin he is, before he can do any more damage.'

So saying, he took up a rope and would have put his threat into execution, had not Lady Wang held her arms around him to prevent it (149).

Jia Zheng is very angry with his wife's interference with his purpose. Up to now, the narration bears a close resemblance to Laius's attempted infanticide. The difference is that Laius wants to kill Oedipus in his infancy, whereas Jia Zheng wants to kill Bao-yu in his adolescence. It is worth noting that all in the family agree that Jia Zheng has overdone his disciplinary job as a father. Even if Bao-yu had done something wrong, even if he had raped the maidservant, he should not have incurred such savage beating, still less a threat on his life. After all, who among the male members of this official family is not a rake indulging in sensual pleasure? Jia Zheng's over-reaction to an alleged rape only testifies to his oedipal aggressivity towards his son.

There is more to the confrontation between the father and son. An aspect of the Oedipus legend is the son's unconscious wish to override the father's domineering influence, having lived anxiously under the shadow of the fatherly tyranny. Bao-yu's rebellion exemplifies this aspect, though it is a muted one. Bao-yu is almost in every way his father's opposite. Jia Zheng's hostility towards Bao-yu has been brewed since the boy's birth. Bao-yu hates Confucian classics and has no wish to follow an official career pursued by Confucian scholars. On many occasions, he expresses his hatred for Confucian order. Jia Zheng instinctively realizes that, by opposing Confucianism, his son is opposing him. While Confucianism regards women as inferior and treats them with contempt, Bao-yu considers women superior to men and treats them with reverence and respect. Confucian order maintains a distance between master and servant, but Bao-yu befriends servants, especially maid-servants, and treats them as his equals. This burgeoning of democratic ideas goes directly against the tyrannical ideology his father upholds and embodies. In his rebellion against Confucianism, however, he has no weapon of modern democracy. He has to seek recourse in Buddhism and Taoism. Confucianism stresses the importance of the filial duty of serving one's parents at home. Buddhism and Taoism advocate an escape from family life to lead a life of wandering or seclusion. By deserting his home and family to become an itinerant monk in the company of a Buddhist and Taoist, Bao-yu succeeds in overruling his father's influence and makes a clean break with the Confucian order, thus scoring a symbolic victory over his father. In this sense, he is perhaps the only oedipal figure in pre-modern Chinese literature, a victorious one at that, even though the victory is limited, for the alternative to subservience to Confucian patriarchal order is escapism.

In Chinese history, the relation of Buddhism and Taoism to Confucianism is of the same order as the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife. Although complementary to Confucianism in many ways, Buddhism and Taoism often stand as its opposites. They were often oppressed by Confucianism, in the same way woman and wife were oppressed by man and husband. Bao-yu's mother and grandmother believe in Buddhism and Taoism. They dote on Bao-yu, yet they also try to persuade him to follow his father's Confucian instructions. Bao-yu's life is closely related to Buddhism and Taoism. A Buddhist monk and Taoist priest figure importantly in his growth and development. They appear several times in his life. The first time, he is born with a jade in his mouth, and they come to the Jia family to extol the virtue of the jade. The second time, Bao-yu is seriously ill, and the monk comes and says a prayer over the jade, which seems to cure Bao-yu at once. The third time, Bao-yu has lost his jade and is in a delirium, and the monk comes

to restore it. The last time, Bao-yu has left home and bids a final farewell to his father. Each time the Buddhist monk and Taoist priest appear, Bao-yu is at a moment of crisis. Each time, the monk and priest bring blessings or deliverances. In many ways, they represent the only force strong enough to withstand the formidable power of Confucianism. By depicting Bao-yu as a character escaping from Confucianism represented by the father to become a monk, the author was, in effect, attempting a subversion of the Confucian order in terms of the Oedipus complex.

2. THE MOTHER-COMPLEX

A «mother-complex» is about a mother's unconscious and instinctual strivings to remove her daughter-in-law so as to repossess her son. It is a common theme in Chinese literature, and bears a striking similarity to a motif in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Anyone who has read the novel must have an indelible impression of Mrs. Morel, Paul Morel's mother, as an excessively possessive mother. When *Sons and Lovers* was first published, Freud's disciples regarded it as a testimony to his discovery of the Oedipus Complex. From the view of psychoanalysis of literature, the significance of Lawrence's novel is not confined to its contribution to a gallery of oedipal case studies; it has another dimension which has not aroused sufficient interest from scholars of psychoanalytic psychology. It is the formation of possessive motherhood as an important component of the Oedipus complex. Mrs. Morel is the daughter of a petty bourgeois family. From her petty-bourgeois father she inherits his middle-class outlook and values, which she brings to bear on anything in her married life. Her total acceptance of her father's values prompts me to think that she must have had a fairly strong oedipal feeling towards her father, which she transforms into her possessiveness towards her sons. Since this is not a paper on Lawrence's novel, I will just stop at this with regard to her oedipal feelings. Married beneath herself, she is disappointed with her miner husband, who has no interest in climbing up the social ladder. So, she transfers all her love for her husband to her sons and cathects them. When they grow up, she chooses them as lovers and forbids them to have love relations with girls. As a result, her sons are caught in the split between their erotic desires for girls and their devotion to the mother. It proves to be fatal for one son and almost so for another. Her possessive influence is so powerful that even after her death her son Paul is still unable to extricate himself from his oedipus involvement and almost follows her to the grave.

The possessive motherhood Lawrence described with insight and thoroughness has long been a subject-matter in Chinese literature, though in disguised and diminutive forms. As early as the early third century A.D. there was a long poem called «The Peacock Flies Southeast», one of the most famous ancient Chinese poems, written by an anonymous hand. It is also known by another title, «An Old Poem Written For Chiao Chung-ching's Wife». There is a short preface to it, which summarizes its content: «Some time in the Ch'ian-an years of late Han dynasty, a woman, nee Liu, wife of Chiao Chung-ching, a petty official in Lu Chian Prefecture, was driven away by her mother-in-law. She vowed not to remarry and committed suicide by drowning when her family forced her to. Having heard the news, her husband killed himself by hanging from a tree in the family courtyard. People were saddened by the tragedy and composed a poem in memory of their devotion to love.» The fact that the tragedy was based on a real event has a significance for understanding ancient Chinese family relations. Previously, critics' attention has been solely focused on the poem's social significance: through a narrative of the tragedy, the poem exposes the wickedness of feudal morality and domestic tyranny, eulogizes a praiseworthy loyalty to love, and expresses people's longing for freedom of choice in love and marriage as against

marriages arranged by parents. No one seems to have examined the poem more deeply than its manifest content. It seems to me that the poem touches on the same theme of possessive motherhood so adroitly depicted in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.

The poem does not tell us much about the male protagonist's father. Instead, the family is completely under the control of the mother, who regards her authority as unassailable. The young couple are devoted to each other, and their marriage is happy in every sense of the word. The daughter-in-law is beautiful, virtuous and diligent, impeccable even by the strict standard of Confucian morality. But the mother-in-law is simply dissatisfied with her, deliberately finding fault for nothing. Unable to bear the abominable treatment, the daughter-in-law asks to be divorced. In ancient China, it is a great disgrace for both the woman and her family if the daughter is to be divorced and sent home. Many a woman would rather endure ill-treatment and even torture than be sent home. But in this poem, the woman, fully realizing the grave consequence of her action, insists on being sent home. This shows that she must have realized it is impossible to co-exist with her possessive mother-in-law, who carps for nothing. This poem does not delve into the reasons for the mother's abominable conduct, but the daughter-in-law's request to leave prompts me to speculate that the daughter-in-law's decision is made with the realization that her mother-in-law's intolerance and despotism must have come from her jealousy of her who, happily married to the son, holds the man's body and soul. Otherwise, there is no reason why the mother wants to get rid of her daughter-in-law. The son's suicide is not just a fulfilment of his vow to be faithful to their deep love. Perhaps it is an indication of his awareness that even if he gets another wife, as his mother promises, his married life would remain intolerable because of his mother's possessive meddling.

About nine hundred years later, in the Southern Sung dynasty, the tragedy of «The Peacock Flies Southeast» was repeated in amazingly similar content and form. Chinese literary history has it that in the 12th century A.D. there was a famous poet named Lu Yu. At the age of twenty, he married his cousin. Like Lu's family, the cousin's family was also famous and prosperous. She was beautiful and virtuous like the wife in «Peacock Flies Southeast», and moreover, intelligent, a poetess herself. Being a relative and daughter from an official family, she was an ideal choice for the poet in terms of tradition and compatibility. The marriage was indeed a perfect match, for the couple loved each other with devotion and intensity. But due to interference from the poet's mother, he had to divorce his wife and marry another woman. The divorced wife later died of a broken heart, thus re-enacting the tragedy of «The Peacock Flies Southeast». Since the marriage was a perfect match, Chinese scholars have kept wondering why the marriage should meet disapproval from the poet's mother. One reason, according to a contemporary poet, is: «When Lu Yu was young, his parents were very strict with him. Shortly after his marriage, the couple loved each other with deep affection. His parents were very worried lest their son should make less efforts with his study. They reprimanded the daughter-in-law several times. The poet dared not oppose his parents' wish and was forced to part with his wife» (Zhi-ping Qi, 15)². It was said that this explanation came from one of Lu Yu's students, and hence was very reliable. But it has not convinced scholars. Their opinion is that Lu Yu had been a diligent scholar since childhood. There is no ground for the idea that his newly wedded wife should distract him from his study. On the contrary, as his wife was a poetess well versed in Chinese classics, she would be a help rather than an hindrance (Zhi-ping Qi, 15).

After his ex-wife's death, the poet was immensely grieved. The tragedy remained an unhealed scar in his heart. In his later life, he wrote many poems in memory of their short-

² This quotation originally comes from Lu Yu's student Liu Kechuang's «Sequel» to *Poetic Remarks of Hou-Chueng* (Vol. 2), requoted from Zhi-ping Qi's *A Critical Biography of Lu Yu*. Please refer to Works Cited.

lasted married life and secretly condemned his mother's tyrannical meddling. In one of his poems, he seems to reveal a major reason for his mother's dislike for the daughter-in-law:

In a boat on a summer evening, I heard the cry of a water bird. It was very sad and seemed to be saying, «Madam Is Cruel!». Moved, I wrote this poem.

A girl grows up hidden in innermost room, / no glimpse of what may lie beyond her wall and hedge. / Then she climbs the carriage, moves to her new lord's home; / father and mother become strangers to her then. / «I was stupid, to be sure, yet I knew / that Madam, my mother-in-law, must be obeyed. / Out of bed with the first cock's crowing, / I combed and bound my hair, put on blouse and skirt. / I did my work, tidied the hall, sprinkled and swept, / in the kitchen fixed their plates of food./Green green the mallows and goosefoot I gathered- / to bad I couldn't make them taste like bear's paws. / When the least displeasure showed in Madam's face, / the sleeves of my robe were soon damp with tearstains. / My wish was that I might bear a son, / to see Madam dangle a grandson in her arms. / But those hopes in the end failed and came to nothing; / ill-fated, they made me the butt of slander. Driven from the house, I didn't dare grumble, only grieved that I'd betrayed Madam's kindness.» / On the old road that runs along the edge of the swamp, / when fox fire glimmers through drizzling rain, / can you hear the voice crying «Madam is cruel!» / Surely it's the sound of the wife sent home (Wu-chi Liu, 378-9).

This poem bears a striking similarity to «The Peacock Flies Southeast» in the description of the wife's diligence, virtue, filial piety and eagerness to please the mother-in-law, and in her ultimate fate of being sent home in disgrace. The difference is that the poet seems to hint that the wife was divorced because she was unable to produce an heir to please the mother. This reason does not apply to Lu Yu's life, for his marriage was too brief to tell if the daughter-in-law was barren. Obviously, this may have been an attempt by the poet to acquit his mother of mistreatment and domestic tyranny and himself of guilt, because we can detect an ambivalence in the poem. On the one hand we hear the wife's lamentation of her ill fate; on the other hand, we also hear her blaming the mother for her cruelty. The ambivalence indicates conflicting feelings in the poet's psyche. To find reason for the mother's distaste for the daughter-in-law, we have to resort to depth psychology. In my opinion, the mother's deep-ingrained dislike is the same as Mrs. Morel's dislike for Paul's first love, Miriam. Paul and Miriam knew each other since childhood. Sharing the same passion for reading and learning and many other things in life, they had a deep understanding of and emotional attachment to each other. When they grew up, their understanding was heightened into love. This gets on Mrs. Morel's nerves. Instinctively opposed to her son's liaison with other women, she is especially hostile to Miriam, regarding her as her most dangerous rival. She feels that should Miriam be married to Paul, she would have him, body and soul, without leaving her any room in her son's affection. So, by hook and by crook, she forces Paul to give up Miriam. Lu Yu's marriage is exactly the same. For his mother, the more deeply the young couple were in love, the more intensely she hated the daughter-in-law. For some time, her son secretly installed his first wife in another place so that they could meet from time to time. His mother eventually found out and became all the more angry. She could tolerate a daughter-in-law less lovable in her son's regard, but under no circumstances would she tolerate this one. The reader familiar with Mrs. Morel's mentality won't have difficulty in understanding the root cause of the tragic outcome.

If the two mothers in the above discussion heavily disguise their intention to possess their sons with the pretext of Confucian filial piety, another mother in a novelette *The*

Golden Cangue by Eileen Chang (1942) scarcely attempts to cover up her possessiveness. This novella, as a modern, psychologically sophisticated piece of writing, comes closer to Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* in the characterization of possessive motherhood. Ch'i-ch'iao, the mother in the story, comes from a lowly family. Because of avarice, her brother sacrifices her happiness by marrying her off to the paralytic son of a wealthy official family. Physically healthy, she craves sexual love, but her sick husband is only able to pay her casual attention. In her frustration, she cathects her children and makes them an important part of her emotional life. In her dismal situation, her only consolation is that after her husband's death, she will become a wealthy and independent woman, which does happen. But her years of frustrations and the acquisition of wealth not only incapacitate her for love, but also make her an insane woman who can not tolerate her children's normal sexual life.

As children of a sick father and stunted by the dominance of a possessive mother, her children grow up weak and sickly. Ch'i-ch'iao treats them as if they were a part of her material possessions. She does not think of finding her son a wife until he begins to frequent brothels. She adopts a hostile attitude toward her son's wife from the first day of their marriage. At the wedding, she scarcely covers up her jealousy of her daughter-in-law: «I can't say much in front of young ladies — just hope our Master Pai don't die in her hands» (Chang, 348). These remarks carry an undertone of sexual possessiveness, implying that she is forced to give up her son. From that point on, she begins to work methodically and ingeniously to get rid of her daughter-in-law so as to wrest her son back. Her tactic is double-edged. On the one hand, she acts like the two mothers discussed above, trying to carp at the daughter-in-law for nothing. She humiliates her by making allusions in public to her daughter-in-law's supposed indulgence in sex: «Our new young mistress may look innocent — but as soon as she sees Master Pai she has to go and sit on the nightstool. Really! It sounds unbelievable, doesn't it?» (349) These remarks show how concerned she is with her son's sex-life. On the other hand, she induces her son by taunts and exhortations of filial piety to leave his wife's bed. She forces her son to accompany her on the opium couch all night long, extricating secrets about her daughter-in-law's sex life. In the daytime, she would make known to her relatives, including the girl's mother, those personal secrets, always adding some touches of her own imagination. To further humiliate her, she gives her son a concubine. All this is done for the sole purpose of removing her rival. As time goes by, both wife and concubine break down under her unbearable mistreatment; one dies of a broken heart; the other commits suicide. Her son does not dare to marry again, knowing fully well that his mother would not tolerate it. He goes whoring from time to time.

My brief account of the woman shows that she is not just a malevolent woman out of her mind. Her insane jealousy of her son's wife and concubine is not just a manifestation of her inability to abide normal sexual life around her due to her own frustration. It is a disguised move to repossess her son sexually as compensation for her own frustration in her younger days. I shall quote a long passage to further illustrate this point:

Ch'i-ch'iao reached out a foot and kicked at him [her son]. «Come Master Pai, fill the pipe for me a couple of times.»

«With an opium lamp right there why put me to work? I have honey on my fingers or something?»...

«Unfilial slave, what kind of answer is that! Putting you to work is an honor.» She looked at him through slitted, smiling eyes. All these years he had been the only man in her life. Only with him there was no danger of his being after her money — it was his anyway. But as her son, he amounted to less than half a man. And even the half she could not keep now that he

was married.... Ch'i-ch'iao put a foot on his shoulder and kept giving him light kicks on the neck, whispering, «Unfilial slave, I'll fix you! When did you get to be so unfilial?»

Ch'ang-pai quoted with a smile, «'Take a wife and the mother is forgotten.'» «Don't talk nonsense, our Master Pai is not that kind of person, nor could I have a son like that either», said Ch'i-ch'iao. Ch'ang-pai just smiled. She looked fixedly at him from the corner of her eyes, «If you're still my Master Pai as before, cook opium for me all night tonight.» «That's no problem», he said, smiling. (549)

The flirtatious gestures, the coquettish banter, the recollection of her sexual frustration in early life, and the mother and son spending the whole night together on the opium couch — all definitely carry a sexual undertone. Except that her attempt to possess her son sexually is covered up under the smoke-screen of filial piety. This is a central point which differentiates Ch'i-ch'iao from Mrs Morel, and distinguishes the «mother-complex» in Chinese literature from that in Western literature.

My analysis of three Chinese mothers in contrast with Mrs Morel may offer an insight into the myth in Chinese culture about the perennial conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. I agree with the widely accepted idea that their almost ubiquitous dislike of each other has a lot to do with financial squabbles. But there is a psychological factor which has so far gone unnoticed. Behind everyday troubles lurks the shadow of unconscious sexual jealousies. Everyday quarrels are often complicated and aggravated by hidden animosities. Chinese society is a patriarchal society in which a married woman's social and family status used to depend and still depends, to a certain extent, on whether she succeeds in producing a son for her husband's family. For this reason, a Chinese mother would invariably regard her son(s) much more possessively than would her counterpart in a Western culture, for her son embodies not only a guarantee of her status in the family and society, but moreover stands as a provider of security and emotional support in her old age. In many ways, a son is to a Chinese mother what investment is to an entrepreneur in the West. If we understand the intensity of an entrepreneur's effort to guard his investment, it won't be too difficult to understand to what extent a Chinese mother will go to to treasure her son.

Nancy Chodorow offers a psychological insight into the possessiveness of mothers with regard to their Children:

A mother's sense of continuity with her infant may shade into too much connection, and not enough separateness.... That women turn to children to complete a relational triangle, or to recreate a mother-child unity, means that mothering is invested with a mother's often conflictual, ambivalent, yet powerful need for her own mother. That women turn to children to fulfil emotional and even erotic desires unmet by men or other women means that a mother expects from infants what only another adult should be expected to give. These tendencies take different forms with sons and daughters. Sons may become substitutes for husbands, and must engage in defensive assertion of ego boundaries and repression of emotional needs. Daughters may become substitutes for mothers, and develop insufficient individuated sense of self (Chodorow, 211-12).

Naturally, such a mother will become jealous of a daughter-in-law who has her son all to herself, body and soul. The more loving the young couple is, the less attention the son will spare for her mother, and the more jealous and hostile the mother will become towards the daughter-in-law. In normal circumstances, if the son's wife is able to bear a son, this may lessen the tension, because the mother-in-law, in her new capacity as grandmother,

will transfer a great part of her love for her son to her grandson. In the past, I was of the opinion that possessive mothers like Mrs. Morel were rare in Chinese society. Psychoanalysis has changed my mind. My view now is that Chinese mothers tend to be more possessive than their counterparts in the western world. But their possessiveness is often camouflaged by their demand for their sons' filial piety.

3. THE SON-COMPLEX

In ancient Chinese society, a father's conscious desire to dispose of his son was justified by Confucian morality, whereas a son's desire, even unconscious striving to remove the father was viewed with absolute horror. Hence, in Chinese literature, a son's oedipal feeling assumes the form of an internal struggle between his desire for women and an unknown inhibition. A notable example of this struggle is to be found in a story called «Sinking» (1921) by Yu Da-fu. Its major theme is the seemingly incongruous blending of sexual frustration and nationalism. It tells of the death of a Chinese youth studying in a Japanese university. He suffers from severe hypochondria, aggravated by his adolescent sexual urges. He desperately wants love from the opposite sex, but he always shuns intimacy with women. He has to indulge in nightly masturbation, only to wake up in the morning with a deepening sense of guilt. Although he tries to get relief by fortifying himself with the works of great writers, foreign and Chinese, or by staying in a lonely inn far away from sensual attractions, he can only momentarily ease his mind. Sensual attractions keep upsetting his precarious mental tranquility, until the balance is tipped and he is no longer able to suppress his libidinal drive. One afternoon, he jumps on a trolley to the city and finds a brothel-restaurant. He ventures inside and orders a meal and some wine. But instead of taking the waitress who serves him to bed, he recites poems to himself and gets increasingly drunk until he falls asleep. When he wakes up in the evening, he pays his bill and walks to the beach. Having not a penny in his pocket and seized with immense remorse for having degraded himself, he is suddenly gripped by an impulse to commit suicide. While bemoaning the weakness of his motherland, which he regards as the cause of his death, he walks out into the sea.

His death seems to result from the combination of adolescent frustration and national humiliation, but these causes are only superficial. The latent content is a son-complex. Because of the severe fragmentation and distortion of the protagonist's perception, critics only see the manifest content of adolescent frustration and nationalism, but fail to see the latent oedipal content, still less how the latent theme works through the story's form into the manifest theme. The story, I believe, is structured on the central theme of a fragmented Oedipus complex. The oedipal theme is the major theme that shapes all the minor ones. The hero suffers from a spiritual impotence which prevents him from taking any action to seek his sex-objects, despite his powerful sexual urge. His inability to do anything to ameliorate his country's international position mirrors this sexual impotence. His emotional agony is embedded in his sexual and psychological problems. All are the consequences of his Oedipus complex. His death is brought about by his insatiable longing for mother-love and the hidden wish to be reunited with the maternal matrix.

What is so striking about the story is that although it contains an oedipal theme, there is very little narration about the hero's relations to his parents. Until the end of the story, the hero is scarcely able to realize that all his psychological problems stem from his repressed Oedipus complex. His inability to recognize the source of his despair testifies to the formidable repression in Chinese society. A comparison with *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* reveals a feature which is characteristically Chinese. In the Greek drama, the oedipal fantasy that underlies the central theme is openly dramatized. In Shakespeare's play, it is repressed: its existence

is hidden but can be felt through its inhibiting consequences. The triangular relationship involving parents and child is retained, however. In the Chinese story, the oedipal triangle is dissolved almost in its entirety. The author only makes a mere mention of the hero's father. The mother does not appear at all, though her presence is to be felt throughout the work, either through symbolism or through sequences of image. His intense longing for maternal love is never mentioned, but is conveyed through an insatiable need for images of nature and the maternal matrix, such as poems about nature, books about nature, the natural surroundings, the sea, and the motherland. «Sinking» works on the same childhood fantasy as *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*. In spite of its shorter length, it displays a more complex system of defensive strategies. Freud makes these remarks on the different treatments of the Oedipus complex in the Greek drama and Shakespearean play: «the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind» (*Interpretation*, 298). His observation may not fit the picture of the contemporary western world, but it certainly is applicable to the Chinese story. The comparison shows that the repression of oedipal feelings has advanced to such an extent in an Oriental culture that the classic form of the Oedipus complex is fragmented almost beyond recognition.³

4. THE DAUGHTER-COMPLEX

In modern Chinese literature, the female counterpart of the Oedipus complex also appears in its fragmented form. A typical example is to be found in Yeh Shao-chun's story «Autumn» (1932). It has a hidden oedipal motif similar to that in Faulkner's «A Rose for Emily». Miss Emily is an old spinster whose oedipal attachment to her father turns her into an odd person capable of what are normally considered human follies and perversions. In Yeh Shao-chun's story, we also encounter a spinster whose unconventional behavior is considered odd by her relatives and contemporaries. Like Miss Emily, she is a daughter of an old, once prosperous family. Her father died when she was twenty-one, leaving behind a large home-estate for his several children to share among themselves. As it is the traditional Chinese way for grown-up children to live in an extended family under one roof, the home-estate provides a spiritual and emotional haven for the female protagonist. Unlike Miss Emily, she is a modern woman who seems to come under the sway of women's liberation. She chooses to study obstetrics and becomes a mid-wife in Shanghai, a profession which is frowned upon by women of her time. Hers is a laborious job and she faces strong competition from quacks. Though she realizes this, she sticks to her profession and decides to remain single for life.

The story opens with her returning home to attend the annual family reunion on the occasion of sweeping her parents' graves. She lies in bed in her own room, overhearing two maidservants talking about her:

«To hear the mistress tell it, she's a midwife in Shanghai.»
 «Ugh! What a disgusting occupation! Blood all over the place...»
 «Never mind that. But think how low-class it sounds just to say 'midwife'!»
 «And she's still single. How can someone who hasn't married yet do that kind of work? I think the situation would be very embarrassing. How can she have face to see anyone?» (Yeh,117)

Imagining the servants' contempt on their faces, the protagonist does not feel angry at

³ As I have written a detailed analysis of the story «Sinking», the discussion here only concentrates on what is relevant to this paper.

all: «So imagining them, yet did not resent them for it. What, after all, do old maidservants know? ...how many were there who did not look at her askance? One could always read the question in their eyes: 'You do this kind of work?' The old maidservants had merely put the question into words, that was all» (118). But their conjecture about her age makes her feel somewhat upset, for she is nearly forty. In ten years' time, she will no longer be fit to do her job. She is worried about her future as an unmarried spinster. Her sister-in-law seizes the opportunity to attempt to persuade her to accept a proposal of marriage, a match quite ideal in the conventional sense. But the effort is unwelcome and in vain. Her refusal is puzzling not only to her relatives but also to the reader. A superficial reason is offered: having seen the travail of childbirth endured by so many women, she does not want to experience the same ordeal, especially at her age: «The sight to which she had become quite accustomed, of a mother giving birth, flashed before her: the tide of blood, the flesh being rent, the trembling and screaming as though the woman were under torture. Truly it was a sacrifice without equal! Then instantly, she thought of what she had learned in her textbooks about the age at which women were most likely to have difficult deliveries, and she seemed to see an image of herself falling into just such a perilous situation. Ah — how terrifying!» (120). This explanation, however, is self-defeating. We are told that the man meant for her is a widower who does not wish to have any more children, as his children have all reached adulthood.

One may find another explanation: perhaps she, having had no children of her own, is scared of the idea of being mother to several grown-up children. This rationalization is also untenable, for the woman is not at all hostile to the idea of being a mother:

«Mother!» this strange yet somehow pleasant word really made her feel as warm inside, as if she had drunk some wine or heard herself respectfully addressed as «Madam» or «Mistress». If a chubby, innocent child were to appear before her and begin tugging at her clothes with a little hand while lovingly calling out «Ma», she could probably put all thought of misery out of her mind. And failing that, even if a young married woman were to address her as «Mother», and speak with her about personal matters, she would probably feel that her life really wasn't empty... (120)

So, her maternal instinct is strong. Perhaps we may content ourselves with the idea that she is put off by her contemplation of the man's age and worn-out appearance: «But instead the stiff stubble of beard was back, scratching around her mouth, and this time, she seemed to see a head of gray hair, a forehead layered with wrinkles, a pair of dim-looking eyes, and a yellowish set of teeth. A revulsion forced her to blurt out decisively, 'Sister-in-law, please let's drop this and talk about something else!'" (120). Her revulsion does not stand close examination, either, for on the one hand, she herself is not young, nearly forty, and on the other hand, she had not yet even seen the man who is only fifty-three. All the obvious explanations for her refusal to marry are untenable.

The ambivalence in the story makes it difficult to pin down its central theme. C. T. Hsia suggests that the story is a «study in loneliness». He chooses one scene to illustrate this idea: «[it] brings to the reader's attention the social changes that have made her what she is: the disintegration of the big family, the passing of the old amenities, and by implication the hard lot of working women longing nostalgically for the parental roof» (Hsia 67-8). This perhaps accounts for one aspect of the story but is certainly unable to explain the reason why the woman refuse to marry. My close reading of the story in terms of depth psychology convinces me that it has a similar oedipal theme to Faulkner's «A Rose for Emily»: it is the woman's unconscious wish to be loyal to her father that incapacitates her for love or even contemplation of marriage. It is stated that as a young woman at the age fit for marriage, she has no inclinations towards such a consideration. When her

parents were still alive, if a match-maker came to make a proposal, she would disappear at once as if out of bashfulness. After her parents die, her brother and sister-in-law have to take her parents' places. But when matrimonial matters come up, she treats any proposed marriage as if it were meant for somebody else. Is she really an asexual female with no interest in marriage? Certainly not:

Still, match-makers continued to call. Adopting the stance of a disinterested by-stander, she listened to the conversation and sometimes even went so far as to ask the matchmakers questions more probing than those of her sister-in-law. It was as though the subject under discussion had nothing whatever to do with her. No one, of course, could have seen through to her heart, a bubbling cauldron in which satisfaction and jealousy were churning in a turbulent mix (119).

This passage reveals that her nonchalance and disinterestedness are only feigned. Her willingness to ask probing questions about the proposed marriage betrays her desire for married life. The image of a «bubbling cauldron» indicates that there is an intense internal conflict within her deep psyche. Its major content is the question: to marry or not? She feels satisfied because the talk about matrimony enables her to imagine the fulfilment of her desires; yet she feels jealous because marriage is something beyond her reach because of some unknown inhibition. She has to be content with this kind of talk in the same way a sexually starved person has to make do with sexual talks.

What is her inhibition against matrimony? The story provides us with a casual hint which, examined in terms of depth psychology, offers an explanation: «When she was twenty-seven or twenty-eight, she decided not to marry, since her father's will stipulated that any daughter who remained a spinster should receive twenty *mou* of land [one *mou* is equivalent to one seventh of an acre]» (118). An unsuspecting reader would interpret the father's will as a precaution against a rainy day. But there are two possible hidden motives. Either her father had realized that her daughter had an inhibition against marriage, or he had a father-complex and was unconsciously encouraging his daughter to remain single. Either is plausible. In any case, his daughter takes the terms in the will literally as a reason for not considering matrimonial matters. To her, the estate left by her father has a symbolic stature, and is in many ways a symbol of her father's existence. So long as it is intact, she can always come home for spiritual sustenance and be reinvigorated by her father's legacy despite her psychological and physical frustrations. This explains why she feels so pained by and antagonistic to the idea of selling the family property:

Suddenly, the woman's mind was pricked as though by a needle, and she thought of the terms of her father's will: a spinster daughter will receive twenty *mou* of land. She now felt as if she completely understood the motive behind her sister-in-law's solicitations this time. Anger welled up uncontrollably within her as she resolved to persist in her determination not to marry, and so put her brother's and sister-in-law's attitude toward her to the test (120-21).

In this sense, her nostalgic longing is not entirely due to the passing of the old order and the old family grandeur, but a mixed feeling of loss and fear that her spiritual haven is going to crumble before her very eyes. When her brothers decide to sell the family estate, «The woman felt as though the wind had suddenly been knocked out of her. At the same time her head became so dizzy that the people in the boat, as well as the sky and fields beyond, began to swirl around in her vision. The room she had occupied from the age of sixteen on, the only world that was ever completely her own, was now about to be wrested away!» (122). The woman is, perhaps, fixated at the age of sixteen. In the story,

much of her mental activity is concerned with reminiscences of the past. Psychologically, she lives in a dream world of the past:

Thinking about all this made the woman feel intensely lonely. Even if the past were only a dream, couldn't she be allowed to dream it once more? — her father and mother robustly alive, all branches of the family not having to eke out livings and being in one place as before, everyone going together on the joyous jaunt to sweep the graves, the three boats drifting on in a row, fruits and sweets set out in abundance, the musical blend of flute and recorder, laughter passed back and forth among the boats — how beautifully sweet was that dream! (121)

For an oedipal person like her, the fifty-odd-year-old widower would make a good husband, for such an old person would make a good father-figure. But as the protagonist is fixated at a time when her father was still young, an old man would only arouse repugnance. This explains why she feels revulsion, imagining in her mind's eye her suitor as an old man with grey hair, wrinkled forehead, dim-looking eyes and yellowish teeth.

As the woman is not uninterested in matrimony, she is caught in a dilemma: to get married in accordance with her feminine desires and the prevalent tradition or to remain single so as to respect her father's wish? The ending presents her internal conflict in montage-like snippets: «On the Shanghai-bound train later that evening, she sank back listlessly in a long narrow seat, her consciousness bombarded by thoughts in bits and snatches: twenty *mou* of land... a wilt wild rose... fifty-three year old... rivers of blood and the rending of flesh... a woman big with child knocking on her door...» (122). With regard to the way to cope with her psychological conflict, the story shows a different feature from «A Rose for Emily». In Faulkner's story, Miss Emily manages to solve her problem by murdering her lover and placing him in her bed so that she can sleep with him in the same bed while still remaining faithful to her father. In the Chinese story, the woman has the normal desire for motherhood, which cannot be fulfilled unless she consents to marriage. She succeeds in solving her dilemma by a process of transformation and an act of sublimation. Due to her inhibition against marriage, she cannot perform the maternal function. She chooses the study of obstetrics quite late; perhaps, her decision to become a mid-wife is made after her father's death, for when the story opens, she is in her late thirties, and had just established her business a year before. It is possible to speculate that her belated decision is a way to transform her repressed maternal desires. The profession of obstetrician was not a highly regarded job for a woman at that time: it is «disgusting», «low-class» and «embarrassing» for a woman to face the world. In this sense she has made a big sacrifice. Her repressed desire for motherhood is sublimated through her choice of her profession. On the other hand, the job is particularly satisfying to her for psychological reasons. Otherwise, we cannot understand how she can make such a «sacrifice» and stick to it in spite of all the odds against it. The hidden satisfaction seems to be: if she can not perform the maternal function, she would like to help other women perform it. Delivering children into this world becomes equivalent to having children by herself. Since she is deprived of the best, she has to be content with second-best.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Compared with Western literature, a complete oedipal story is very rare in Chinese literature. China still remains a patriarchal society. The dominant role played by the father in a family ensures an early identification of sons with their father. Moreover, Chinese culture is situation-centered, in contrast to the individual-centeredness of Western culture.

From early childhood, Chinese children learn their place in the family and society and act accordingly. The dissolution of the Oedipus complex occurs in a more thoroughgoing manner than in the West. If oedipal feelings in some children remain strong until their adulthood, they are rigorously suppressed by a strong sense of horror. My analysis of the Chinese works shows that oedipal feelings are always displaced on to objects having similar qualities or disguised as manifestations of altruism or filial piety. In this sense, I have ample reason to call the Oedipus complex in Chinese culture a «muted complex». In this muted relationship, we can see a radical deviation from the classical Oedipus complex. A classic oedipal situation constitutes a triangular relationship involving father, mother and son. In a muted oedipal situation, the oedipal relationship may be a conflict between father and son, a triangular conflict involving mother, son and son's wife, a son's insatiable longing for maternal love, or a daughter's incomprehensible inhibition against love and marriage. The fragmentation of the Oedipus complex may happen in Western literature, but it certainly occurs more frequently and drastically in Chinese literature.

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The Mechanism of «Wrenching» in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Certain Types of Psychotic States (*)

YVES THORET (**)

The British school of psychoanalysis has the good reputation of always taking into account the field of clinical practice and the difficulties that may arise in a therapeutic relationship.

I shall try to maintain this approach, taking into consideration, in this paper, the difficult clinical problem of the onset of psychotic states. I shall apply it to Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*.

I would like to thank Erik Nakjavani who helped me very much with the English translation of this article.

I shall begin with two observations.

First, Freud found that this play was constructed «upon an improbable premiss»: Lear, while he is still alive, as an autocrat, allows himself the right to divide his kingdom among his three daughters; he does this in proportion to the amount of love that each of them expresses for him (Gradiva 43).

Secondly, Cordelia's death occurs in the last scene of the play. Lear appears on the stage carrying Cordelia's dead body and tries to call her back to life, by offering his own life. In *King Lear*, Cordelia's death spoils the happy ending that the audience could expect after their reconciliation and mutual forgiveness. As we know, during a century and a half, this play was performed in a modified version, in which Cordelia's death was suppressed, or even better, repressed.

Bernard Paris suggested that «Cordelia's death... is the direct result of Lear's folly at the beginning of the play» (143).

I would like to advance the following hypothesis: *Cordelia must die*, she has been condemned to death by the psychotic mechanism that overwhelms her father. Shakespeare calls this mechanism «wrenching» (act I, sc. I, v. 266).

Cordelia's death might be considered, as Freud said about another play, «as a perfect example of poetic justice in the manner of a talion... for crimes against the sanctity of generations» (Character-types 321).

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THE MECHANISM OF WRENCHING

Now, I shall try to refresh your memory briefly on how this violent forsaking of Cordelia by her father, occurs.

Lear expects his daughters to express the love they feel for him. Goneril and Regan have already satisfied his request.

His youngest daughter, Cordelia, however, refuses to do so. She only answers:

«Nothing, my lord.»

She refers to the symbolic linkage between daughter and father. She simply states:

«I love your Majesty
According to my bond; no more nor less.»

But Lear insists and warns her that she might lose her part of his kingdom; invoking the same theme, Cordelia announces her intention to share her love between her father and her future husband.

As Freud has noted, this situation reminds us the Primal Horde, when all the women belonged to the father (Jones 514).

After Cordelia's response, Lear, violently angry, addresses his daughter with this terrible sentence:

«By all the operations of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever.»

(act I, sc. I)

This mortal quarrel with Cordelia leads Lear to a structural undermining of his mind.

Later on, he quarrels with his daughter Goneril and remembers his uncontrolled rage against Cordelia as his first step taken towards madness, as a self-analysis of it:

«O most small fault
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show.
Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
From the fix'd place.»

(act I, sc. 4, v. 264-7)

Lear strips Cordelia of her proud array of qualities as woman, daughter, heir and princess. He violently pulls on the bonds relating him to her and tears them off.

As Norman Holland has noted, «his angry rejection of Cordelia, throwing her away to her suitor, repudiates his regressive desires but it also repudiates her for not responding to them» (66).

I would say that what Shakespeare means by «wrenching» is a damage which, like an engine, destroys the psychic apparatus.

G. Wilson Knight has described it in the following way: «The tearing off of this love is hideous, cataclysmic... As the loosened drive flings limp, the disconnected engine of madness spins free, and ungeared revolutions of it are terrible, fantastic...» (162).

This mechanical metaphor of a heart-wrenching separation can be compared with the mechanisms described by Freud in 1894, in an article, «The neuro-psychoses of defense». In this text, he distinguished sharply the mechanisms at work in neurosis and psychosis.

In neurotic conflict, Freud observes that the representation separates itself from its affect and is repressed into the unconscious.

In psychosis, «the ego breaks away from the incompatible idea; but the latter is inseparably connected with a piece of reality, so that, in so far as the ego achieves this result, it, too, has detached itself, wholly or in part, from reality» (59).

This distinction may be compared, I should say, with the situation when we unscrew a bolt; if it can easily be done, it may represent the neurotic mechanism of separation; if screw and bolt are stuck together by rust, we can force with a tool, we can wrench it off by force, pulling and twisting at it violently, till it breaks itself loose.

REALITY-TESTING AND REALITY-VOUCHING

I find the following verses of Lear's self-analysis interesting:

«Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall.»

(act I, sc. 4, v. 266-8)

What is involved here, is not only the function of reality-testing. This play, as Norman Holland has noted, is based upon «ambivalence, the divorce of what is from what ought to be, the schism between earthly fact and heavenly value» (66).

The verses I just quoted are based on the evocation of values. The trouble which affects Lear is deeper than a narcissistic loss, injury or deficiency. What occurs here is like a wreck of the King's mind. Lear expresses it himself:

«O Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgement out!»

(act I, sc. 4, v. 268-270)

Good values like love and judgment disappear; bad ones, like gall, hate and folly come to overwhelm his mind with destructive and aggressive drives; he loses control and forsakes any allegiance.

I will not treat fully here the theory of reality-testing in Freud's works, I shall only mention one 1921 text, «group psychology and analysis of the ego» in which he proposes a new pattern, even though he dismisses it later, in 1923.

Freud writes: «We omitted to mention among the functions of ego ideal the business of testing the reality of things. No wonder that the ego takes a perception for real if its reality is vouched for by the mental agency which ordinarily discharges the duty of testing the reality of things» (113).

I can now say that this little fault committed by Cordelia was rather a matter of assertion of values.

I find here correspondence with what Joan Byles, in her work, has described as the venging poacher, going on secret and silent missions directed by the superego (I).

This attribution of reality-testing to the ego ideal means that this function works as a warrant, a guarantee, a *reality-vouching* (Thoret 165).

When Cordelia is rejected by her father, one man in the court, the king of France, shows clinical sensitivity to King Lear's mental disorder; he then wonders, humourously, what offense so unnatural Cordelia must have committed to betray Lear's forevouched affection» (act I, sc. I, v. 219).

PRIMARY IDENTIFICATION

This mechanism of vouching is at work as soon as the primary identification is set up. Freud described the concept of primary identification, as you know, in the same 1921 essay, «Group psychology...» as follows:

«In the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person... the little boy takes his father as his ideal, as his model», as an imago, a mould for the coming secondary identification (105).

It is this process which is defectuous in psychosis. For André Green and Jean-Luc Donnet, «blank psychosis affects the subject's identity because it remains impossible to set up the negative hallucination of the mother-figure on the ground of primary identification» (284).

In psychotic states, a defect in the ground upon which the frame of reality is fixed, reveals a wrenching of the roots of primary identification.

I shall conclude with a magic invocation by King Lear to the gods:

«Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,
That make ingrateful man!»

(act III, sc. 2, v. 8-9)

DISCUSSION

David Willbern observed that this phantasy of wrenching might reveal a previous traumatic event related with an archaic type of castration.

Norman Holland wondered why Freud assigned the function of reality-testing to the ego ideal, part of the superego. He esteemed that this Freud's idea should lead us to work on the hypothesis of *an implication of the Id itself* in this function of taking into account the values involved in our experience of reality, as wishes for happiness.

Robert Silhol proposed to interpret the «orbs» mentioned by Shakespeare as a representation of the mother-figure.

Some days after the Conference, in the Barbican Theatre, near Moorfields where stood an hospital for «Poor Toms O'Bedlam», a new production of *King Lear* was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in London. The great actor John Wood, playing the part of Lear, said in an interview:

«I like the idea that Lear is in some sense mad before the play starts. He's certainly reached a point where he wanders in and out of reality — That's what the first scene is about...»

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La Mégère Apprivoisée ou la Belle Catherine

SABINE BRODDES (*)

Selon Freud, les poètes ont une grande capacité à percevoir ce que d'autres ne voient pas, compte tenu de leur courage à laisser s'exprimer leur propre inconscient, mais sont amenés à effectuer des modifications de leurs perceptions pour rendre celles-ci acceptables par le public, en «tempérant l'ensemble et comblant des lacunes». Ceci ne demande plus à être vérifié tant l'oeuvre de *Shakespeare* a été étudiée sous un angle psychanalytique.

C'est avec «*the taming of the shrew*» traduit habituellement «*la mégère apprivoisée*» que je propose une lecture possible de la problématique hystérique à travers celle que je rebaptiserais volontiers «*La belle Catherine*». Cette pièce est un plaidoyer touchant en faveur de cette femme pour qui son identité sexuée est une énigme. Il semble en effet que Shakespeare ait perçu à quel point l'agressivité des femmes prises dans ce type de structure est une demande d'amour exprimée dans un profond désarroi.

L'INTRIGUE

L'histoire, telle qu'elle a été mise en forme pour nous être représentée, met en scène un riche bourgeois, Baptista, ayant deux filles en âge de se marier.

Catherine, l'aînée, animée d'un farouche caractère, met à mal l'ensemble des prétendants au titre d'époux. Sa réputation de mégère étant établie, elle l'entretient, s'y trouvant piégée. Bianca, la cadette, douce, docile, gentille, sachant tirer l'aiguille, «la blanche», amène bon nombre de postulants au mariage à graviter autour d'elle.

Il n'est fait mention ni d'épouse pour Baptista ni de mère pour ses filles et, si cela est assez courant dans l'oeuvre de *Shakespeare*, cela peut, dans le cas présent, illustrer une hypothèse concernant l'image maternelle pour Catherine.

Pour que Bianca puisse se marier, Baptista pose la condition absolue que Catherine le soit d'abord. Les prétendants de Bianca, impatients de réaliser leurs projets d'union avec la plus «aimable» des deux soeurs, cautionnent Pétruchio, bourgeois de Vérone en quête d'un riche mariage, afin qu'il les débarasse, par ce biais, de l'encombrante Catherine.

Pétruchio annonce que, la dot étant fameuse, il fait son affaire du caractère de la mariée.

Nous voyons évoluer sous nos yeux notre mégère qui deviendra, pour qui saura en faire le pari, une femme révélée, prête à accepter de vivre sa féminité comme postulat de base et point de soutien de son désir.

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Je laisse de côté les multiples rebondissements des prétendants de Bianca pour ne considérer que la personnalité de Catherine et le bénéfice qu'elle peut tirer de sa rencontre avec Pétruchio.

CATHERINE ET BIANCA «LA BLANCHE»

Bianca, la soeur cadette, possédant les «qualités» communément demandées à une femme pour convoler en justes noces, est à mon sens, tout au long de la pièce, un élément révélateur mis en place pour que puisse se dévoiler, sous nos yeux, la problématique de sa soeur aînée. Elle est en position de miroir dans lequel Catherine croit voir son incapacité à être aussi tendrement aimée par le père que sa soeur cadette. Elle annonce les difficultés dans lesquelles Catherine se débat et permet que se fasse jour les fantasmes de celle-ci. Elle la pousse dans ses retranchements pour que la parole hystérique vienne colorer le tableau. Je précise dès à présent qu'il ne s'agit pas de reprendre un débat stérile, mysogine ou phallocrate, pour déterminer qui, de l'homme ou de la femme, doit porter le pantalon et la manière de le porter. Il s'agit d'essayer de voir ce que cette rencontre, entre deux personnes dotées de forts caractères, va mettre au jour de ce qu'il en est d'«être» et la recherche difficile de cette féminité que *Freud* nommait «continent noir».

Depuis *Freud* jusqu'à plus récemment *Lacan*, de nombreux auteurs ont essayé d'apporter leur éclairage au désir de la femme et, c'est avec le témoignage que peut faire *François Perrier* sur la structure hystérique et le dialogue analytique qui l'accompagne, que j'ai choisi de relire «*la mégère apprivoisée*».

C'est autour de l'intensité du désir mis en jeu, pour l'un dans la belle Catherine, pour l'autre dans la problématique hystérique chez la femme, que nous pourrions dégager l'idée d'une thématique commune entre l'écriture du roman chez *Shakespeare* et l'interprétation analytique chez *Perrier*.

En effet, ces deux auteurs nous permettent d'entendre quelque chose de l'impérieuse revendication d'amour et du désespoir qu'elle dissimule derrière les diverses situations d'agressivité et d'incompréhension.

Pour soutenir l'idée de la problématique hystérique de Catherine, je rappelle que pour présenter un des cas de ce type qu'il a interprété, dans les études sur l'hystérie, *Freud* l'a surnommé Katharina. Coïncidence? Pourquoi pas!

Nous avons, dans les quarante premiers vers de l'acte II, le portrait quasi complet de l'hystérie chez la femme avec la mise en scène de la question «qu'est-ce qu'une femme?» et de la situation familiale qui la caractérise.

Pour *François Perrier* la femme hystérique se présente soit, sur le versant de la défensive, «la belle indifférente» qui ne prend pas la parole mais laisse son corps s'exprimer pour elle, soit, sur le versant de l'offensive.

Sur le versant de l'offensive, qui est celui qu'utilise Catherine dans sa rencontre avec Pétruchio, nous pouvons voir à l'oeuvre un trait caractéristique de la femme hystérique qui se fait «la militante du sexe et de l'amour».

Si elle aimerait bien se marier et rencontrer l'amour, il ne faudrait quand même pas que cela se fasse avec n'importe qui et de n'importe quelle façon! En effet, entière dans ses convictions et ses passions elle souhaite rencontrer l'homme à sa mesure qui pourrait, comme elle, être aussi inentamé. Ceci ne peut que poser quelques problèmes, non pas de choix, mais de réalité car peu d'hommes qui soient réellement des hommes, c'est-à-dire assumés sous le signe de la castration, ne peuvent correspondre à son attente. En effet, Catherine présente apparemment des difficultés à séparer les deux plans distincts du fantasme et du réel. Aucun homme ne peut correspondre à l'image idéale du mâle puissant possédant à lui seul ce qui justement se retrouve dans l'amour, ce que chacun des deux partenaires donne à l'autre, s'acceptant comme symboliquement castré.

De son regard perçant elle dévoile à coup sûr ce que chaque homme qu'elle rencontre possède, comme signe de faille dans sa toute puissance.

«Tout son malheur vient des hommes» mais elle aimerait bien comprendre pourquoi elle, Catherine, possédant tout ce qui est nécessaire pour être aimée, ne parvient pas à faire s'agenouiller devant elle autant de soupirants que sa soeur (ne serait-ce que pour les renvoyer à leur incapacité à la faire jouir).

La jouissance est ici à entendre dans l'acception la plus large du terme ne se limitant pas à la jouissance sexuelle mais comme rayonnement portant la totalité de l'individu en interaction avec les partenaires de son existence.

Elle s'interroge sur la question de savoir ce qu'une autre femme peut recéler comme secret et se tourne vers sa soeur Bianca pour lui demander de dire ce qu'elle recherche dans tous ses prétendants et ce quelle détient pour tant leur plaisir. Seraient-ce les bijoux? Ces bijoux qu'elle arrachait à Bianca au début de la scène et qui visiblement ont pour Catherine une signification dans leur présence/absence. Bianca ne précise-t-elle pas qu'en les lui ôtant, sa soeur la désigne comme servante, esclave.

Catherine voudrait savoir ce que veut la femme en cherchant à percevoir ce qu'une autre désire et ce que veut l'homme en regardant comment elle se fait désirer.

Bianca lui renvoie ses difficultés et la fait rugir davantage nous montrant à quel point Bianca la douce peut avoir la langue aussi acérée qu'une vipère quand elle refuse de voir que la véritable quête de Catherine est celle de l'authenticité.

D'autre part, n'est-ce pas contre ce paradoxe évident entre la candeur affichée par sa soeur dans son prénom même et la turpitude de ses agissements avec ses prétendants et son entourage que Catherine se dresse en premier? Ce qui ne veut absolument pas dire que Catherine ne soit pas capable de reprendre, à son compte, ces turpitudes qu'elle dénonce, dans une appropriation singulière et dont elle saura faire usage!

En effet, une des caractéristiques de l'hystérie est de dévoiler le subterfuge mais dans un mouvement protéiforme l'adopter en s'y coulant avec une adresse déconcertante.

Cette «raisonneuse frigide» nous dit *François Perrier* «se refuse... aux gratifications sexuelles, tout en consolidant une jalousie envers une belle-mère, une soeur, ou toute autre rivale sexuellement interdite au mari». C'est Bianca que *Shakespeare* met en place pour tenir ce rôle de rivale jalouse.

Pour compléter et remettre cette phrase dans le contexte, je rappelle, s'il le faut, que toute femme hystérique n'est pas forcément frigide mais qu'en revanche *Freud* précise qu'il tient pour hystérique toute personne ayant du «dégoût» pour la sexualité.

CATHERINE ET SON PERE

Quand Baptista, le père, entre en scène, il vient compléter le tableau de la femme hystérique. En quelques vers, Baptista nous indique dans quelle dichotomie il tient la femme, soit une pauvre pleurant et sachant tirer l'aiguille (sa fille Bianca), soit une haridelle endiablée devant en être honteuse (sa fille Catherine).

Par ailleurs il se décrit lui-même comme défaillant en soulignant que jamais homme ne fut plus à plaindre que lui.

Pour *François Perrier*: «La femme hystérique dans son offensive langagière se maintient dans une double insatisfaction. De par sa position phallique, elle se réfère à un idéal du Moi masculin que pour constater la carence de celui-ci en son géniteur... du côté du Moi idéal homosexué, elle ne trouve dans sa mère oedipienne qu'une femme regressivante qui dévalorise le modèle de féminité qu'elle aurait dû incarner».

Nous avons noté l'absence de mère pour Catherine et Bianca ainsi que l'absence d'épouse pour Baptista. L'absence de mère symbolise donc l'absence de modèle féminin valable auquel

Catherine aurait pu s'identifier. Par ailleurs, Baptista est présenté comme un père impuissant à symboliser la puissance phallique que la femme pourrait désirer. Il est non désirant et non désiré. Nous pouvons ainsi avec cette particulière configuration familiale repérer ce qu'il en est de la classique image oedipienne dans cette problématique.

Toute la dimension du manque et de la non circulation du phallus est ici précisée sans détour par *Shakespeare*, par l'apparence du père et par l'absence de mère, cette absence mettant en exergue la dimension insignifiante de celle-ci pour la femme hystérique. *François Perrier* ajoute que «la castration chez la fille est prise en charge d'elle-même au jour où la mère ayant désir du père devient, à ses yeux, une femme qui sait trouver en son homme ce que celui-ci n'a pas tout à fait».

Toute femme et la part féminine de tout homme peuvent vérifier et confirmer ce en quoi Baptista ne peut donner envie d'être femme et d'accéder aux joies des épousailles, fussent-elles matériellement comblantes par le truchement de la dot.

Restée au stade des identifications imaginaires, Catherine ne peut assumer sa castration et modifier pour elle, dans une actualisation qui lui serait propre, le scénario du couple parental. En conséquence, il ne lui reste plus qu'à défendre une position intenable qui serait celle d'une possible complétude au sein d'une bisexualité fantasmatique. Il ne lui manque rien.

Cependant, si ce fantasme peut tenir quelques temps, elle n'en reste pas moins soumise à la quête de la reconnaissance de sa féminité et elle adresse un pathétique appel au père au vers 31, «what will you not suffer me?» pour lequel je propose ma propre traduction qui est: «Quoi, ne pourrez-vous jamais me souffrir?» Cette souffrance, elle la reprend à son compte dans ce moment d'authentique désespoir après avoir clamé son mépris pour les hommes. Seule avec son père, elle peut lui adresser une demande d'amour qui pourrait la faire femme s'il acceptait de la voir comme telle et dans le même mouvement lui donner les clefs de son ascension à ce statut: vers 31 et 32 «... Votre trésor, c'est elle, je le vois; elle a droit au mari.»

Désespoir touchant mais fugitif moment ne rencontrant pas d'écho et qui sera repris aussitôt dans le tourbillon de sa structure: vers 35 «jusqu'au jour où j'aurai chance de me venger.»

Ne pouvons-nous pas dans ce passage retrouver l'idée de *Freud* selon laquelle la vie sexuelle infantile arrive à son terme dans des circonstances pénibles laissant des sentiments profondément douloureux. «La perte d'amour et l'échec portent au sentiment d'estime de soi, un préjudice durable qui reste comme cicatrice narcissique».

Nous pouvons noter à ce moment, la douleur de l'enfant Catherine qui, blessée par son échec de reconnaissance par son père comme femme, persiste à croire qu'elle pourra réussir avec les autres hommes là où elle a échoué avec son père, en utilisant alternativement la séduction, l'agressivité, la menace de vengeance, signe que c'est toujours la même structure qui est agissante. En fait, son attitude est plus révélatrice de cette difficulté qu'une possibilité de la surmonter.

Cette blessure enkystée ainsi que les imagos dont elle se soutient qui ne sont pas suffisamment valeureuses, ne peuvent permettre qu'elle trouve, dans son image, la cause du désir de l'homme.

CATHERINE ET PETRUCHIO

Pour aborder sa rencontre avec Pétruchio, téméraire amant qui, se faisant fort d'obtenir la récompense promise, est bien décidé à franchir tous les obstacles que l'inaccessible Catherine dresse devant elle, nous nous tournons à nouveau du côté de *François Perrier* et de ses portraits croqués des maris de la femme hystérique. Jamais ils ne peuvent correspondre à l'homme auquel elle a droit, cela nous l'avons déjà repéré. Ils peuvent finir par abandonner la lutte et ne plus chercher à s'y retrouver ou bien, plus inquiet sur eux-mêmes, se prendre

au jeu et s'interroger sur leur virilité. Quoiqu'il en soit, c'est en les écoutant que l'on peut entendre quelque chose de la chronique insatisfaction de leurs femmes.

«Sexuellement, leur dilemme est le suivant: ou le désir de la femme est un ordre et, faute d'être maîtres de leur érection, ils deviennent impuissants; ou bien, préférant leur heure à celle de l'épouse pour échapper au fiasco, ils rationalisent — en hommes — sur les plaintes inlassables d'une raisonneuse frigide» ... «il promène une agoraphobe; il veille une insomniaque; il nourrit une vomisseuse; il est femme de ménage d'une intellectuelle. Et plus il en fait, plus on lui en veut, et plus on le trouve frustrant».

Caricatures!, pourrait-on penser si l'expérience clinique ne venait pas confirmer l'existence de ce type d'hommes décrit par *François Perrier*. Pour d'autres moins typiquement marqués, ce modèle peut servir dans la mesure où un contour accentué permet de repérer une courbe plus discrète, moins radicalement visible et dessiner une approche permettant de repérer ce qu'il en est d'un profil.

De toute évidence, notre Pétruchio est loin de correspondre même partiellement à cette silhouette et c'est bien pour cela que notre mégère, après avoir subi toutes sortes de frustrations orales et sexuelles, se retrouve avec comme unique bagage dans la relation, son corps sexué comme lieu du désir de l'homme.

Pétruchio démonte un à un, particulièrement dans la scène avec le tailleur, tous les subterfuges de la séduction dans leurs rapports avec l'apparence physique que Catherine veut se donner. C'est dans les vers 166 à 180 de la scène 3 de l'act IV qu'il exprime lui-même le désir de vérité de Catherine à l'aide de paradigmes langagiers qui sont à mon sens la symbolisation même du paradigme qu'utilise l'hystérique pour mettre en acte, en corps pourrait-on même dire, sa question: «Qui suis-je, dans mon corps, en quoi l'homme peut me désirer?»

Pétruchio énonce que c'est par des vêtements «tout simples», mais «très propres» que les bourses peuvent être «fières» car «la richesse du corps» est donnée par «l'âme». Si sa femme doit rougir de son pauvre équipage, c'est sur lui que doit rejaillir le blâme.

Je lis dans ces vers que Pétruchio adresse à Catherine le désir de l'homme qui la fera femme. Qu'en toute simplicité elle doit accepter de recevoir ce «désir» qu'il ne puise qu'en elle et pour elle et que c'est dans cet échange fantasmatique, d'un rien qui fait tout, qu'ils peuvent se soutenir de leur amour et de leur jouissance.

Acceptant sa castration, mais ne cédant pas sur son désir, qui était au départ un curieux désir de renflouer sa bourse, le mari de Catherine devient le dépositaire d'un amour qui lui fait les bourses fières. Amour de transfert, si l'on veut, car si tout transfert n'est pas de l'amour (et pour nous en convaincre il suffit de ne considérer que le transfert de fonds sur lequel le mariage était basé de prime abord), tout amour n'est-il pas de transfert?

Souvenons-nous du petit prince de Saint Exupéry et de la demande du renard: «S'il te plaît, apprivoise-moi!»

C'est au sein de ce lieu particulier qu'est le transfert amoureux que va se révéler celle qui en fait n'était qu'une mégère en attente d'être apprivoisée par celui qui saurait lui faire découvrir ce que son corps recélait comme trésor.

C'est cette découverte de l'amour qui mène Catherine à la grande tirade finale et dans laquelle elle peut exprimer:

«Qu'une femme en colère est comme une eau troublée,
épaisse, limoneuse et répugnante à voir,
Et nul, tout assoiflé, tout desséché soit-il,
N'y daignera goûter, en boire une gorgée.»

La suite de cette déclamation, si elle peut troubler, répugner et faire se dresser les banderoles féministes, est en fait à prendre comme expression véritable du besoin de la femme hystérique de rencontrer «le maître». «Que veut l'hystérique?» dit *Lacan* «un maître

qu'elle puisse dominer!» C'est à partir de ce moment, non traité par *Shakespeare*, car on peut raisonnablement penser qu'il n'avait pas la réponse que *Freud* et ses successeurs ont pu tenter de trouver, qu'une issue possible à l'hystérie pathologique peut se réinventer.

Pétruchio est un veinard qui peut à loisir savourer la victoire obtenue et trouver les ressources personnelles nécessaires pour qu'évolue notre belle Catherine amoureuse vers une naissance qu'elle espérait désespérément depuis toujours. Naître en tant qu'être et «être sexué» acceptant sa castration. Ce n'est pas un renoncement mais une promotion.

Cette pièce n'est peut-être à lire qu'en avant-propos d'une aventure qui étendra encore bien loin son histoire avant qu'une suite hypothétique du couple Pétruchio/Catherine puisse être écrite.

Rappelons que le terme hystérique doit absolument se départir de toute interprétation péjorative pour ne garder que le sens spécifique d'un état qui peut être normal, réussi ou bien pathologique.

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Dorian Gray ou l'Anti-Narcisse

SYLVETTE GENDRE-DUSUZEAU (*)

Le Portrait de Dorian Gray qui a accompagné bon nombre d'adolescences de lecteurs ne laisse-t-il pas dans les mémoires le souvenir d'un jeune Narcisse fasciné par sa propre beauté, un jeune Narcisse au destin tragique mis à mal par la laideur de son image peinte?

L'autre Narcisse, le mythique, celui des *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide, le célèbre jeune homme au miroir succombait mortellement, lui, à la fascination de son image, toute de beauté que lui renvoyait la source dans laquelle il se mirait.

Portrait contre miroir, miroir contre portrait, tout contre, la laideur de l'un et la beauté de l'autre ont ceci de commun qu'elles aboutissent toutes deux à la mort.

Le Narcisse d'Ovide, subjugué par le charme maléfique de sa propre beauté s'écrasait non seulement contre le miroir visuel de son image mais aussi contre le miroir acoustique de ses paroles que lui tendait la nymphe Echo. Se souvient-on qu'Echo la bavarde fut brisée dans sa parole par Héra la femme légitime de Zeus qu'elle gênait dans la surveillance des infidélités de son mari... Le malheur d'Echo se redoubla de la déception amoureuse que lui infligea Narcisse par son indifférence, tout absorbé qu'il était par l'intense passion que lui inspirait son reflet. Echo dépérit alors, ne subsista que dans la voix, dans cette voix off d'une langue désarticulée, contrainte à cette reproduction indéfinie de la fin qui appelle en écho la pulsion de mort.

Mais si l'on écoute de près l'histoire de Narcisse, de l'enfant Narcisse, il apparaît que l'enchantement spéculaire qui le capture (Lacan 570) ne se limita pas à la seule fascination de l'image. Il fut lui-même conçu dans l'élément aquatique auquel il appartient de ce fait. Son père, le fleuve Céphise, avait violé sa mère Liriopé, nymphe des eaux d'une très grande beauté qui repoussait ses avances. Narcisse est issu de cette violence aquatique constitutive de son origine, violence qui instaure la fusion et exclut toute différence.

Tel est le secret historique de sa conception, un secret inconnu de lui dont les effets apparaissent dans les liens psychiques qui le relie aux images visuelles et acoustiques.

Fasciné par son reflet qui l'enferme au-dedans de lui-même, les yeux grands ouverts de Narcisse se refusent à voir l'acte traumatique dont il est issu et qui pourtant se montre dans chaque goutte d'eau qui forme son image. Il est alors intérieurement contraint à réagencer les fragments aquatiques martyrisés en une belle image qui masque l'horreur traumatique qui le constitue. Il se refait donc une image idéale toute de beauté et d'amour, une image qui exclut l'autre et les dangers de sa différence sexuelle. Il s'absorbe avec passion dans ce reflet à l'exclusion du reste du monde car il ne veut boire désormais que de cette eau

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là. Mais l'image idéale ne peut que le piéger car elle est une construction défensive contre l'innommable, l'impensable, l'horrible à voir, autant d'éléments constitutifs qui le déstructurent psychiquement.

Tel serait le sens caché de la prédiction de Tirésias qui avait annoncé que «Narcisse vivrait longtemps s'il ne se connaît pas»¹. L'anticipation temporelle de l'oracle trouve ici sa justification dans les conditions spécifiques de la conception de Narcisse et de la menace psychique qu'elles font peser sur son devenir de Sujet. Les effets du trauma s'activeront et donc la prédiction s'accomplira.

Précisément, la mémoire oubliée de ce passé blessé ressurgit sur le corps de Narcisse sous forme d'un ressouvenir en acte lorsque dans un éclair de conscience aigu, l'idée que celui à qui s'adresse tout son amour n'est autre que sa propre image, s'impose à lui. Se rendant compte alors que sa vie ne tient qu'à la réalisation du souhait impossible d'être séparé de ce qu'il aime le plus, son image, il se frappe violemment le corps de rage et de désespoir. Il arrache le haut de son vêtement, se dénude la poitrine qu'il assaille de coups jusqu'à la colorer d'une teinte de rose... Appelés par la rage et l'impuissance de Narcisse à s'arracher à la capture spéculaire, les effets mortifères du souvenir oublié, jamais formulé explicitement, viennent parler sur son corps l'émoi sexuel pervers, la violence inouïe qui a uni les chairs dont la sienne est faite.

Voici donc la nouvelle histoire de Narcisse telle qu'elle apparaît à découvert de l'autre côté du miroir, là où viennent se mirer celles de la nymphe Echo et du devin Tirésias, toutes des histoires de paroles brisées et de regards aveuglés par des raisons sexuelles apparentées — regard et parole, les deux voies royales qui conduisent aux secrets.

L'histoire de Dorian Gray, autre jeune homme célèbre au portrait cette fois, s'annonce toute différente. C'est dans l'atelier de Basil Hallward où il pose pour son portrait en pied qu'il rencontre Lord Henry, cet aristocrate libertin qui lui révèle tout ensemble la puissance et l'évanescence de la jeunesse alliée à la beauté. Confronté à la merveilleuse beauté qu'il découvre sur son portrait fraîchement achevé, Dorian désorienté émet le vœu que le portrait vieillisse à sa place tandis que lui-même restera toujours jeune et beau. Le pacte Faustien à l'odeur sulfureuse s'effectue alors au détriment de la loi morale puisque le portrait se déformera sous le coup de chaque mauvaise action. La vie de Dorian sera dissolue à souhait. Il ruinera la réputation de bon nombre de jeunes gens et jeunes femmes honorables, les acculant au banissement ou au suicide, et assassinera même son peintre Basil, le tout sur fond de vapeurs d'opium, Dorian Gray fréquentant assidûment les bouges londoniens du port. Vingt ans plus tard, effrayé et écoeuré par la déformation hideuse de son portrait, il décide de le détruire. Il porte alors un violent coup de couteau dans la toile qu'il déchire. Un cri se fait entendre. Dorian s'écroule mort sur le tapis, corps et visage rattrapés par le vieillissement tandis que jeunesse et beauté réintègrent leur place sur le portrait.

Mystérieux théâtre du double le portrait-miroir de Dorian Gray constitue un dispositif visuel doté de bien des singularités. Mécanique à multi-fonction, il s'apparente à plusieurs instruments sans en être vraiment. Formidable machine à maîtriser le temps sans être toutefois horloge, il déclenche l'inférieur compte à rebours avec la vieillesse et la mort par la mise en route du pacte. Faux miroir du corps en ce qu'il se dérobe à la symétrie spéculaire, les étranges transformations du portrait matérialisent le miroir de l'âme secrète de Dorian, «il détenait le secret de sa vie et racontait son histoire.»²

¹ Tirésias participe lui aussi de la non différenciation sexuelle. Il connaissait les deux sexes car il avait été métamorphosé en femme pour avoir voulu séparer deux serpents en train de s'accoupler. Il fut aveuglé par Junon pour avoir soutenu la thèse de son époux Jupiter sur la supériorité de la volupté féminine (Ovide).

² Les citations entre guillemets renvoient au *Portrait de Dorian Gray* (O. Wilde).

Ce portrait magique qui montre au lecteur la mémoire et l'histoire secrètes de Dorian superpose également selon les lois du travail onirique des mises en scènes de l'origine. Avec le dernier coup de pinceau de Basil, s'achèvent la gestation et la naissance de l'infans Dorian celui que l'on portera à domicile dès que «sec, verni et encadré». Le même infans au portrait apparaît aussi entre ses géniteurs Basil et Lord Henry, déjà marqué dans son corps et son âme par ce qu'ils lui transmettent, la beauté peinte par l'amour de Basil et le goût de la perversité de Lord Henry. Un quatrième terme présent à cette scène mythique de naissance, Dorian adulte, introduit d'emblée une énigme car il porte à quatre le trio qui préfigure classiquement l'Oedipe.

Mais le portrait soumis au pacte vieillit, s'enlaidit, saigne, au fil des pages en une effrayante vision de cauchemar. Rongée par une lèpre interne, la toile est «en proie à une corruption bien particulière, pire que celle de la mort sans cependant jamais mourir» à côté de laquelle «la décomposition d'un cadavre offre moins d'épouvante». La décomposition à l'infini du portrait-cadavre laisse apparaître dans son impossibilité à trouver un point d'arrêt l'activité intense d'un processus mélancolique. Incapable de trouver enfin la mort, l'image peinte s'anime et s'agite comme un spectre tourmenté en mal d'absolution dont l'âme embarrassée de lourds péchés est jamais interdite de repos.

Cependant, la putréfaction infinie et l'agitation fantomatique dont est victime le portrait ne se déclenchent pas anarchiquement. Elles s'organisent autour de la bouche. C'est là que commence la déformation du portrait lorsque la première victime de Dorian s'empoisonne, une jeune actrice Shakespearienne éprise en vain de lui. Ce sont «ces lèvres auxquelles Shakespeare apprit à parler qui ont murmuré le secret à l'oreille de Dorian.» Secret d'amour, peut-on supposer mais aussi secret tout court. De bouche à oreille, c'est ainsi que se transmettent et se chuchotent habituellement les dires non révélables aux intéressés. Hamlet évoqué à propos du portrait dans une citation approximative «Comme la peinture d'une affliction, un visage sans coeur», réintroduit le secret par un autre biais. La douleur de deuil d'Hamlet est avivée de la révélation du spectre paternel sur sa propre mort, son frère Claudius l'ayant tué en lui versant du poison dans l'oreille. Mais ne serait-ce pas plutôt un secret inentendable qui aurait choqué l'oreille à mort, empoisonné l'âme? (N.Abraham). Bouche empoisonnée ou bouche empoisonneuse, la bouche interdite de révélation est condamnée au bouche à oreille qui sussure le secret sans le révéler. Close à tout jamais par le secret, c'est dans le corps du portrait que parle alors la bouche dont les lèvres s'entrouvrent à même les chairs qu'elles éclatent jusqu'au sang. Chargée de ce même secret frappé d'oubli, la mémoire se souvient du dehors, dans le fantôme qu'elle crée et qui anime la décomposition infinie.

Ce qui différencie radicalement Narcisse de Dorian Gray tient à ce que l'histoire de Narcisse indépendamment de sa singularité s'enchevêtre à celle des dieux antiques qui l'élève de ce fait au rang de mythe. Il en va différemment pour Dorian Gray et son portrait. Dorian est un personnage de roman créé par Wilde. C'est à dire que son existence littéraire est tissée dans la même étoffe que celle dont est faite la psyché de Wilde. Le personnage surgit au détour des mots, des phrases, des assemblages signifiants, des lapsus, des oublis, des choix inconscients de noms etc... tels que les problématiques psychiques de l'écrivain les façonnent. Dès lors, si on ne se laisse pas aveugler par la cohérence imaginaire du personnage, il est possible d'entendre et de voir dans mille et un petits détails de l'écriture ce qui de la psyché de Wilde insiste et s'active dans son oeuvre.

Dans *Le Portrait de Dorian Gray*, déjà, Wilde avait frôlé la comparaison avec la capture spéculaire mortifère de Narcisse sans cependant y succomber: «Un jour, par gaminerie, jouant au Narcisse, il avait baisé ou plutôt feint de baiser ces lèvres écarlates qui maintenant lui souriaient d'un si amer sourire. Des matinées entières il s'était immobilisé devant ce portrait, s'émerveillant de sa beauté, bien près par moments d'en tomber amoureux.» «Feindre» et «bien près de» font toute la différence et si Dorian Gray n'est pas Narcisse, il a sans doute quelque chose en commun avec lui.

Le petit poème en prose de Wilde intitulé *Le disciple* est écrit dans un trait d'humour aussi éclatant que grinçant. Il raconte une scène inattendue qui se déroule après la mort de Narcisse, dans le prolongement du mythe d'Ovide. La source dans laquelle se mirait Narcisse répand le sel de ses pleurs mélancoliques dans les eaux douces de son bassin. Les nymphes Oréades accourues pour la soutenir dans son chagrin lui expriment de vive voix leur sympathie face à la perte douloureuse de Narcisse qui «était beau». Mais Narcisse était-il beau, questionne alors la source avant de révéler la cause surprenante de sa douleur, car elle ne pleure pas le beau Narcisse, elle pleure celui qui lui a à jamais révélé dans le miroir de ses yeux sa propre beauté à elle qu'elle ne contempera plus.

Narcisse est mort, vive Narcisse! Telle serait en peu de mots la quintessence du poème qui se démarque complètement du mythe. Le disciple de Narcisse, la source (neutre en anglais) vient ici narguer la capture spéculaire de manière saisissante. Narcisse, cet éminent symbole psychanalytique du «même», par essence étranger à l'altérité et à la différence des sexes engendre soudain sous la plume de Wilde un disciple/enfant par le moyen de l'imitation, de la copie. Le coup de théâtre de l'héritier de Narcisse auquel l'humour prend source reconduit à la question de l'origine doublée de celle d'une filiation auto-engendrée par copie, sans l'intervention de l'autre féminin.

Or, le mythe de Narcisse II, inventé par Wilde se trouve à créer des particularités similaires à celles du portrait de Dorian qui s'anime sous l'effet du pacte. Tandis que Narcisse se penche sur la source pour s'admirer, la source se penche vers Narcisse pour se voir «dans le miroir de ses yeux», faisant de ce fait mener double vie à l'écran aquatique support du reflet de Narcisse. La source et le portrait de Dorian partagent tous deux cette propension à pervertir leurs fonctions respectives de support fixe d'images.

Doubles, fantômes ou Narcisses? Wilde organise des jeux de cache-cache avec ces couples insistants de figures qui élisent comme domicile favori les miroirs et les portraits. Contrairement à ce qui est habituellement imaginé, Wilde ne serait pas préoccupé par le seul enfermement narcissique dans la belle image. Sa création littéraire des portraits-miroirs fait plutôt surgir un double fantomatique, un fauteur de troubles, un empêchement de tourner en rond dans les idées habituelles.

C'est dans cette invention propre à Wilde des reflets-doublures, des images-fantômes, des portraits animés emmêlés tout ensemble aux fils d'un secret, que filtrent les signifiants d'une problématique inconsciente précise. L'on entrevoit alors combien le mythe de Narcisse fournit à Wilde un support tout préparé.

Mais les histoires de doubles, de fantômes et d'animations ne sont pas l'exclusivité de Wilde. Le XIX^{ème} siècle en use largement comme en témoignent les oeuvres de Poe, de James et de Maupassant. Par contre ce sont les modalités de leur mise en scène qui sont propres à Wilde et qui conduisent à cerner les effets d'agencements inconscients uniques. En ce qui concerne Wilde, une incursion dans sa biographie permet d'établir la spécificité de liens psychiques entre un repère historique et ses effets dans la psyché tels que les donne à voir son écriture. Il est pertinent à ce point précis de savoir que les parents d'Oscar Wilde cachaient à leurs enfants l'identité d'un cousin de vingt ans leur aîné, un familier de la maison qui était en réalité le fils aîné de la lignée illégitime secrète du père, William Wilde (S.Gendre-Dusuzeau). La révélation de ce secret transmis par voie inconsciente (M. Torok, N. Abraham et la théorie du fantôme) n'offre un intérêt qu'en relation avec ses manifestations à la fois insistantes et énigmatiques dans l'écriture. D'autres éléments convergents mobilisés par la fonction symbolique du nom propre (R. Major 57) et par un deuil mélancolique non abordés ici sont déterminants dans le choix des interprétations proposées.

Les portraits-miroirs de Wilde et leurs animations fantomatiques viennent représenter par le moyen de l'écriture les effets du secret du double fraternel illégitime en le mettant en scène de cette manière. Lorsque Wilde utilise des miroirs dans ses contes et romans, il invente des miroirs dont le reflet n'est ni clair ni direct mais déjà terni et intercepté

par une ombre. Par exemple le visage de Salomé tout pâle est décrit comme «l'ombre d'une rose blanche dans un miroir d'argent». En anglais, l'ombre (shadow) qui désigne à la fois «l'ombre du corps» et «l'ombre d'un mort» est un signifiant particulièrement adéquat pour représenter les effets perturbateurs conjugués de la fratrie illégitime et du processus inachevé du deuil évoqué au sein de la psyché. L'image spéculaire que révèle l'écriture de Wilde est une image toujours-déjà-doublée.

Reflet pré-inscrit dans le miroir, portrait animé, voilà deux exemples du travail de l'écriture — de la même manière que l'on parle du travail du rêve et qui montrent à l'oeuvre les effets actifs de la filiation mensongère dans la psyché.

Pourtant, l'évocation des miroirs dans l'oeuvre de Wilde ne prend à aucun moment la place dominante équivalente à celle qu'occupe le portrait de Dorian Gray. Peut-on envisager alors que l'image psychique montrée au moyen du portrait se situe dans un rapport particulièrement privilégié avec les questions de filiation et d'origine? Le miroir sur lequel se penchait Narcisse était un miroir liquide. L'origine de Narcisse conçu par Céphyse et Liriopé, divinités des eaux, prédetermine la rencontre de Narcisse avec l'onde qui contient sa scène originaire à lui, celle du viol qui a présidé à sa conception et à laquelle il surimpose son image idéale. La rougeur des coups qu'il s'infligeait montrait le caractère toujours actif du souvenir oublié.

La couleur rouge est également celle qui prédomine dans le portrait de Dorian Gray. Le pinceau utilise toute la palette des rouges pour tracer le nom, peindre les lèvres, colorer le sang de la main meurtrière qui goutte sur les pieds. La teinte rouge riche en symboles risque d'emballer l'imagination et de fausser l'interprétation. Mais une indication de Wilde très limitée et précise vient restreindre la liberté des associations du lecteur. Elle apparaît alors que Dorian s'interroge sur les modifications de son portrait: «Existait-il donc quelque affinité entre son âme à lui et les atomes chimiques qui se groupaient sur la toile en forme et en couleur. Ces atomes réalisaient-ils ce que pensait son âme?» Cette question indique que c'est entre l'âme à entendre comme la problématique inconsciente de la filiation secrète et la couleur que se situe l'énigme du portrait. Là encore une indiscretion biographique fait apparaître l'incidence capitale dans la psyché d'un rouge particulier, le rouge tyrien. Le mode de fabrication de la célèbre teinture fut redécouvert par le père d'Oscar Wilde lors d'un voyage archéologique à Tyr, voyage au retour duquel naquit mystérieusement le faux cousin.

L'on comprend alors comment pour Wilde c'est l'image peinte, picturale, organisée par la teinture rouge et non l'image spéculaire qui offre le déploiement le plus complet et le plus approprié à l'activité signifiante.

Les enjeux sous-jacents à la couleur rouge conduisent pour Wilde et Narcisse aux questions primordiales de la filiation et de l'origine mais d'une manière unique pour chacun, en relation avec leur histoire propre.

Image spéculaire aquatique de Narcisse, image spéculaire picturale de Wilde, les deux images psychiques reflètent dans leurs mirages signifiants les blessures traumatiques desquelles elles sont issues, blessures qui viennent ainsi s'écrire dans les mots des mythes, des contes, et des romans.

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The Two Wordsworths Revisited: A Psychoanalytic View

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The two Wordsworths of my title, I should point out, are not the two Wordsworths that may come first to mind: William and Dorothy. My title refers instead to two different aspects of Wordsworth's poetry, or two views of the poetry. The two are distinct enough to suggest two different poets. Let me use as my starting point a quote from a critic of Wordsworth.

The commonplace modern criticism of Wordsworth is that he is too transcendental. On the other hand, the criticism with which he was first assailed... was that he was ridiculously simple, that he made an unintelligible fuss about common feelings and common things. The reconciliation of these opposite criticisms is not difficult. He drew uncommon delights from common things. (90)

This view, which seems to suggest two different Wordsworths — one overly simple and common, the other too transcendental and unintelligible — was expressed over a hundred years ago by Richard Holt Hutton, a leading literary critic and editor of the *Spectator* and the *National Review*. Today the same can be said about some readings of Wordsworth's poetry: they tend to be updated versions of Hutton's dichotomy. Reconciling the two opposite views has been more difficult than Hutton suggested. In fact, the peculiar nature of that «unintelligible fuss» or the «uncommon delights» which Wordsworth draws out of common things has never been widely nor fully understood. It is, at bottom, the difficulty caused by a strained subject-object relationship in Wordsworth's poetry, especially at those moments when the poetry is most intense. In Wordsworth's poetry, the ambivalence of becoming a poet is inseparably bound up with larger social issues of conventionality and morality: his prominent concern with self in the poetry is part of a dialectic which is a complex and difficult one, a psychic dynamic that is central not only to his poetry but to his development as a person. What Hutton referred to as an «unintelligible fuss» was a process identified by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* as one of the peculiar characteristics of Wordsworth's genius. He called it «mental bombast» as distinguished from verbal: thoughts and images too great for the circumstances and occasion and said it was a fault of which none but a man of genius is capable (258). It is a process of growth through poetry that can be seen as beginning in ambivalence, including positive feelings of growth in conflict with

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feelings of transgression — of going beyond limits — and giving rise to the anxiety of guilt, which must be accepted and worked through. The poetic act, for Wordsworth, became the occasion for this process.

Of course one may argue that any new or difficult poem may be seen as proposing an unusual or not-yet-fully understood subject-object relationship. We expect that from our best poets. And after all, it was Freud who said, «It was not I, but the poets before me who discovered the Unconscious. What I discovered was a method by which the unconscious can be studied.»

This essay will use some of the methods and ideas of the British School to approach Wordsworth's poetry. There is nothing new in my wanting to examine the poetry from this point of view or to use specifically some ideas from the British psychoanalysts Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott, W.R.D. Fairbairn, and Harry Guntrip. Their ideas have already been applied to some of Wordsworth's major poetry such as the «Spots of Time» passages in *The Prelude*, where ambivalence and guilt are central. Here, I will limit myself to suggesting briefly how some of these ideas can also be brought to bear on another short poem, one that is not usually associated with the work in *The Prelude*. It is a poem that, while not exemplifying the pressure of ambivalence, guilt, and restitution, is important as an escape from it.

For D.W. Winnicott, «A sense of guilt is anxiety linked with the concept of ambivalence, and implies a degree of integration in the individual ego that allows for the retention of good object-*imago* along with the idea of the destruction of it» (73). In contrast to Freud's acceptance of the inevitability of the mutually exclusive claims of self vs. society and the unavoidable renunciation of the self which that involves, Winnicott sees guilt as a sign of the value of the individual in a social setting, a signal of the ability to cope with conflicting feelings while achieving a moral relationship with others. It is the view set out in Melanie Klein's «Depressive Position», the ability to tolerate ambivalence and take responsibility for it as a positive step (145). In fact, Harry Guntrip rejects the whole belief in the conflict between societal expectations and inner necessities. He calls it «one of man's oldest self-deceptions» (37). He argues that the deepest problem is not the contest with one's instincts, but the fear of ego-weakness — the fear of a central ontological insecurity. Although both Klein and Winnicott locate the origin of the sense of guilt at an earlier point in childhood than does Freud, they agree with Freud that it is not a simple step, but an ongoing process throughout life. Just as Freud pointed out that an overly stern authoritative father-figure can cause a weak and passive ego and a moral regression, forcing a fusion of currents of feeling as in sadism and masochism, Winnicott notes that excesses of guilt feeling occur when there is false superego development based in an abnormal way on the intrusion of a powerful authoritarian influence. Two states of mind can result from this, both of which can be forms of illness: obsessional thinking and melancholia. With the former, the individual is always trying to put something right, to «tidy up» as a way of allaying confusion, while the latter is an organized form of the depressed mood to which almost all people are liable (23).

Winnicott's ideas on guilt have the advantage of enabling «psychoanalytic theory to begin to include the idea of the individual's value, whereas in early psychoanalysis the statement was in terms of health and neurotic ill-health.» Value, says Winnicott, is intimately bound up with the capacity for guilt-feeling (25). Guilt enables the individual to be creative in constructing a moral sense based on the idea of restitution through a creative ego. That is to say, morality and creativity are bound up together as the opposite of repression and dread of authority.

W.R.D. Fairbairn, in the «Prolegomena to a Psychology of Art», sees the principle of restitution as the central and governing principle in all successful art-work. Considering the aggressive or destructive aspect of ambivalent feelings and fantasies, he is able to make

a distinction between anxiety and guilt: guilt is that form of anxiety linked to object relations. «At the level of object love, of course, the destruction of love-objects occasions intolerable guilt... It is to deal with the anxiety and guilt that repression is originally instituted in childhood; and it is owing to their persistence in the unconscious that it is maintained in adult life» (296). Creative art-work is the way to reverse this process, but it is something more than simply undoing the repressive pattern. He says, «art is seen to be not only a sublimated expression of repressed urges, but also a means whereby positive values are created, in the service of an ideal. The ideal served is the super-ego; and the creation of positive values is an act of restitution on the part of the ego» (302). This process, I think, can be seen as the central dynamic in much of Wordsworth's major poetry.

After mentioning these ideas, I'd like to turn now to a specific instance in the poetry. The poem I'd like to consider is Wordsworth's so-called «Daffodils» poem, published in 1807 but belonging, I would argue, to a much earlier period — the same period as *The Prelude* passages, the «Intimations» Ode, and «Resolution and Independence». To understand its importance, it must be seen in its relationship to this earlier group of writings. Journal entries show that Wordsworth's experience with the daffodils was on April 15, 1802; «Resolution and Independence» was composed May 3, 1802; the «Intimations» Ode was composed in 1802; and the childhood experiences of *The Prelude* were composed 1799-1805. I choose it also because Coleridge cites this particular poem in his discussion of Wordsworth's «defects». I believe that the poem, while not an example of that process mentioned above, as the other examples are, is nevertheless closely related to it as another form of «mental bombast» (which may also seem to be an «unintelligible fuss»). I think it represents an escape from the pressure and ambivalence of that process.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

The tendency to see the poem as a description of an innocuous and pleasant occasion is strong and is found not only in the general reader but in critics as well. The British critic A.C. Bradley, in the Oxford Lectures, called it «entirely happy» (131); the American critic Geoffrey Hartman in his important study of Wordsworth, recalling Bradley's comments, referred to it as «a pretty thing» (4); and another American, Carl Woodring, in his book *Wordsworth* described it as a poem of «unclouded majesty and joy» (78). I would like to argue that the poem has more complexity than some standard commentaries ascribe to it, and that it is not one-minded — as it is often read — but a poem of complex moods or feelings that has as its starting point sharply contrasting states of mind.

But any discussion of the poem must begin by acknowledging that there is some basis for those common views: it is a poem easily categorized and dismissed as trivial. It is deceptive because there is a full and autonomous surface level narrative that has a logic of its own. But the experience Wordsworth renders exceeds this kind of logic; what he grasps imaginatively is richer than what the poem claims at the narrative level. This is so because the poem has two planes, an outer and an inner, or put another way, it has the natural landscape and the emotional, psychological experience which is in part prompted by it. That Wordsworth was more interested in the psychological dimension is shown by his placing it under the heading «Moods of my own Mind»; he did not think of it as a landscape poem. But it would be imprecise to call it «a mood piece» in the usual sense of that term: the poem involves divergent moods, though they are not equally developed. And to miss this contrast, as so many commentaries do, is to miss the dramatic turning upon which the whole poem pivots.

The surface, or outer structure, follows fairly closely the formula for popular eighteenth-century nature poetry, the descriptive poetry produced by Dyer, Shenstone, and other minor poets. Or, if one approaches it as a piece of «romantic» verse, it seems a convenient illustration of Wordsworth's «love of nature» coupled with the formula for «emotion recollected in tranquility» which encourages the assumption that the experience is narrated to exemplify that doctrine. But what sets this poem apart from conventional or popular poetry is the fact that the feeling gives significance to the action, not the other way around.

Yet Coleridge categorized this poem as an example of Wordsworth's «defects» (258). He objected to the disparity between the beauty and poignancy of the penultimate couplet and the final couplet. There is a falling off, he argued, a sinking effect (259). While that may be true, I would argue that these two couplets, coming at the conclusion of the poem, are the respective climaxes of the two planes, inner and outer, that they are equally essential, and that they do connect meaningfully in Wordsworth's mind, although the connection is not always understood by the reader — a situation which gives rise to the common criticisms of Wordsworth.

My argument is that the poem is neither trifling nor sentimental on the one hand, nor «unintelligible fussing» on the other, although there is a process at work in the experience and the articulation of it that may be called «mental bombast». It is a moral poem, which is to say, the process underlying the poem is deeply personal at the same time that it is moving toward outer relationship, even if it is «an unknown mode» and not fully grasped by logic. In this labor, with its overload of thought and feeling, can be found the distinctive qualities that set Wordsworth's poetry apart.

The opening image is the key to understanding the poem because it establishes the psychological state which is the starting point for the experience. It is often overlooked, perhaps because it is so often used as the title that it has acquired a ring of familiarity and does not fully register in the reader's mind. Then another state appears in line 3, «when all at once» the daffodils appear. (Wordsworth left the piece untitled but referred to it in correspondence as «Daffodils».) But the opening image requires attention if the poem is to succeed. The mood it conveys is important; his «wandering», a lack of direction or purpose, has the same loneliness as floating over everything, without contact, without relationship.

It is a mood in which the attention is turned inward, not in touch with anything outside the self — either people or things — and hardly aware of one's surroundings. What inner demands were turning him inward or closing off the outside world we do not know from the poem itself, but such moods appear often in Wordsworth's poetry. Two examples of a dramatic turning inward and its fearful consequences are the opening passage of Book I of *The Prelude*, where Wordsworth lays down on the ground to assure himself of being in touch with something outside himself, and his account of grasping at a tree or wall to recall himself to reality, in the headnote to the «Ode on Immortality».

In this poem, though, the process is truncated. It stops short of feelings of self-reproach and fear of punishment or at least there is no indication in the poem of these feelings. The mood is cut short by the dramatic appearance of the daffodils, drawing him out of himself and into relationship with the external world. The poem moves abruptly and startlingly from a self-contained inner state to the world of objects, and the relationship is a rich and complex one. He sees the show of moving flowers first as a crowd, then in a striking choice of words, as a «host» of golden daffodils. The shift from solitude to this happy society of «dancing» flowers is sudden and presents itself to his imagination later as an emblem of a happy consummation to his mood. The word «dance», which recurs in each of the four stanzas, suggests the way it made him feel as well as the kind of society into which he has so suddenly been invited. It is worth looking at how the internal «dance» in stanza 4 is different from the dances of the first 3 stanzas. The word «host» reinforces the suggestion of happiness by its double meaning of a multitude, and also one who presides over a party, inviting guests in. His imaginative vision then expands in the 2nd and 3rd stanzas to include not only the flowers, but the water beside them and the stars above, all also alive and moving in a kind of joyful harmony. The vision is cosmic: the active universe is a happy gathering, enjoying a oneness, a harmony which is in sharp juxtaposition to his opening mood of melancholy solitude. It is this vision that is able later to summon up the same feelings of community and relationship, even in moments of solitude. The final stanza returns to the «vacant mood» of the opening, but with an important difference. This solitude is a «*bliss* of solitude» simply because his inward eye may now draw on the occurrence as a way of recreating the feelings associated with the original experience. Then, through memory, he can create inwardly the dancing of the daffodils. In this later solitude, the external aspect, the flowers, follows or is created by the internal (i.e., he is able to form a mental picture of them) in contrast to the opening, when his inner state followed the natural scene. This is the relationship of the final two couplets: together they represent a reversal of the relationship in the beginning of the poem and suggest new powers acquired through the experience. In such cases his solitude, unlike the image of the cloud in line 1, has a focus and sense of relationship which presents a clear picture of community and togetherness.

However, there are indications that the experience is not as simple as it may seem. There is some suggestion, carried by his choice of words, imagery, and syntax, that his joy may not be as fully realized as that which he confers upon the natural scene. The inner and outer states may not be as fully merged as this first reading suggests.

First, it is worth noting that Wordsworth does not state directly that he is joyful or gay; the sense of his new mood is filtered through a negative screen: «A poet could not but be gay». Second, even though the poem opens with a strong use of first person narrative, the switch to the third person in line 15 enables him to avoid claiming a mood for himself, even though he may have conveyed it to the reader. Only insofar as he is a poet, responding creatively, could he «not but be gay». It is not until later, recreated imaginatively, when the process is reversed — the outer scene following the inner process and a creation of it, as in the final two couplets — that he will make the claim, «And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances...»

Third, it is necessary to take another look at Wordsworth's striking use of the word «host» in the first stanza. The word has an older meaning that is closer to its Latin roots and originally referred to the outsider, the stranger, or even more strongly, the enemy. It is this meaning that is still found in our use of the word «hostile». If the Latin word had a place in Wordsworth's mind, it would suggest an estrangement or a hostility to, not a harmony with, the goings-on. Unlike most modern readers, Wordsworth studied Latin intensively — he read both Latin and Greek—and it is not improbable that he was aware of this older meaning. The ambivalence of the two contrasting meanings, in fact, may be an important part of this experience.

Fourth, the imagery in the third stanza suggests the richness of the experience for him, the «wealth», the «golden» flowers. But he calls it a «show», suggesting something staged for him and to which he is a spectator rather than a participant and opening up some distance between himself and the show, as between audience and actor. He also calls it a «company», suggesting actors and a kind of theatricality, external to himself.

And this leads to one final problem in the poem. Wordsworth says that the wealth was «brought» to him. The show is a gift, a «given», completely external, not earned out of experience. In «Resolution and Independence», the sudden appearance of the leech gatherer rescues him from a similar mood of «solitude» in which he feels a «dim sadness», a «dejection». The old man seemed to him to be «wandering about alone and silently», yet after some struggle on Wordsworth's part, the old man seemed to have «so firm a mind» that he cheered the poet. It is this firmness of mind that is achieved so easily in «Daffodils» that it is open to question and runs the risk of being labelled empty sentimentality. Yet the poem seems to recreate the experience as it came to Wordsworth; no struggle was required in this instance and Wordsworth, stubbornly faithful to the original experience, which is to say, the inner, psychological part with its sudden shift of mood, eliminates struggle from the poem, even if it gives the poem an appearance of being too facile.

Wordsworth is at pains to depict the mood of joy which results from the experience despite the fact that no struggle was required to achieve it. Commenting on the poem, he acknowledges this fact: «The subject of these stanzas is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression... upon the imaginative faculty, than exertion of it» (II, 507). In that sense, the poem is not an account of a creative struggle, which was often painful for Wordsworth, but a moment of easy triumph, Wordsworth's mood following the cue from nature effortlessly. It is the ideal consummation of a burdensome state of mind. The burden is himself, and the «joy» in this context can be understood as freedom from anxiety.

Taken as a whole then, the poem conveys to the reader — using the daffodils as an imaginative point of reference — a vague sense of significance which goes beyond «love of nature». The poem records a process that culminates in relationship, which is sometimes a struggle, but is here so effortless that it strikes Wordsworth's fancy as an ideal form of the process and leaves the reader with little to fathom. But Wordsworth still feels — and manages to convey — the profundity of it, even though he has bypassed the struggle which would be the core of the poem, as it is in the «Spots of Time» passages in *The Prelude*. Thus, the feeling celebrated in the poem rings hollow to some readers. The poem is unbalanced in favor of the joyful mood, a release from the anxiety seen in other poems and shows the emergence from the opening state of mind, which would, in another poet, be more likely to produce aphasia than this kind of lyrical occasion.

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The True Self in Cold Storage: Henry James and *What Maisie Knew*

SUZI NAIBURG (*)

Let me suggest two points of entry for my study of Henry James and *What Maisie Knew*. The first is Harry Guntrip's treatment of the schizoid personality, and the second is D.W. Winnicott's distinction between the True and the False Self. In *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self* (1961),¹ Guntrip uses James as a contrasting example to the psychopathologies described in the first three chapters of his book. He presents James as a «relatively 'normal' schizoid personality» (98). Guntrip's evidence is built primarily on old stereotypes and his judgements are harsh, yet his diagnostic instincts are right.

Guntrip's James evidences «the 'half-in and half-out' compromise of the schizoid position» (98), «the schizoid non-involvement and evasion of permanent ties» (98) and «the deep fear of the outer world felt by the withdrawn individual» (99). Guntrip's James is more than slightly introverted, lonely and skittish about intimacy. Although profoundly insightful psychologically, James is, for Guntrip, so withdrawn and detached that he lives primarily in the schizoid inner world of the mind and is «obsessed with the problem, for him unsolvable, of the relation of his inner mental life to external reality» (99).

I wouldn't go quite so far. Nor would I recommend reading Guntrip's appraisal of James without reading the book's first hundred pages. It's here that we come to an empathic understanding of the schizoid position, one Guntrip knew from both personal and professional experience. Guntrip builds on Fairbairn's view that «*love made hungry* is the *schizoid* problem and rouses the terrible fear that one's love has become so devouring and incorporative that love itself has become destructive» (24). The schizoid is caught coming and going. Both loving and being loved devours the self. The only way out is in. Safety is found by withdrawing «into detachment and aloofness» (30), by giving up emotional attachments to others.

In James's famous short story «The Beast in the Jungle» (1903), the narcissistic John Marcher describes an annihilating experience he presumes to be his anticipated fate. His confidant, May Bartram, asks if it is something he is «to suffer». Marcher responds:

«Well, say to wait for — to have to meet, to face, to see suddenly break out in my life; possibly destroying all further consciousness, possibly annihilating

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¹ Subsequent references to this text will include page numbers only.

me; possibly, on the other hand, only altering everything, striking at the root of all my world and leaving me to the consequences, however they shape themselves» (James, *Supernatural* 679).

May knows Marcher's image represents «the expectation — or at any rate the sense of danger, familiar to so many people — of falling in love» (James, *Supernatural* 679). Familiar that is to many schizoids.

Another way to take the edge off calling James a relatively normal schizoid personality is to remind ourselves that illness and health lie on a continuum and that «'psychotic' mechanisms underlie and affect the emotional attitudes of 'normal' people» (Storr 100). The contemporary American psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden provides another useful model. He sees «human experience as the product of the dialectical interplay of three modes of generating experience — the depressive, the paranoid-schizoid, and the autistic-contiguous» (4). Ogden conceptualizes psychopathology as «a collapse of the dialectic in the direction of one or the other» of these modes (4). Thus underlying James's relatively stable state lies the schizoid mode; under stress it is bound to show.

If we had more time for theoretical excursions, we would explore another dimension of Guntrip's treatment of the schizoid — namely, the «splitting of the libidinal ego into two parts — an oral needy libidinal ego and a regressed libidinal ego» (77). The word «schizoid» actually comes from the Greek word to split, *schizo*. It is this idea of splitting that links Guntrip with Winnicott for our study of Maisie. «For Winnicott», Ogden writes, «the split in the personality involves the alienation of a rudimentary experience of self (the True Self) from a compliant, externally-directed aspect of the self (the False Self)» (88). The False Self, Ogden observes, is «the Winnicottian equivalent of the schizoid aspect of the personality» (88). To put it another way, the split-off «live core» of the schizoid's psychic being is Winnicott's «True self in cold storage» (Guntrip, *Personality Structure* 167).

The split in John Marcher's personality is particularly chilling. May shares with Marcher

... the secret of the difference between the forms he went through — those of his little office under Government, those of caring for his modest patrimony, for his library, for his garden in the country, for the people in London whose invitations he accepted and repaid — and the detachment that reigned beneath them and that made of all behavior, all that could in the least be called behavior, a long act of dissimulation. What it had come to was that he wore a mask painted with the social simper, out of the eyeholes of which there looked eyes of an expression not in the least matching the other features. This the stupid world, even after years, had never more than half-discovered (James, *Supernatural* 686).

May is caught in a similar deception:

Beneath *her* forms as well detachment had learned to sit, and behaviour had become for her, in the social sense, a false account of herself (James, *Supernatural* 687).

In 1960 Winnicott wrote Guntrip and said, «Your split in the libidinal ego seems to have a lot in common with my 'hidden true self' and the 'false self built upon a compliance basis' (a defence in illness, and in health simply the polite self that does not wear its heart on its sleeve)» (Guntrip, *Schizoid* 77). Now if we try to draw an exact correspondence between the splitting of Guntrip's libidinal ego and the distinction between Winnicott's True and False Self, we could get ourselves into hot water by mixing metapsychologies (Ogden fn. 90-91). But for our purpose of understanding both James and Maisie, a connection rather than an exact equivalence is really all we need.

For in *Maisie* we will find a wonderful example of the development of the False Self to protect the vulnerable emotional core of the personality, and in James we have already located the basic schizoid patterns. Might we then want to consider *Maisie* a fictional component of James's True Self? Or consider her going into hiding a fictional counterpart of James's own inner development toward the schizoid position? Is *Maisie* a schizoid in the making? Just how far *Maisie* will as an adult remain in hiding within the adaptations of the False Self cannot be determined within the frame of the novel. But the initial impetus and protective nature of that movement are clearly evident just as is *Maisie*'s need for relatedness. James began writing *What Maisie Knew* in 1896, the year Winnicott was born. Winnicott read many of James's novels even before he read Freud. Adam Phillips observes that James «like Winnicott was preoccupied in his novels by what was elusively absent» (34). We might add that they were both appreciative of the True Self's need to hide when nurture was absent or the environment threatened.

James's English heroine is six, a child of London and «the collapsing Victorian moral facade» (Edel 458). The court decrees that *Maisie* spend half a year with each of her divorced parents, although both want to be rid of her. «The wretched infant was thus to find itself practically disowned, rebounding from racquet to racquet like a tennis ball or a shuttlecock» (James, *Maisie* 5).² Although the laws of England in the last quarter of the 19th century had begun to move away from treating children as property, *Maisie*'s parents do not. Her value for them lies in her use.

What was clear to any spectator was that the only link binding her to either parent was this lamentable fact of her being a ready vessel for bitterness, a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed. They had wanted her not for any good they could do her, but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid, do each other (18).

In the novel's two dozen opening pages, James writes a primer on how to create a worst case scenario for a child of divorce. Start with an acrimonious divorce, a custody battle and a fight over money. Let the parents gleefully parade their vitriolic feelings in front of their sensitive child. Let her mother be beautiful and, for *Maisie*, unattainable. Let her father be charming and impress upon his daughter that «everything had been changed on her account» (17). Let the parents use the child to wage their own battles, so that with each abuse of the other parent the child is forced to experience their conflicts internally.

Now take the one possibly safe adult in the child's life, her governess, establish firm loyalties between child and nanny and then separate the two. Do this not once, but several times. Tell the child who wishes her governess to accompany her to the other parent's house that «'It does n't in the least matter, you know, what you think'» (22). Complicate the plot by allowing the governess to switch loyalties from mother's side to father's. Allow *Maisie*'s attachment to her governess to grow. «She had conceived her first passion, and the object of it was her governess» (25). Then let the governess's affections shift from child to father. Let the child see it happen. But what *Maisie* sees and what she understands are not the same, and therein lies the familiar rub. Rather than follow this well-worn line of critical inquiry, let us consider what is missing in *Maisie*'s life. Trust, mirroring, continuity of care, a holding environment are terms Winnicott would use to define the makings of an optimum environment for a child's development. *Maisie*'s is hardly optimum. Furthermore, she must encounter what she cannot fully comprehend and is forced by circumstances to achieve a precious adaptation to her environment.

Maisie exhibits a child's natural wish for knowledge, for relatedness, for meaning, for reliability. She also evidences an amazing resiliency. At the same time she develops

² Subsequent references to this text will include page numbers only.

in that precious adaptation a split between the True and the False Self. After carrying her father's words to her mother — «'I was to tell you from him', she faithfully reported, 'that you're a nasty horrid pig!'"» (18) — Maisie decides to opt out of her parents' cruel game by playing dumb. «Either from extreme cunning or from extreme stupidity, she appeared not to take things in» (19). As she realized «the strange office she filled» (19) for her warring parents, she «accomplished» a «moral revolution... in the depths of her nature» (20).

She had a new feeling, the feeling of danger; on which a new remedy rose to meet it, the idea of an inner self or, in other words, of concealment. She puzzled out with imperfect signs, but with a prodigious spirit, that she had been a center of hatred and a messenger of insult, and that everything was bad because she had been employed to make it so. Her parted lips locked themselves with the determination to be employed no longer. She would forget everything, she would repeat nothing, and when, as a tribute to the successful application of her system, she began to be called a little idiot, she tasted a pleasure new and keen (20).

Later Maisie adopts the same strategy with regard to her governess Mrs. Wix.

Maisie was aware that her answer, though it brought her down to heels, was vague even to imbecility, and this was the first time she had appeared to practice with Mrs. Wix an intellectual inaptitude to meet her — the infirmity to which she had owed so much success with papa and mamma. The appearance did her injustice (206).

Time does not permit us to review how Maisie's divorced parents try out various partners destabilizing Maisie's environment at every turn. Even Mrs. Wix is not without blemish. And Maisie's step-father, the hopelessly inconstant Sir Claude, cannot help but disillusion Maisie at the novel's end, although he appreciates her sensitivity more than any other. In *What Maisie Knew* James does not indicate whether the mothering Maisie received before her parents' divorce was «good enough» to sustain her later in «cold storage». We cannot know if she will mature to develop a personality less dependent on concealment.

We do know by following the trajectory of James's fiction that issues of retreat, concealment, renunciation and failed relationships predominate until they reach their apotheosis in his last finished novel, *The Golden Bowl*. We also know that James worked out in fiction what he did not achieve in his personal life — namely, the full intimacy of fulfilled relationship. Yet it was the measure of intimacy that James invited with Hendrik Andersen and enjoyed with Dudley Jocelyn Persse that opened him to feelings long submerged and allowed him to complete the task of his fiction.

Anthony Storr, in his book entitled *Solitude: A Return to the Self*, not only expresses a deep appreciation of the need for solitude to produce creative work but also identifies the schizoid mode underlying a number of creative lives including James's. Storr describes a pattern of development for which, he notes, James's life proves an interesting exception. «At the beginning of life», Storr writes, «survival depends upon object-relationships.... Toward the end... the opposite condition obtains» (168). «There is a tendency to turn from empathy toward abstraction; to be less involved in life's dramas, more concerned with life's patterns» (169). Storr traces a parallel movement in the phases of an artist's work with concomitant developments in artistic influence, style and choice of subjects. Opening to intimate personal relations late in life, James's pattern reverses the usual sequence.

On a trip to Rome in 1899 James met a handsome Norwegian-born American sculptor named Hendrik Andersen. The famous novelist was instantly attracted, bought a small bust and invited the sculptor to visit him in Rye (Edel 489-490; 494-498). Andersen, Leon Edel observes, awakened for the first time in James feelings «akin to love» (Edel 498).

James was 56 and his new friend, 27. Thereafter James's letters, Edel observes, reveal a considerable alteration in his personality. He is looser, less formal, less distant; he writes with greater candor and with more emotional freedom. He has at last opened himself up to the physical things of life — and has fallen in love. We perceive an artist who grows less rigid and more experimental in spite of his aging (James, *Letters IV*: xiii).

When Andersen's older brother died in 1902, James wrote offering «to put my arm around you and make you lean on me as on a brother and a lover» (James, *Letters IV*: 226). All the evidence we have — James's reticence about sex, Hugh Walpole's word that James had refused him when he offered himself to the Master — suggests that James's passion was not sexually consummated. Throughout his life James remained passionately committed to his art as his primary relationship. In a notebook entry written in California in 1905, James describes his muse as one might a lover.

He is here with me in front of this green Pacific — he sits close and I feel his soft breath, which cools and steadies and inspires, on my cheek. Everything sinks in: nothing is lost; everything abides and fertilizes and renews its golden promise, making me think with closed eyes of deep and grateful longing when, in the full summer days of L[amb] H[ouse], my long dusty adventure over, I shall be able to [plunge] my hand, my arm *in*, deep and far, and up to the shoulder — into the heavy bag of remembrance — of suggestion — of imagination — of art — and fish out every little figure and felicity, every little fact and fancy that can be to my purpose (James, *Notebooks* 237).

After meeting Andersen, James could open to deep feelings he had not acknowledged before. «We know», Edel writes «that James had hitherto tended to look at the world as through plate glass» (498). Guntrip uses the same metaphor: «A somewhat common schizoid symptom is the feeling of a plateglass wall between the patient and the world» (*Schizoid* 63). James writes of Maisie:

So the sharpened sense of spectatorship was the child's main support, the long habit, from the first, of seeing herself in discussion and finding in the fury of it... a sort of compensation for the doom of a peculiar passivity. It gave her often an odd air of being present at her history in as separate a manner as if she could only get at experience by flattening her nose against a pane of glass (83).

James broke through that glass in his relation with Andersen. Although ultimately disappointing, it prepared him for more fulfilling and direct relationships with other men. As the idealized projections James had placed on Andersen dissolved over time, James was left aroused and awakened, more vulnerable and permeable to emotions, more desirous of intimate contact. Both the longing and the loss James experienced in relation to Andersen forced him to recognize, as John Marcher does, how incomplete life is without love. Although Marcher's realization came too late, James's paved the way for the novels of his major phase, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904).

In 1913 James wrote to Hugh Walpole, a young journalist, novelist and close friend.

We must know, as much as possible, in our beautiful art, yours and mine, what we are talking about — and the only way to know is to have lived and loved and cursed and floundered and enjoyed and suffered. I think I don't regret a single «excess» of my responsive youth — I only regret, in my chilled age, certain occasions and possibilities I *didn't* embrace (James, *Letters IV*: 680).

To Dudley Jocelyn Persse with whom James established a more satisfying and lasting relationship than he had with Andersen, James would write:

I rejoice greatly in your breezy, healthy, grousy — and housey, I suppose — adventures, and envy you, as always, your exquisite possession of the Art of Life which beats any Art of mine hollow (Edel 574).

The pull between «Art» and «Life» and between the need to hide and the desire to connect that leaves the schizoid «half in and half out» would characterize James throughout his life. But from his mid-fifties on, the outward pull toward external object relations is finally strong enough to challenge the inward one. James was a fiercely dedicated artist with a gifted imagination, a reservoir of deep feelings and a pronounced predilection toward the schizoid mode. It is no accident that his novels focus on what Dorothea Krook called «The Ordeal of Consciousness» and that one can trace in his complex style an elegant and subtle variety of verbs of cognition and an increasing emphasis on abstraction and intangibility. James's intimate knowledge of living in the inner world of the mind informs every aspect of his fiction and contributes to the sensitive creation of so many characters who seek refuge in hiding. Against the background of the schizoid position, James's late-life flirtations with intimacy with other men become all the more poignant. And against the background of his coming out of more than one closet, we might wonder if Maisie, like Maggie Verver, will emerge one day to enjoy fully consummated love.

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Guermantes et Méséglise ou le roman familial de Proust

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Parmi les nombreux liens que Freud établit entre la recherche psychanalytique et l'activité littéraire, il y en a un que l'on a parfois tendance à oublier et qui pourtant pourrait bien se révéler être l'un des plus importants: c'est son idée du «roman familial». D'après Freud cette idée se lit en filigrane dans chaque oeuvre littéraire et donne à celle-ci comme sa trame inconsciente. Marthe Robert a publié à ce sujet, il y aura bientôt vingt ans, un très beau livre, *Roman des origines et origines du roman*¹, qui montre de façon convaincante la portée de ce concept. Son livre n'a guère vieilli aujourd'hui. En effet, prendre comme point de départ de l'interrogation psychanalytique d'un ouvrage la façon dont les rôles du père et de la mère y sont traités et distribués, donne à l'analyse, même d'un point de vue didactique, cohérence et force de conviction.

Je pars donc de cette idée simple mais fondamentale de la théorie Freudienne, celle du «*Familienroman*»²: le roman familial de l'enfant, expression qui désigne les fantasmes de ce dernier qui, mécontent du sort que lui réservent ses parents, s'invente un autre père ou une autre mère, ou les deux à la fois, se procurant ainsi imaginativement les conditions d'une vie meilleure, et la solution — illusoire, bien entendu — à tout conflit, oedipien ou pré-oedipien. Car les parents réels restent là, eux aussi et eux surtout. S'il en est ainsi — et j'en arrive déjà à mon idée de base — les produits de notre esprit, dont le texte littéraire est l'un des plus beaux, doivent tous porter la marque de cette présence permanente et ineffaçable en notre imaginaire du père et de la mère de notre enfance. Les traces des expériences vécues avec ces derniers, et des rêves qu'ils ont inspirés, restent visibles, que nous le voulions ou non, une vie durant, non seulement dans notre apparence ou notre comportement, mais aussi dans la manière dont se forment en nous sentiments, fantasmes et pensées.

La loi de la communauté humaine nous propose un scénario où nous quittons père et mère, et allons mener notre propre vie, loin de la maison de notre enfance. Dans les scénarios de l'inconscient, qui sont à la fois ceux du commencement et ceux de toute une vie, les choses se passent autrement: ici, le couple des parents n'est jamais totalement absent. Et leur omniprésence n'est nulle part plus claire qu'en littérature: tôt ou tard, ouvertement

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¹ Paris, Grasset, 1972. Rééd. Paris, Gallimard, collection Tel, 1976, 1990.

² S. Freud: *Gesammelt Werke* (18 vol.), VII, 224, Frankfurt, Fischer Verlag, 1960.

ou en filigrane, le père et la mère de l'imaginaire d'un auteur, ceux du monde de son enfance, font leur apparition, et vont en moins de rien reprendre possession du devant de la scène.

C'est pourquoi les fantasmes qui occupent aujourd'hui notre esprit vagabond, par exemple lorsque nous créons ou lisons des oeuvres littéraires, ou, chose importante également, lorsque nous les enseignons, ne sauraient être conçus ni compris sans les fantasmes d'hier, lorsque papa en maman occupaient toute la place, ou presque. D'une façon ou de l'autre, leur souvenir s'est incrusté dans la matière et la mémoire de notre cerveau.

Ce que nous appelons «santé mentale» serait ainsi conditionné et défini par la qualité d'un tel concours, par l'harmonie — ou la disharmonie — qui s'établit dans notre esprit entre une «composante maternelle» et une «composante paternelle». Par «composante maternelle» j'entends ici — globalement parlant — les sentiments, images et paroles qui contiennent une référence au corps humain et à ses désirs, au domaine donc où Freud voyait surtout le «Ça» à l'oeuvre, et qui ne saurait être que notre terre originelle, maternelle. La «composante paternelle» renvoie, elle, plutôt aux différents codes — à celui du langage notamment — susceptibles d'introduire ordre et régularité dans l'univers maternel. Dans ce dernier cas nous avons surtout affaire à ce que Freud appelle le «Surmoi». Or, aussi bien le «Ça» que le «Surmoi» comportent un côté d'ombre, qui reste pour une large part inconscient. C'est le jeu plus ou moins heureux de ces deux composantes ou instances qui décide de la teneur ou la qualité de notre vie intérieure. Celle-ci comportera donc nécessairement des forces «régressives» — idée dont la connotation négative est à exclure ici — et des forces «conquérantes» qui nous font aller de l'avant.

Dans ce scénario qu'à travers une série d'images et de fragments pas toujours faciles à comprendre, tout être humain vit, consciemment, inconsciemment, avec le couple qui l'a formé, l'auteur de la *Traumdeutung* distingue quelques scènes cruciales qui ne manquent dans l'imaginaire de personne d'entre nous, et, ajoutons-le tout de suite, dont les traces se retrouvent dans toute oeuvre d'art:

1) Cela vaut en premier lieu pour la scène que Freud appelle «originnaire» ou «primitive»: c'est-à-dire pour le fantasme — qui ne renvoie pas nécessairement à des choses vues — que l'enfant nourrit au sujet des rapports sexuels de ses parents et de la violence que ces rapports entraîneraient. Le fantasme de l'origine, qui fait partie de l'héritage de chaque être humain et de celui de l'humanité entière, nous montre l'enfant à la recherche du secret de son existence. Metteur en scène, il joue à la fois avec l'image de sa mère et celle de son père. Ce qui en résulte nous montre, plus que tout autre fantasme, l'imbrication nécessaire mais problématique, violente même, de ces deux instances, dont l'intériorisation combinée est à l'origine de la personnalité — de la vie intérieure — de l'enfant.

2) La première image qu'un enfant conçoit dans son univers intérieur d'un idéal à poursuivre, est marquée, elle aussi, du sceau des deux parents: Freud appelle cet idéal «le père de la préhistoire», sans doute parce qu'il distrait et éloigne du corps maternel, mais dans une note il ajoute aussitôt qu'un tel père ne saurait exister dans l'imaginaire de l'enfant sans être accompagné d'une mère³. Il est permis de reconnaître dans ce «père de la préhistoire», comme le fait Julia Kristeva dans une étude intitulée *Histoires d'amour*⁴, le cadre de référence quasi définitif du travail de notre imagination, l'écran sur lequel vont être projetées ultérieurement les images permettant toutes sortes

³ Ibidem, XIII, 250-259.

⁴ Paris, Denoël, 1983.

de processus d'identification dans la vie de l'enfant et celle de l'adulte.

C'est dans ce cadre aussi que Freud situe le «roman familial» de l'enfant, où il reconnaît l'une des sources de la création littéraire, peut-être même sa source par excellence. Marthe Robert a pu développer à partir de cette théorie freudienne une typologie fort originale du genre narratif. Dans *Roman des origines et origines du roman*, elle distingue deux grands groupes de romanciers — qui n'existent d'ailleurs pas à l'état pur — : celui des auteurs «oedipiens» ou «bâtards» comprend ceux qui, tels Stendhal ou Balzac, écrivent des livres où l'image de la mère de leur enfance, idéalisée ou non, est restée intacte, mais d'où le père d'antan a été banni. Dans ces récits, de jeunes héros partent à la conquête du monde. Leur audace est soutenue par l'amour des femmes, qui sont souvent très maternelles, et par l'exemple des grands hommes, qui, eux, viennent glorieusement prendre la place du père réel. L'autre groupe — «préoedipien» — celui des «enfants trouvés», compte dans ses rangs les auteurs qui, tels Kafka, Beckett ou les frères Grimm, créent un univers dont notre réalité quotidienne semble être totalement absente, et où le père et la mère en tant que principaux responsables de cette réalité ont, eux aussi, été remplacés par des substituts de rêve.

Même la théorie Freudienne de la bisexualité humaine reçoit, dans ce cadre, un éclaircissement supplémentaire, puisque nous pouvons y reconnaître le résultat d'un processus d'identification ou d'intériorisation, qui est relatif aux deux parents.

3) On comprend que le *conflit oedipien*, le moment dans le développement de l'être humain où le triangle mère-enfant-père s'ouvre définitivement sur le monde extérieur (l'enfant aimerait expulser l'un des parents et prendre sa place auprès de l'autre, mais se voit obligé d'aller chercher l'objet de ses désirs ailleurs), constitue l'épisode décisif de ce scénario. Le nombre réduit des protagonistes de ce drame triangulaire ne diminue en rien la masse de ses variantes. Chaque oeuvre littéraire fournit à sa façon une nouvelle preuve de cette constatation.

Il va de soi que le style d'un auteur, c'est-à-dire la manière dont celui-ci exploite les possibilités et les limites de sa langue, est déterminé d'abord, et cela dans une très large mesure, par la culture, les idées, les façons de penser et de parler d'une période donnée. Le visage d'un écrivain se dessine toujours sur l'écran de sa propre époque. Une approche historique, sociologique, sémiotique ou féministe de l'oeuvre littéraire s'inspirera avant tout des aspects du texte qui renvoient à cette histoire collective. Cependant, un auteur n'appartient pas seulement à une époque, ou à une collectivité. Dans ce qu'il écrit, il fait aussi entendre sa propre musique: «Le style, c'est l'homme même». Dans le style d'un auteur, comme dans sa vie, les signes de l'histoire collective et ceux de l'histoire personnelle sont toujours intimement mêlés. Cette dernière, nous l'envisageons ici comme le jeu et l'imbrication de ces deux composantes, maternelle et paternelle, dont le chercheur peut essayer de retrouver les traces. C'est à un tel travail que nous nous livrons ici.

Ainsi, dans la thématique de n'importe quel ouvrage, les personnages du père ou de la mère, ou du moins leurs images ou celles des instances qui les remplacent, ne sont jamais absents. La structure d'un livre et son style peuvent également être éloquentes à cet égard. Tel auteur excellerà dans le maniement des nombreux codes que le langage met à sa disposition pour conquérir et organiser le monde, tel autre se servira surtout de ce même langage pour retrouver à travers lui le corps de l'autre, ou la terre qui nous nourrit et nous porte: tout ce dont, autrefois, la mère se portait garante. Ainsi l'articulation, toujours autre — différente

de toutes les autres — de ces deux instances, contribue grandement à l'originalité de l'écriture d'un auteur.

Voilà donc l'enjeu et la méthode de notre recherche. Nous essayons de voir comment, dans l'oeuvre qu'il crée, l'auteur inscrit également son histoire originelle, son «roman familial», celui qu'il a vécu avec le père et la mère de son enfance. Nous demandons au texte jusqu'à quel point le jeu de ces deux instances restées omniprésentes détermine le sens, la portée, la beauté de cette oeuvre⁵

C'est ce que l'analyse d'un passage pris dans *Combray* de Proust voudrait ici confirmer. Dans cet ouvrage, les traces du roman familial de l'auteur se lisent, si l'on peut dire, en filigrane.

«Aussi le côté de Méséglise et le côté de Guermantes restent-ils pour moi liés à bien des petits événements de celle de toutes les diverses vies que nous menons parallèlement, qui est la plus pleine de péripéties, la plus riche en épisodes, je veux dire la vie intellectuelle [...] Le côté de Méséglise avec ses lilas, ses aubépines, ses bluets, ses coquelicots, ses pommiers, le côté de Guermantes avec sa rivière à têtards, ses nymphéas et ses boutons d'or, ont constitué à tout jamais pour moi la figure des pays où j'aimerais vivre, où j'exige avant tout qu'on puisse aller à la pêche, se promener en canot, voir des ruines de fortifications et trouver au milieu des blés, ainsi qu'était Saint-André-des-Champs, une église monumentale, rustique et dorée comme une meule; et les bluets, les aubépines, les pommiers qu'il m'arrive quand je voyage de rencontrer encore dans les champs, parce qu'ils sont situés à la même profondeur, au niveau de mon passé, sont immédiatement en communication avec mon coeur. Et pourtant, parce qu'il y a quelque chose d'individuel dans les lieux, quand me saisit le désir de revoir le côté de Guermantes, on ne le satisferait pas en me menant au bord d'une rivière où il y aurait d'aussi beaux, de plus beaux nymphéas que dans la Vienne, pas plus que le soir en rentrant — à l'heure où s'éveillait en moi cette angoisse qui plus tard émigre dans l'amour, et peut devenir à jamais inséparable de lui — je n'aurais souhaité que vînt me dire bonsoir une mère plus belle et plus intelligente que la mienne. Non; même ce qu'il me fallait pour que je pusse m'endormir heureux, avec cette paix sans trouble qu'aucune maîtresse n'a pu me donner depuis puisqu'on doute d'elles encore au moment où on croit en elles, et qu'on ne possède jamais leur coeur comme je recevais dans un baiser celui de ma mère, tout entier, sans la réserve d'une arrière-pensée, sans le reliquat d'une intention qui ne fût pas pour moi — c'est que ce fût elle, c'est qu'elle inclinât vers moi ce visage où il y avait au-dessous de l'oeil quelque chose qui était, paraît-il, un défaut, et que j'aimais à l'égal du reste, de même ce que je veux revoir, c'est le côté de Guermantes que j'ai connu, avec la ferme qui est peu éloignée des deux suivantes serrées l'une contre l'autre, à l'entrée de l'allée des chênes; ce sont ces prairies où, quand le soleil les rend réfléchissantes comme une mare, se dessinent les feuilles des pommiers, c'est ce paysage dont parfois, la nuit dans mes rêves, l'individualité m'étreint avec une puissance presque fantastique et que je ne peux plus retrouver au réveil. Sans doute pour avoir à jamais indissolublement uni en moi des impressions différentes rien que parce qu'ils me les avaient fait éprouver en même temps, le côté de Méséglise ou le côté de Guermantes m'ont exposé, pour l'avenir, à bien des déceptions

⁵ Cette introduction théorique à l'analyse de *Combray* a également servi dans un travail dur l'oeuvre de la romancière canadienne Anne Hébert, paru dans *Texte, Revue de critique et de théorie littéraire*, Université de Toronto, 1990, 155-175.

et même à bien des fautes [...]» (Proust: *Combray*, in: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade — Folio. pp. 182-183).

Qu'est-ce qui arrive lorsque nous lisons ce texte de Proust: une, deux, cinq fois (à la première lecture, nous lisons surtout notre propre histoire, les fois d'après peut-être celle de l'autre), avec «l'attention flottante» dont parle Freud, celle qui nous rend disponibles à entendre d'autres voix dans le texte, et même celle de l'inconscient?

S'agissant de Proust, nous savons d'entrée de jeu que dans la vie aussi bien que dans l'écriture de cet auteur, une seule personne comptait: celle de sa mère. On pourrait dire que le désir, ce «plaisir imaginé» (Ricoeur) qui inspire et qui porte le roman de Proust, concerne en première et en dernière instance l'univers de la mère: l'univers du corps et de la matérialité des choses, celui de la présence aimante d'une mère à jamais en allée, celui de la douceur mais aussi de l'horreur que son amour lui apportait alors, et continue d'apporter au moment où il écrit son livre.

La page que voici, qui se trouve à la fin de la première partie de *Du côté de chez Swann*, intitulée *Combray*, et qui forme la conclusion d'une cinquantaine de pages consacrées aux deux promenades — celle de Méséglise et celle de Guermantes — que la famille du narrateur faisait dans les environs de cette petite ville: cette page présente surtout les caractéristiques d'un tel désir de la mère. Aussi le but de l'auteur n'est-il pas tant de raconter une histoire que de rendre présent l'univers de l'enfance, celui de la mère. Plus encore que l'évocation directe du baiser de la mère, le style de l'auteur nous fait partager sa nostalgie. La description détaillée, amoureuse, du paysage du côté de Guermantes — celle des deux fermes «serrées l'une contre l'autre», des prairies «réfléchissantes comme une mare», du paysage dont parfois, la nuit dans [s]es rêves, l'individualité [l]'étreint» — nous renvoie, dans son vocabulaire et dans sa syntaxe, à l'étreinte maternelle, et au rêve d'unité qu'elle inspire.

Notons également que Proust, qui était un contemporain de Freud, formule ici à sa manière l'une des lois de l'inconscient énoncées dans la *Traumdeutung*, en évoquant «l'heure où s'éveillait en [lui] cette angoisse qui plus tard émigre dans l'amour, et peut devenir à jamais inséparable de lui». Pour ces deux auteurs — Freud et Proust — notre vie d'adulte, et notamment notre vie amoureuse d'adulte, devient en quelque sorte la répétition des amours que nous avons vécues avec nos parents dans notre enfance. Ainsi, il est difficile d'imaginer le joli tableau que Proust peint vers la fin de ce passage, celui de «la ferme qui est un peu éloignée des deux suivantes serrées l'une contre l'autre», sans y voir une métaphore à peine déguisée de la situation oedipienne de l'enfant observant l'intimité de ses parents (ou son intimité rêvée avec l'un des deux, l'autre ayant été mis à l'écart).

Ce qui frappe lorsqu'on relit *Combray* est le fait que l'univers de la mère y coïncide pratiquement avec le côté de Guermantes. Le paysage aquatique, ensoleillé de Guermantes rappelle à l'auteur le souvenir de sa mère, du bonheur et du malheur qu'elle lui a laissés. Les vingt pages qui précèdent celle-ci⁶, et qui décrivent la promenade du côté de Guermantes, comportent en effet surtout des éléments «maternels»: la rivière et le secret des eaux tantôt transparentes, tantôt menaçantes; l'histoire de France, mère des héros et mère des beaux rêves; et, bien sûr, les deux figures féminines au centre: la première est la duchesse de Guermantes, la descendante de Geneviève de Brabant, celle dont la légende nous raconte qu'elle a été abandonnée par un mari jaloux. Maternelle, souriante mais inaccessible, la duchesse est longuement décrite par le narrateur (celui-ci s'attarde par exemple à une irrégularité dans le visage de la duchesse que nous retrouvons ici dans la description de sa mère). L'autre femme, évoquée en passant, une jeune femme pensive, habitant un lieu isolé, vraie Geneviève de Brabant moderne, abandonnée, elle aussi, par son mari, partageant à sa façon le sort du petit garçon qui doit se coucher sans baiser du soir. Soulignons enfin que l'auteur choisit la promenade de Guermantes pour y situer ce qui fut pour lui la découverte la plus importante

⁶ Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I — Folio, 163-181.

de sa vie: celle de l'écriture. La fameuse scène des clochers de Martinville forme la conclusion de cette partie du roman, comme si Proust tenait à faire de son travail d'écrivain la «réparation du corps maternel» dont parle Mélanie Klein. Quoi qu'il en soit, Guermantes, chez lui, semble renvoyer avant tout aux retrouvailles avec la mère.

S'il en est ainsi, la question s'impose de savoir si l'autre promenade, celle de Méséglise, n'appartient pas au père, à ce père qui chez Proust reste toujours un peu à l'ombre, ou faut-il dire: dans l'inconscient? Notre extrait, trop bref, ne fournit pas assez d'éléments permettant de répondre à cette question. Cependant, en lisant les pages, antérieures à celle-ci, où le narrateur se souvient du parcours Méséglise⁷, on constate que récit et description y sont en effet d'un autre ordre que lorsqu'il s'agit du côté de Guermantes. Pour faire bref — car tout ceci mériterait des développements bien plus étendus — la rivière, au bord de laquelle le narrateur rêvait, y fait place aux champs, où l'on travaille, le passé est remplacé par le présent, le beau temps par l'averse. Dans l'ensemble de ces pages sur le côté de Méséglise, les lois de la réalité et de l'âge adulte, celles que le père détient, ont tendance à prendre toute la place qui ailleurs, du côté de Guermantes, revient aux désirs et aux plaisirs du rêve et de l'enfance.

Cette réalité trouve ses principaux représentants dans deux figures paternelles, Swann et Vinteuil. Le parc du premier et la maison du dernier constituent les deux foyers à partir desquels l'auteur fait le récit de cette promenade. Du reste, si ces deux hommes jouissent de l'estime du narrateur, ce n'est pas tant parce qu'ils sont pères, mais, comme cela arrive presque toujours chez Proust lorsqu'il nous présente ses figures paternelles, parce qu'ils occupent une place honorable dans le monde de l'art: Vinteuil est musicien et se révélera même être un grand compositeur, et quant à Swann, ses amitiés et son goût très sûr en matière d'art le mettent également au rang des artistes.

Ainsi, dans le récit de Proust, le côté Méséglise ou «le côté de chez Swann» est en effet placé sous le signe du père. Et le père, chez Proust, est celui des deux parents qui s'occupe surtout de ses filles. Les garçons sont l'affaire de la mère (en fait, il s'agit presque toujours, chez Proust, d'enfants uniques, son narcissisme lui faisant ignorer — ou nier — toute rivalité possible sur ce plan), le père, lui, doit son importance à sa progéniture féminine. Des trois grandes scènes que compte cette promenade — la scène de Gilberte, celle des aubépines et celle de Vinteuil — deux ont des jeunes filles comme protagonistes. Or ces êtres qui intriguent tant le narrateur, n'ont qu'une seule réaction devant lui: elles le rejettent. Gilberte, la fille aux yeux noirs, habillée de rose, le premier amour de sa vie, n'a pour lui qu'un regard méprisant et même un geste indécent. Même si ce geste reçoit vers la fin du roman, par la bouche même de Gilberte, devenue entretemps l'épouse de Robert de Saint-Loup, une interprétation toute différente, cela ne change pas grand chose à l'impression initiale⁸. La fille de Vinteuil lui oppose un autre refus: ses amours homosexuelles sont observées par le petit garçon dans une scène de voyeurisme, qui est aussi, assez significativement, la plus longue scène de ce volume. Tout se passe comme si, à l'ombre du père, les jeunes filles en fleur voulaient interdire au narrateur l'accès à leur royaume, et par là même, au royaume du père, dont elles sont le plus précieux trésor. Selon cette logique, il ne lui resterait en effet d'autre issue que de retourner à sa mère.

Aussi la célèbre et très poétique scène des aubépines, qui forme la transition entre ces deux rencontres peu encourageantes, se lit-elle comme leur métaphore. Cet arbuste de toute beauté, qui a des épines jusque dans son nom, et dont la plus belle fleur, que le grand-père de l'auteur lui montre, a la couleur rose de Gilberte Swann, est destiné par lui à la virginité des fleurs qui servent sur l'autel du reposoir de la Vierge Marie, ce qui est une façon de dire leur «refus» à son égard. En fait, le garçon ne sait que faire de

⁷ Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I — Folio, 133-163.

⁸ *Albertine disparue*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, IV, 269.

leur secret, ni de l'ambivalence qui en émane. Le désarroi qui en résulte trouve son apogée dans la scène d'adieux à la fin des vacances où, telle un prince — ou une princesse — de tragédie, le garçon se sépare de ses chères aubépines, dont le mystère a conduit son imagination jusqu'à une vision de... «la mer»⁹. (Le narrateur trouve d'ailleurs moyen de faire assister sa mère à cette scène. Car c'est sans doute aussi en elle qu'il faut chercher la raison de tout ce qui se passe — et se passe si mal — entre lui et les jeunes filles). Ce tableau des refus répétés auxquels le narrateur se heurte auprès d'elles sera complété par l'évocation du refus définitif qu'est la mort, la loi la plus dure de cette réalité dont Méséglise et le père qui y trouve son domaine semblent les porteurs. Il s'agit de la mort de la tante Léonie, dont le souvenir survient également pendant la promenade de Méséglise. Pour le moment le narrateur ne réagit à tous ces abandons que par le récit d'une masturbation, en attendant les scènes homosexuelles entre hommes dans les volumes suivants.

D'après Michel Raimond et Luc Fraisse, qui, avec leur *Proust en toutes lettres*, nous ont donné un excellent «état présent des études proustiennes», Guermantes, ce rêve sur l'aristocratie, représenterait, dans l'oeuvre de Proust, le côté de l'imagination de l'auteur, Méséglise n'étant pas seulement le lieu de la bourgeoisie, mais surtout celui du corps et du désir¹⁰. Une telle conclusion ne convainc guère, désir et imagination pouvant difficilement être logés à des enseignes différents. Mieux vaut sans doute constater l'opposition que Proust crée entre, d'un côté, le domaine du désir ou du plaisir, où le personnage maternel occupe la place centrale, et, de l'autre, celui de la réalité et de la frustration concomitante, où le père apparaît comme le gardien de l'objet du désir: de la mère d'abord, de la jeune fille ensuite, et enfin, dans un contexte moins conflictueux, de l'oeuvre d'art qui se révélera être la seule issue pour l'auteur. Car dans ce roman les pères — et d'abord celui du narrateur — ne réussissent pas à faire accéder leur progéniture à la vie adulte. La frustration, qui est le lot commun des enfants, concerne non seulement l'autre dont on est amoureux et qui se montre inaccessible, mais aussi la figure paternelle elle-même, absente ou bafouée, n'assumant pas son rôle de modèle et de législateur. Aussi Méséglise est-elle pour le narrateur «quelque chose d'inaccessible comme l'horizon, dérobé à la vue, si loin qu'on [aille]»¹¹. Quoi d'étonnant donc — nous le devinons dès le début de ce long roman — si le désir du narrateur se tourne vers Guermantes, nom qui, d'après lui, apparaît «comme le terme plutôt idéal que réel de son propre côté»¹². Dans ce royaume de la mère et de son fils, des gamins jouent au jeu mystérieux du «contenant» et du «contenu»¹³, et plus tard un rameur y montre sur son visage «l'avant-goût du bonheur et de la paix»¹⁴. Guermantes et Méséglise reçoivent ainsi une charge plus riche encore que ce que l'auteur y avait d'abord projeté.

Retournons à notre extrait. Nous comprenons maintenant mieux la phrase d'ouverture insistant sur le lien indissoluble qui unit le côté de Méséglise et celui de Guermantes, et soulignant leur importance pour la vie «intellectuelle», intérieure de l'auteur. Elles peuvent être lues comme les métaphores des principaux stades — pré-oedipien et oedipien — du développement de cette même vie intérieure. Cette interprétation contraste du reste avec le début de ce long développement sur «les deux côtés», où le narrateur s'arrête avant tout à ce qui sépare Guermantes et Méséglise en les opposant l'un à l'autre. Aussi pour aller du côté de Méséglise doit-on emprunter une autre porte que si Guermantes est le but de la promenade. C'est, affirme le narrateur, comme s'il s'agissait de «deux côtés de

⁹ Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I — Folio, 137.

¹⁰ *Proust en toutes lettres*, Paris, Bordas, 1989, 118-119.

¹¹ Bibliothèque de la Pléiade I — Folio, 132.

¹² Ibidem, 133.

¹³ Ibidem, 166.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 168.

[s]on cerveau» enfermés «loin l'un de l'autre, inconnaissables l'un à l'autre» (pp. 132-133).

L'indissolubilité en revanche dont il est question dans notre texte ne se comprend qu'à la lumière de ce qui vient d'être dit ici: Dans l'esprit de Proust, Méséglise et Guermantes renvoient en dernière analyse aux instances maternelle et paternelle, précisément dans leur imbrication indissoluble. Proust parle à la fin de cette page, dans un contexte légèrement autre, d'«impressions différentes... éprouv[ées] en même temps». Elles sont à l'origine, non seulement du corps de l'auteur, mais aussi de son imagination et de son écriture. L'une des tâches — jamais accomplie, d'autres diraient: impossible à accomplir — de l'écriture serait justement de concilier ou d'harmoniser ces deux pôles de notre être, entre lesquels aucune conciliation ou coalition ne sera jamais définitive, ni aucune harmonie stable. (Le dernier secret de cette dialectique interne de l'être humain pourrait bien se trouver dans un autre couple Freudien, qui a marqué la fin de sa vie et de sa carrière, celui entre l'instinct de mort et l'instinct de vie).

Ainsi, ce que Proust essaie de concilier dans son oeuvre, ce ne sont pas seulement le temps passé et celui d'aujourd'hui, ni le monde hétérosexuel et le monde homosexuel, problème qui est pourtant l'un de ses principaux centres d'intérêt. Derrière tout cela nous sentons la présence, permanente, obsédante, du couple parental, dont l'union et la désunion entre eux et avec leur enfant formeraient la trame même de l'aventure Proustienne. Il suffit en effet d'un regard sur une page, presque choisie au hasard, dans *Combray*, pour constater que le roman familial dont parlait Freud, le jeu des fantasmes, conscients mais aussi pour une large part inconscients, autour du père et de la mère, représente une couche essentielle de la création Proustienne¹⁵.

Dans les derniers volumes du grand roman ce jeu d'oppositions tend à prendre un autre caractère, et presque à s'effacer. A ce moment-là Proust révèle la secrète unité qui dès le départ liait entre eux dans son imaginaire tant de personnages et de lieux qui jusqu'ici semblaient inconciliables, à mille lieues les uns des autres. Du moment que madame Verdurin peut devenir princesse de Guermantes, et Robert de Saint-Loup un des nombreux homosexuels qui peuplent l'univers proustien, Guermantes et Méséglise voient, elles aussi, s'estomper leurs contours. Or dans les pages où il signale ces «bouleversements», au sujet des deux «côtés», les associations du narrateur semblent pour la première fois établir un rapport plus ou moins conscient avec le couple parental, lorsqu'il enchaîne sans raison apparente: «En tant d'êtres il y a différentes couches qui ne sont pas pareilles, le caractère de son père, le caractère de sa mère; on traverse l'une, puis l'autre. Mais le lendemain l'ordre de superposition est renversé. Et finalement on ne sait pas qui départagera les parties, à qui on peut se fier pour la sentence»¹⁶. Désormais Guermantes et Méséglise forment un couple uni, la distance qui les séparait était une invention de l'enfance. Gilberte, qui en vieillissant a changé comme le paysage qu'elle habite, propose même au narrateur cette chose étonnante, et qui aurait été impensable mille pages plus tôt: «Si vous voulez, nous pouvons tout de même sortir un après-midi et nous pouvons alors aller à Guermantes, en prenant par Méséglise, c'est la plus jolie façon»¹⁷. Et le narrateur de conclure: «Les deux côtés n'étaient pas aussi inconciliables que j'avais cru».

¹⁵ L'écriture de Proust ne saurait être qu'un cas — exemplaire, il est vrai — parmi tant d'autres. Ailleurs j'ai étudié dans la même perspective et avec des résultats également éclairants, les oeuvres d'auteurs aussi divergents que Fénelon et Roland Barthes, ou Beckford et Marguerite Yourcenar. Cette perspective, pratique, didactique, dont je dois l'idée surtout à Marthe Robert, qui, elle, avait repris à sa manière — magistrale — les intuitions de base de Freud, s'est révélée être si féconde que mon collègue Walter Schönau et moi organisons en novembre 1992 un congrès sur le thème «Pères et Mères dans la littérature» à l'université de Groningue. L'un des buts de ces pages a été d'éveiller l'intérêt du lecteur pour ce congrès et — qui sait? — de l'y attirer.

¹⁶ *Albertine disparue*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade IV, 267-268.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 268.

Guermantes et Méséglise sont ainsi «conciliées», comme se concilient dans l'esprit qui va vers la maturité les images de parents que dans son narcissisme initial il n'avait pu voir que comme des concurrents ou même des ennemis. Après la traversée de toutes les frustrations que la vie et l'écriture lui ont réservées, le narrateur a définitivement pris ses distances. Il n'en est que plus frappant que le rapprochement entre ces êtres et ces lieux ne puisse s'opérer qu'au moment où le narrateur sait qu'il va affronter la grande aventure qui mettra fin à toutes les différences, même à celle entre réalité et rêve. Car c'est en méditant sur la mort, la séparation définitive, que Proust conçoit l'idée de son roman. L'écriture accomplira imaginairement ce que la vie n'a pas réussi à faire. L'unité et la conciliation proposées par le livre ne s'en dessinent pas moins sur un fond de décadence et de déception. Les retrouvailles avec Guermantes et Méséglise ne sont pas heureuses. Le roman familial, douloureux depuis le début, ne connaît pas de fin heureuse. Au niveau du récit, le bonheur du narrateur consiste surtout dans le jeu de la mémoire lui permettant de revivre tel ou tel moment d'un passé devenu inaccessible. Il n'empêche qu'au niveau de l'écriture son oeuvre lui révèle la vérité mystérieuse d'être plus grand que tout cela, plus grand que l'histoire vécue avec sa mère et son père, plus grand que Guermantes et Méséglise, qu'hier ou aujourd'hui. C'est un peu de ce bonheur-là, fait de paroles qui éclairent, concilient, consolent, qu'il communique parfois à ses lecteurs.

Fernando Pessoa: Temps et Espace

FREDERICO PEREIRA (*)

Fernando Pessoa est le poète du faire semblant, dans lequel se profile la recherche de la plus radicale authenticité; il est le poète aussi de l'hétéronimie, le poète-plusieurs-scènes où chaque personne-personnage vient à vivre et à dire — plus qu'une partie d'un Soi qui semblerait polymorphe — une élaboration des difficultés d'être ouvertes par une autre personnage-personne.

Et Pessoa, Reis, Caeiro, Campos, Soares sont certainement les plus importants de ces personnages-personnes — à quoi il faut encore ajouter que Pessoa est aussi *la scène* où ils existent: *scène* comme on dit: la «*scène d'un rêve*».

Dans cette scène ils existent, et ils se rencontrent. Campos, par exemple, raconte une conversation avec Caeiro — et c'est intéressant de voir que le sujet de cette conversation est *l'infini*.

Infini que pour Caeiro est impensable, alors que pour Campos il s'agit d'une évidence (— mais est-ce qu'on peut l'atteindre, cet infini-évidence?).

Dit Campos:

«...*Mais ne concevez-vous pas l'espace comme infini? Ne pouvez vous pas concevoir l'espace comme infini?*'

'Je ne conçois rien comme infini. Comment pourrais-je concevoir quelque chose comme infini.'

'... supposez un espace; au-delà de cet espace il y a davantage d'espace, et davantage et davantage et davantage... cela ne finit pas...'

'Pourquoi?' dit mon maître Caeiro.

Cela a produit en moi un tremblement de terre mental. 'Supposez que cela finit', j'ai crié. 'Qu'y a-t-il après?'

'Si cela finit, après il n'y a rien', répondit-il.»

Campos demande alors à Caeiro:

«*Mais vous concevez cela' (...)*

'Si je conçois quoi? Qu'une chose a de limites? Evidemment! Ce qui n'a pas de limites n'existe pas. (...) En quoi est-il difficile de concevoir qu'une chose est une chose et n'est pas toujours en voie d'être autre chose qui est au-delà?'»¹

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¹ 'Mas V. não concebe o espaço como infinito? Você não pode conceber o espaço como infinito?' 'Não concebo nada como infinito. Como é que eu posso conceber qualquer coisa como infinito?' '... suponha um espaço. Para além desse espaço há mais espaço, para além desse mais, e depois

L'explication de l'attitude de Caeiro, de la façon de *voir* de Caeiro vient de Reis: il évoque chez Caeiro un *objectivisme total*, un «sensorialisme» où la «*Nature c'est des parties sans un tout*». Avec lui «*l'objectivisme va jusqu'à sa conclusion fatale et dernière, la négation d'un tout que l'expérience des sens n'autorise pas sans l'intromission (...) externe, de la pensée*».

La recherche de Caeiro est ainsi une recherche de l'accès immédiat à un espace où il n'y a pas de Pensée.

Caeiro, qui sera notre point de départ, «vit d'impressions immédiates, surtout visuelles» et *jouit dans chaque impression de l'impression elle-même et non pas d'autre chose, même pas de son contenu, car une impression n'a pas de contenu.*

Caeiro dit:

«... J'écris la prose de mes vers
et je suis content
Parce que je sais que je comprends la Nature de l'extérieur;
...
Parce que la Nature n'a pas d'intérieur;
Sinon elle n'était pas la Nature.»²

Et en parlant du sens des choses:

«'Constitution intime des choses'...
'Sens intime de l'Univers'...
Tout ceci est faux, tout ceci ne veut rien dire
...
Le seul sens intime des choses
C'est qu'elles n'ont aucun sens intime du tout.»³

L'éradication de la Pensée est le principe même de Caeiro: *pas de pensée en tant que pensée.*

«Je suis un gardien de troupeaux.
Le troupeau c'est mes pensées
Et mes pensées sont toutes sensations.
Je pense avec les yeux et les oreilles
Et avec les mains et les pieds
Et avec le nez et le bouche.»⁴

mais, mais, e mais... Não acaba...'

«Por que?» disse o meu mestre Caeiro.

Fiquei num terramoto mental. 'Suponha que acaba', gritei. «O que há depois?»

'Se acabe, depois não há nada', respondeu.

(...)

'Mas V. concebe isso?'(...)

'Se concebo o quê? Uma coisa ter limites? Pudera! O que não tem limites não existe. (...) O que é que custa conceber que uma coisa é uma coisa, e não está sempre a ser uma outra coisa que está mais adiante?' Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, pp. 189-190, ed. Maria Aliete Dores Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda., 1960. Citation de «Notas para a recordação do meu mestre Caeiro» de Álvaro de Campos.

² «... escrevo a prosa dos meus versos/ E fico contente,/ Porque sei que compreendo a Natureza por fora/.../ Porque a natureza não tem dentro;/ Senão não era a Natureza.» Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, p. 156, ed. Maria Aliete Dores Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda., 1960. Citation de «Poemas Completos de Alberto Caeiro».

³ «'Constituição íntima das coisas'.../ 'Sentido íntimo do Universo'.../ Tudo isto é falso, tudo isto não quer dizer nada./.../ O único sentido íntimo das coisas/ É elas não terem sentido íntimo nenhum.» Idem, p. 142.

⁴ «Sou um guardador de rebanhos./ O rebanho é os meus pensamentos/ E os meus pensamentos são todos sensações./ Penso com os olhos e com os ouvidos/ E com as mãos e os pés/ E com o nariz e a boca.» Ibidem, p. 148.

Poète inculte, païen par tempérament, plus païen encore que les Grecs, poète du sensorial, de l'immédiat — *l'Espace de Caeiro est un Espace de Surfaces*.

«Je ne suis même pas un poète: Je vois.»⁵ — dit-il.

Et l'Espace des choses dites est l'espace de le Trahison du sujet:

«N'est-il pas vrai que cette fleur là
n'est plus une fleur, seulement une fleur,
à partir du moment où d'elle je parle?»

Lui *donner un nom* c'est l'étrangler.

C'est vrai: *sans nom* comment existera-t-elle?...

Mais *avec un nom* comment pourra-t-elle exister?

«Les hommes défigurent le réel
En métant des écritaux sur les arbres.»

Le poète *veut se disperser, se disperser infiniment dans l'infinitude des choses* qui sont *diverses* ou qui, parce que le temps passe, deviennent *d'autres choses*.

Pourtant, il sent en simultanément *l'impossibilité radicale du sentir-seulement-sentir: sentir sans une subjectivité qui accueille le senti et lui donne un nom c'est à la fin si complètement se disperser, si complètement devenir objet, que le senti lui-même s'évanouit, se perd dans l'Espace et disparaît dans en Temps qui n'est plus*.

«Je n'arrive pas toujours à sentir ce que
Je dois sentir
parce qu'il faut que je le dise
Sinon je ne sais même plus ce que je sens.»

Sentir sans nommer, sentir sans penser à la chose sentie, c'est devenir *radicalement vrai*, car la chose en fait n'est que *chose* et *non pensée-de-chose* — mais sentir sans nommer, sentir sans penser c'est aussi perdre le senti dans un Espace-surface et dans un Temps vide.

D'un autre côté *nommer le senti* c'est déjà le transformer, faire de lui *autre chose qu'un pur senti*, faire de la chose autre chose que la chose même, et donc pour le garder le perdre, pour le maintenir le laisser s'évanouir.

L'âme qui ne dit rien *devient la pierre ou la fleur* qu'elle cherche simplement à regarder. Processus circulaire sans solution possible.

Sauf à disparaître, le poète ne peut réaliser son projet d'avoir accès aux choses mêmes; mais s'il disparaît, comment pourrait-il avoir un projet?...

Même son «tempérament» ne peut devenir poésie, car il est en deçà de tout(e) poésie).

Dissous dans les surfaces multiples des objets sans contenu qu'il ne peut capturer puisque lui-même n'est qu'un Espace-surface, le poète ne peut que trahir son projet et les choses mêmes qu'il regarde, *puisque il les dit*.

Refus des Noms. Refus de la Pensée: refus de la Philosophie.

«Avec la Philosophie — dit-il — il n'y a pas d'arbres; il y a seulement des idées».

Confronté à un Espace *unaire* où il n'y aurait plus de polarisation Sujet-Objet, et à un temps qui n'existe plus *parce que la nature n'a pas de mémoire*, Caeiro ne fait que penser sur la Trahison où l'impossibilité de penser!

Et j'aurais tendance à dire: finalement il n'y a pas là une *vraie* Trahison aux choses puisque la seule façon d'accéder aux choses telles qu'elles sont c'est de penser sans arrê

⁵ «Eu nem sequer sou poeta: vejo.» Ibidem, p. 176.

sur les choses. La Tragédie du Sujet pour Caeiro — et avec lui l'homme Pessoa — c'est que c'est seulement en pensant qu'on accède à la non pensée, vérité des choses et donc vérité du Sujet.

Et cependant, me semble-t-il, partout, toujours, un APPEL à un regard souriant...

Ce que Caeiro refuse, somme toute, c'est le mouvement projectif qui constitue les choses, la vibration des choses, l'être fondamental de choses.

«Une fleur par chance a de la beauté?
Aura un fruit une quelconque beauté?
Non: ils ont une couleur et une forme
et seulement existent.»⁶

Mais si Caeiro développe une Pensée contre la Pensée, on une Philosophie contre la Philosophie, contre toute idée-unificatrice-mensonge, s'il refuse de se mettre à l'intérieur d'un monde qui doit rester *surface* et donc n'a pas d'intérieur — s'il refuse la Projection constitutive des choses — et si tellement il le répète c'est que, en deçà du dit, il y a une impulsion contraire, à *se jeter dans le monde*. Seulement (l'homme Pessoa-âme au centre de tous le hétéronomes et au centre de l'orthonome), seulement il ne veut pas se tromper; c'est comme si il disait: 'oui, au fond je veux cela qui est derrière les surfaces du monde, mais cela doit valoir en soi: ne me demandez pas de m'y mettre, ne me demandez pas de participer à la constitution de cela qui serait derrière les surfaces du monde, ne me demandez pas de me tromper au point d'y trouver ce que j'y ai mis et avec tout cela devenir content.'

Caeiro n'accepte pas une Illusion, et il veut répéter: 'Je suis heureux avec ce que je vois et j'entends et je ne veux pas me tromper.'

Or si Caeiro est le poète de la non-subjectivité, avec toutes les difficultés que pose un tel projet, Ricardo Reis découvre à *l'extérieur* le Temps et l'Espace, et il *construit* une Subjectivité qu'il veut dominer sans découvrir.

«Plusieurs vivent en nous;
Si je pense ou sens, j'ignore
Qui pense ou sent.
Je suis seulement le lieu
Où l'on sent et où l'on pense.

J'ai plus d'âmes qu'une.
Il y a plus de mois que moi-même.
J'existe toutefois
indifférent à tous.
Je les fais taire: Je parle.

Des impulsions croisées
De ce que je sens ou ne sens pas
Désputent en qui je suis.
Je les ignore. Ils ne disent rien
À qui me sait: J'écris.»⁷

⁶ «Uma flor acaso tem beleza?/ Tem beleza acaso um fruto?/ Não: têm cor e forma/ E existência apenas.» Ibidem, p. 155.

⁷ «Vivem em nós inúmeros;/ Se penso ou sinto, ignoro/ Quem é que pensa ou sente./ Sou somente o lugar./ Onde se sente ou pensa.// Tenho mais almas que uma./ Há mais eus do que eu mesmo./ Existo todavia/ indiferente a todos./ Faço-os calar: eu falo.// Os impulsos cruzados/ Do que sinto ou não sinto/ Disputam em quem sou./ Ignoro-os. Nada ditam/ A quem me sei; eu 'screvo.» Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, Vol. 2, p. 130, ed. João Gaspar Simões, Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1986. Citation de «Odes de Ricardo Reis».

Ce n'est pas de l'advenir à être qui est en mouvement. C'est la reconnaissance d'une pluralité qui se contrôle et contient dans le moment du dire. *Il y a «plusieurs» mais c'est «moi» qui parle; il y a «plusieurs» mais c'est «moi» qui écrit.* Alors que Caeiro vit la dispersion dans la limite, Reis vit la contention. Dans l'absence de synthèse, il y a domination. Domination-silence de tout ce qui empêcherait au moins l'illusion du Sujet de se constituer.

Ce Sujet au fond manqué crée un Espace: un Espace où l'on peut aller d'ici là — mais un espace singulier car de là où l'on va on ne peut revenir.

Un *Espace irréversible* — avec un *Temps ponctuel irréversible*: un temps extérieur, succession de points extérieurs des une discontinuité.

«Si je me rappelle qui j'ai été, autrui je me vois,
Et le passé est le présent dans le souvenir.
 Qui j'ai été est quelqu'un que j'aime
 Mais seulement en rêve.
Et la nostalgie qui m'afflige l'esprit
N'est pas de moi ni du passé vu,
 Sinon de qui j'habite
 Derrière les yeux aveugles.
Rien, sinon l'instant, ne me connaît.
Mon souvenir même n'est rien, et je sens
 Que qui je suis et qui j'ai été
 Ce sont des rêves différents.»⁸

Le Sujet, donc, existe dans un temps qu'il ne peut élaborer, un temps externe, fait de purs instants discontinus, dont cependant la suite est déterminée: c'est la Destinée — temps externe et irréversible.

L'Espace est peuplé d'objets et il semblerait qu'à ces objets Reis ne veuille point se *juxtaposer*.

L'effort de la conscience hautaine lui commande de reconnaître les choses, mais d'en être indépendant.

La fleur existe et s'impose à mon regard, mais mon regard doit être libre de toute fleur.

Reis est en quelque sorte l'opposé de Caeiro: on dirait presque que maintenant c'est la Conscience qui doit s'imposer et non l'Objet, le Sujet et non la Chose. Et peu importe la chose, peu importe même tout du Sujet sinon son regard ou sa fonction regardante. Car tout peut disparaître sauf la Vision.

«...
Peu m'importe
Amour ou gloire,
La richesse est un métal, la gloire un echo
Et l'amour une ombre.

Mais l'exacte
Attention donnée
Aux formes et aux manières des objets
a un sûr abri.

⁸ «Se recordo quem fui, outrem me vejo,/ E o passado é o presente na lembrança./ Quem fui é alguém que amo/ Porém somente em sonho./ E a saudade que me afflige a mente/ Não é de mim nem do passado visto,/ Senão de quem habito/ Por trás dos olhos cegos./ Nada, senão o instante, me conhece./ Minha mesma lembrança é nada, e sinto/ Que quem sou e quem fui/ São sonhos diferentes.» Idem, p. 232.

Ses fondements
Sont tout le monde,
Son amour est le placide Univers,
Sa richesse la vie.

Sa gloire
Est la suprême
Certitude de la solennelle et claire possession
Des formes des objets.

Le reste passe,
Et craint la mort.
Seule rien ne craint ou souffre la vision claire
Et inutile de l'Univers.

Il ne désire rien
Sauf l'orgueil de voir toujours claire
Jusqu'à cesser de voir.»⁹

Cette subjectivité hautaine dont on dirai qu'elle n'a pas besoin de l'Objet, en même temps qu'elle construit le Temps cherche à le dominer.

Dominer le Temps signifie le suspendre à *un moment spécial, le moment de la construction de la domination du Temps* qui est le moment de sa fin dans la Mort que le sujet transforme non pas en Suicide mais en action volontaire. «Par notre pied nous y entrerons».

Espace binaire où il y a Sujet et Conscience attentive d'un côté, Objet de l'autre, Temps ponctuel quoique dominé par la Mort — c'est aussi la temporalité réduite qui est le champ même de l'Etre. Sujets, Objets, face au Temps et à son absolue détermination ne sont rien — et c'est lui qui à la fin est TOUT. Un TOUT externe, non incorporé, non assimilé à la masse même du Sujet ou à la continuité des Objets dans leur devenir: dans les Objets il se réduit à se graver pour s'objectiver lui-même.

«Aussi dans la plaque l'externe instant grave
Son Etre, en elle durant.»

Si pour Caiero être c'est devenir les objets dans un Espace unaire où le Sujet est la pulsation même de l'Objet et où le Temps n'existe pas puisque «la Nature n'a pas de mémoire», pour Reis être c'est être attentif dans un espace où il y a Sujet et des Objets, mais sans contact réel, c'est à dire avec réduction de mouvements projectifs constitutifs de la vie des choses, à l'intérieur d'un Temps que tout néantifie et qu'il s'agit précisément, avant tout, de dominer, en l'objectivant lui-même.

Si l'aventure de Reis réside dans la domination du Temps, celle de Álvaro de Campos, consiste à élargir sans fin l'Espace du Sujet, à y mettre la totalité du monde. *C'est Moi, univers pensant en chair et en os, qui veut passer.*

Permettez-moi de citer, un peu longuement, des extraits de «La salutation à Walt Withman»:

⁹ «... Pouco me importa/ Amor ou glória,/ A riqueza é um metal, a glória é um eco/ E o amor uma sombra.// Mas a concisa/ Atençaõ dada/ Às formas e às maneiras dos objectos/ Tem abrigo seguro.// Seus fundamentos/ São todo o mundo,/ Seu amor é o plácido Universo,/ Sua riqueza a vida.// A sua glória/ É a suprema/ Certeza da solene e clara posse/ Das formas dos objectos.// O resto passa,/ E teme a morte./ Só nada teme ou sofre a visão clara/ E inútil do Universo.// Nada deseja/ Salvo o orgulho de ver sempre claro/ Até deixar de ver.» Idem, p. 212.

«...
C'est donc à toi que j'adresse
Mes vers sauts, me vers bonds, mes vers spasmes
Mes vers-attaques-hystériques
Mes vers qui trainent le char de mes nerfs.
...
Ouvrez-moi toutes les fenestres!
Arrachez-moi toutes les portes!
Tirez la maison entière sur moi!
...
Je ne veux pas de fermetures aux portes!
Je ne veux pas de fermeture aux coffres!
Je veux m'intercaler, m'imiscer, être pris,
Je veux qui on fasse de moi appartenance folle de quelqu'un d'autre.
Qu'on me jette des porbelles,
Qu'on me lance aux mers,
Qu'on me cherche à la maison avec des fins obscènes,
Rien que pour ne pas être ici assis et sans bouger,
Rien que pour ne pas être simplement en écrivant ces vers!

Je ne veux pas d'intervalles dans le monde!
Je veux la contiguïté pénétrée et matérielle des objets!
Je veux que les corps physiques appartiennent les uns aux autres comme les âmes,
Non pas seulement dynamiquement mais statiquement aussi!

...

He calle Walt:

Porte donnant sur tout!
Pont pour tout!
Route vers tout!
Ton âme omnivore,
Ton âme oiseau, poisson, fauve, homme, femme,
Ton âme les deux où ce sont deux,
Ton âme le un qui sont deux quand deux sont un,
Ton âme flèche, rayon, espace,
Amplexes, sexes, Texas, Caroline, New-York,
Brooklyn Ferry l'après midi,
Brooklyn Ferry des allées et des retours,
Libertad, Democracy, Vingtième Siècle au loin!
Pum! pum! pum! pum! pum!
PUM!

Toi, ce que tu étais, ce que tu voyais, toi ce que tu entendais,
Le Sujet et le Objet, l'actif et le passif,
Ici et là, partout toi,
Cercle fermant toutes les possibilités de sentir,
Marque milliaire de toutes les choses qui peuvent être,
Dieu Terme de tous les objets, qui s'imaginent et c'est toi!
Toi Heure,
Toi Minute,

Toi Seconde!
 Toi intercalé, libéré, déployé, allé,
 Intercalement, libération, allée, déploiement,
 Toi intercaleur, libérateur, deployeur, expéditeur,
 Timbre dans toutes les lettres,
 Nom dans toutes les adresses,
 Marchandise rendue, retournée, suivant...
 Train de sensations l'âme qu'ilomètre-heure,
 À l'heure, à la minute, à la second, PUM!¹⁰

Un extrait maintenant du «Passage des Heures»:

«Je porte dans mon coeur,
 Comme dans un coffre qu'on ne peut pas fermer tellement il est plein,
 Tous les lieux où j'ai été,
 Tous les ports où je suis arrivé,
 Tous les paysages que j'ai vu au travers des fenêtres ou des hublots,
 Ou des dunettes, en rêvant,
 Et tout cela, qui est tant de choses, c'est peu pour ce que je veux.»¹¹

L'espace interne est peuplé par TOUT: l'espace interne est l'espace du Tout. Espace infini où radique l'omnipotence du Sujet face au Temps. Qu'importe d'ailleurs le Temps si l'on a prise sur un Espace qui est tout l'espace?

L'espace poétique, d'ailleurs, est lui aussi l'homologue de l'espace interne: infini, luxuriant.

Mais un espace interne peuplé par tout, par toutes les choses du Monde et tous les sentiments du monde et toutes les pensées du monde — n'est-ce pas cela la même chose qu'un *Espace vide*? Un Espace qui n'est pas un espace mais un *Anti-Espace*. De nouveau il n'y a pas un *dedans* et un *dehors*, pas un *ici* et un *là* — et pas un *avant* et un *après*.

¹⁰ «... Por isso é a ti que endereço/ Meus versos saltos, meus versos pulos, meus versos espasmos/ Os meus versos-ataques-históricos,/ Os meus versos que arrastam o carro dos meus nervos./.../ Abram-me todas as janelas!/ Arranquem-me todas as portas!/ Puxem a casa toda para cima de mim!./.../ Não quero fechos nas portas!/ Não quero fechaduras nos cofres!/ Quero intercalar-me, imiscuir-me, ser levado,/ Quero que me façam pertença doída de qualquer outro,/ Que me despejem dos caixotes,/ Que me atirem aos mares,/ Que me vão buscar a casa com fins obscenos,/ Só para não estar sempre aqui sentado e quieto,/ Só para não estar simplesmente escrevendo estes versos!./ Não quero intervalos no mundo!/ Quero a contiguidade penetrada e material dos objectos!/ Quero que os corpos físicos sejam uns dos outros como as almas,/ Não só dinamicamente, mas estáticamente também!./.../ *He calle Walt*:// Porta para tudo!/ Ponte para tudo!/ Estrada para tudo!/ Tua alma omnívora,/ Tua alma ave, peixe, fera, homem, mulher,/ Tua alma os dois onde estão dois,/ Tua alma o um que são dois quando dois são um,/ Tua alma seta, raio, espaço,/ Amplexo, nexo, sexo, Texas, Carolina, New-York,/ Brooklyn Ferry à tarde,/ Brooklyn Ferry das idas e dos regressos,/ Libertad! Democracy! Século vinte ao longe!/ Pum! pum!/pum!/pum!/ PUM!./ Tu, o que eras, tu o que vias, tu o que ouvias,/ O sujeito e o objecto, o activo e o passivo,/ Aqui e ali, em toda a parte tu,/ Círculo fechando todas as possibilidades de sentir,/ Marco miliário de todas as coisas que podem ser,/ Deus Termo de todos os objectos que se imaginam e és tu!/ Tu Hora,/ Tu Minuto,/ Tu Segundo!/ Tu intercalado, liberto, desfraldado, ido,/ Intercalamto, libertação, ida, desfraldamento,/ Tu intercalador, libertador, desfraldador, remetente,/ Carimbo em todas as cartas,/ Nome em todos os endereços,/ Mercadoria entregue, devolvida, seguindo.../ Comboio de sensações a alma-quilómetros à hora,/ À hora, ao minuto, ao segundo, PUM!» Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, pp. 297-8, ed. Maria Aliete Dores Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda, 1960, Citation de «Saudação a Walt Withman» de Álvaro de Campos.

¹¹ «Trago dentro do meu coração,/ Como num cofre que se não pode fechar de cheio,/ Todos os lugares onde estive,/ Todos os portos a que cheguei,/ Todas as paisagens que vi através de janelas ou vigias,/ Ou de tombadilhos, sonhando,/ E tudo isso, que é tanto, é pouco para o que eu quero.» Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, p. 300, ed. Maria Aliete Dores Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda, 1960. Citation de «Passagem das Horas» de Álvaro de Campos.

Un fait, la réduction du Temps à la modalité présente qui est la dissolution du Temps, va de pair avec la construction de cet Anti-Espace qui en contenant *tout* ne contient *rien*.

Cet espace ouvert ne délimite pas ni ne contient un système de coordonnées, un point quelconque à partir duquel la distance puisse se compter et avec elle la différence.

L'Espace du Tout c'est donc aussi l'exact espace par où et où se produit l'hémorragie du Sujet — l'*excès projectif* qui peut faire de chaque chose n'importe quelle *chose*: et si la *chose* ne suffit pas, alors un son, un bruit, une quelconque lumière prendront sa place.

C'est dire que l'espace du Tout est justement l'espace illusoire, espace du Néant *rempli* à partir de l'extérieur, du Néant lui-même puisque pour le Sujet il n'y a pas *un côté* qui soit un *autre côté au delà du Sujet*. *Aporie folle qui épuise.*

Et alors c'est la poésie du Vide, de la Nausée, qui s'élabore chez Campos, comme dans «Lisbonne Revisitée»:

«Non: Je ne veux rien.
Je l'ai dit que je ne veux rien.

Ne m'apportez pas de conclusions!
La seule conclusion c'est mourir.
Ne m'apportez pas des esthétiques!
Ne me parlez pas de morale!»¹²

Ou, aideurs:

«N'être rien, être une figure de roman,
Sans vie, sans mort matérielle, une idée,»¹³

Ou encore, plus radicalement:

«...
Si au moins je devenais fou!
Mais non: c'est cet être entre,
Ce presque,
Ce peut-être que...,
Ça.»¹⁴

Voilà donc ce que le nom du Tout finit par devenir: ÇA.

Et c'est justement pour fuir ce ÇA auquel cependant ou retourne, qu'un monde d'idées-choses s'organize chez l'autre Campos — être une idée, un personnage de roman ou qu'un monde de sensations, identifications aux objets, dispersion du Sujet, s'organize ailleurs, surtout chez Caeiro et Reis, mais aussi chez Campos lui-même:

«Profiter du temps!
Ah laissez-moi ne rien profiter
Ni Temps, ni être, ni mémoires de temps ou d'être!...
Laissez-moi être une feuille d'arbre, chetouillée par la brise,
La poussière d'une route involontaire et seule,
Le ruisseau casuel de pluies qui finissent,
La trace laissée sur la route par des roues pendant que d'autres ne viennent pas,»¹⁵

¹² «Não: Não quero nada./ Já disse que não quero nada.// Não me venham com conclusões!/ A única conclusão é morrer./ Não me tragam estéticas!/ Não me falem em moral!» Idem, p. 317. Citation de «Lisbon Revisited» de Álvaro de Campos.

¹³ «Não ser nada, ser uma figura de romance,/ Sem vida, sem morte material, uma ideia,» Idem, p. 316.

¹⁴ «.../ Se ao menos endoidecesse deveras!/ Mas não: é este estar entre,/ Este quase,/ Este poder ser que.../ Isto.» Idem, pp. 356-7.

¹⁵ «Aproveitar o tempo!/ Ah, deixem-me não aproveitar nada!/ Nem tempo, nem ser, nem memórias de tempo ou de ser!.../ Deixem-me ser uma folha de árvore, titilada por brisas,/ A poeira de uma

Et c'est cet effort fou pour résoudre des questions sans réponse que Pessoa lui-même contemple et décrit:

«Leger, brève, suave,
Un chant d'oiseau
S'élève dans l'air qui commence
Le jour.
J'écoute, et c'est passé...
Il paraît qu'il était seulement parce que j'ai écouté
Qu'il est arrêté.»¹⁶

Si l'Objet *est*, le Sujet ne peut pas être; si le Sujet *est* alors c'est l'Objet qui disparaît ou alors devient (le) Sujet-qui-pense-à-l'Objet.

C'est peut-être dans le poème «Eros et Psyché» que le régime de coexistence possible de l'Espace du Sujet et de l'Espace de l'Objet est défini en tant qu'espace purement imaginaire: une princesse rêve à un prince, mais le prince était la princesse qui rêve à un prince.

Le sujet écoute le Monde, mais le monde alors s'évanouit. Il est peut-être là, mais en sourdine, on *en absence*.

J'écoute et c'est passé.

La prise de conscience du dédoublement du Sujet en Sujet qui voit et Sujet qui se voit voir fait disparaître le monde des choses, car il n'y a pas de place pour deux regards simultanés de le part du sujet dans sa solitude.

C'est pour des raisons identiques que *penser la présence c'est aussi la transformer en absence*.

La présence pensée c'est un mensonge de la pensée, car si elle était vraiment présente alors ce serait le regard et non la pensée qui la rencontrerait.

Et pourtant, dans ce mouvement, Fernando Pessoa a l'intuition de quelque chose qu'en même temps lui échappe. Regarder le regard évanouit le monde: oui, mais il y a un autre regard: le regard du regard, le regard d'un Autre qui regarde le Sujet regarder le Monde. C'est cet *Autre* qui transforme les impressions émotionnelles en impressions pensées, c'est ce *Autre* qui fournit l'espace où cette Transformation peut opérer, et c'est lui, et non pas le Sujet en soi dédoublé, qui regarde le Sujet regarder le monde aussi bien externe qu'interne.

Si cet Autre constitutif échappe, ce grouillement intérieur qui est aussi le Monde restera éternellement occulte: un en-deça de monde sans face ni profil ni volume.

Également, sans l'Autre en tant que Présence, une partie de monde qui est contact entre l'Espace interne et l'Espace des Objets, s'évanouit et ainsi presque disparaît une partie du Sujet qui dans la solitude est absolument non visible et qui pourtant fonde toute visibilité. *Et cette partie non visible sauf par l'Autre c'est le regard même, point éternellement occulte de toute vision solitaire.*

Ce n'est pas dans le regard du Sujet que le regard advient à être, mais dans le regard de l'Autre qui le voit regarder le Monde. Si cet autre s'évanouit de la Mémoire c'est aussi le Monde qui tombe et en même temps *perd le sens on se fragmente*.

Chez Pessoa la quasi absence de la mémoire de l'Autre le constitue comme espace du Vide, et c'est ce Vide qui, à chaque fois, se projette sur toute chose regardée et s'y loge indéfiniment.

C'est pourquoi Pessoa sait que voir les choses dans la solitude subjective c'est *s'y perdre on les perdre*.

estrada involuntária e sozinha,/ O regato casual das chuvas que vão acabando,/ O vinco deixado na estrada pelas rochas enquanto não vêm outras,», Idem, p. 329. Citation de «Apostilha» de Álvaro de Campos.

¹⁶ «Leve, breve, suave,/ Um canto de ave/ Sobre no ar com que principia/ O dia./ Escuto, e passo.../ Parece que foi só porque escutei/ Que parou.» Fernando Pessoa, *Obras Poéticas*, p. 70, ed. Maria Aliete Dorcas Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda, 1960. Citation de «Cancioneiro» de Fernando Pessoa.

Espace sans volume: tout Objet ou tout Sujet; Temps sans rythme, Temps ponctuel, Temps nié. Telle est la dynamique qui à partir de la solitude anime la construction de personnages-poètes qui élaborent des projets eux-mêmes sans fin ni issue.

C'est comme si il y avait dans le desespoir de la solitude une recherche presque folle où à l'intuition: Je suis radicalement seul répondant deux échos-négation de la solitude:

1^a — «Je ne suis pas seul car je ne suis *rien*, on alors peut-être feuille, rivière, route, arbre, objet: et les objets ne sont jamais seuls. Ils sont des êtres finis qui finissent là où l'espace qui les définit finit lui-même, et à l'intérieur des objets il n'y a non plus rien, parce qu'ils sont surfaces et rien que surfaces.» — Solution de Caetano surtout, et aussi de Reis.

2^a — Deuxième solution au problème de la solitude: «Je ne suis pas seul parce que je suis tout, et dans *mon* espace il y a de la place pour *tout* sentiment, *toute* pensée, *toute* chose.»

Face à l'intuition de l'impossibilité d'être qui aussi s'organise, Pessoa, Pessoa lui-même, vient à concevoir une autre possibilité: c'est lui qui est l'objet de la pensée d'un autre et de son regard, et rien qu'objet de pensée et de regard.

«Je rêve que mon attention
de moi quelqu'un rêve
Et peut-être ne serais-je moi même
que le rêve de ce quelqu'un qui n'existe pas.»

La raison dira que ce quelqu'un n'existe pas. Mais la Pensée impose que Pessoa découvre ce qui organise le mal d'être: et c'est le manque de l'autre, le manque d'un quelqu'un. Un manque si funeste qu'il serait prêt à se laisser n'être que le rêve de l'autre — si cet autre existait.

C'est le sens même de «Eros et Psyché».

Mais Pessoa, lui pour qui l'Enfance est le Mémoire du Futur, sait que cet Autre, à l'Ombre de qui il aurait pu exister, n'est pas ou a des contours pleins d'énorme fluidité.

Et c'est alors qu'il dit:

«Je serais toujours celui qui a attendu qui on lui ouvre la porte près un mur qui n'a pas de porte»¹⁷.

Et au fond ainsi se définissent dans leur plus grande généralité le Temps et l'Espace chez Fernando Pessoa:

L'espace: un mur qui n'a pas de porte.
Le temps: l'attendre que s'ouvre cette porte qui n'existe pas.

Mais en même temps que se fait tout poème, que se précise toute pensée, que répond tout méandre de la sensibilité, cette intuition qui ouvre «Le Bureau de Tabac»:

«Je ne suis rien.
Je ne serais jamais rien.
Je ne peux vouloir être autre chose que rien.
A part cela, j'ai en moi tous les rêves du monde.»¹⁸

¹⁷ «Serei sempre o que esperou que lhe abrissem a porta ao pé de uma parede sem porta». Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Poética*, p. 325, ed. Maria Aliete Dorez Galhoz, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar Ltda, 1960. Citation de «Tabacaria» de Álvaro de Campos.

¹⁸ «Não sou nada./ Nunca serei nada./ Não posso querer ser nada./ À parte isso, tenho em mim todos os sonhos do mundo.» Idem, p. 323.

Crypts in London: The Novels of Elizabeth Bowen

NICHOLAS ROYLE (*)

Is it possible to *remember the future*? What would it mean?

Coming to London, or coming back to London, being inscribed or haunted by London.

«Crypts in London: The Novels of Elizabeth Bowen» — my title is false or misleading in a number of ways. I cannot hope to speak here of Bowen's novels in general but must confine myself to a few observations about *A World of Love*, published in 1955. *A World of Love* is set in and around a country house called Montefort, in the south of Ireland: it is not, in any blindingly obvious fashion, a novel about London. Still, the following remarks concern London and are at the same time offered in the hope of opening up a new and different series of readings of Bowen's work generally. Finally I might suggest that, if there turn out to be *crypts in London*, they will have been in this room, in Regent's Park. And here I would recall Bowen's own observation, in her essay «Coming to London», about coming to live in Regent's Park, in 1935: «The attraction of Regent's Park, the immediate sense that this place was habitable, were due to its seeming something out of (or in) a book» (*The Mulberry Tree*, 89).

My focusing on *A World of Love* here is part of a larger project and is based on the sense that Bowen's novels have been seriously undervalued, or that they have been valued and appreciated in the wrong kinds of ways and for the wrong kinds of reasons. That is to say, Bowen's novels have been recognized and admired *by* — and *as examples of* — what used to be called the British Establishment. They have been characterized as «society» novels, novels of «manners», brilliant and evocative descriptions of upper-class and upper-middle-class English or, very often, Anglo-Irish social life. Bowen has been seen as a sort of sub-Bloomsbury, sub-Woolfian novelist, a situation not helped by her own high and sometimes rather obsequious praise of Virginia Woolf, in letters and elsewhere. Briefly I would like to risk a little extravagance and assert that Bowen has scarcely been read at all, that her novels are far stranger, more powerful and less assimilable than has been traditionally supposed, that they are not so much social as they concern the asocial and psychotic, that they ally themselves with the darker and more disturbing aspects of the writings of Emily Brontë, Dostoevsky, George Eliot (in particular *Daniel Deronda*), Henry James, Conrad and Woolf. In what follows, then, I wish to suggest that it is to

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the extent Bowen's work has not been read — and even cannot be read or resists being read — that it engages with a «remembering of the future». In order to speak of the singularity of Bowen's writing, its power and strangeness, and in order to situate that writing in relation to a notion of *remembering the future*, I propose to consider *crypts*.

The concept of the crypt has been articulated and analyzed primarily by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in their study, published in English in 1986, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*. It has been further and variously elaborated by a number of other writers including most recently Esther Rashkin, Nicholas Rand and Avital Ronell. I too have focused on this concept, in a reading of *Hamlet* in a recent issue of *Diacritics* and in a reading of *Wuthering Heights* in my book *Telepathy and Literature*. In a very summary and inadequate fashion then: a crypt is the strange topos of an unspeakable secret, it is theorized by Abraham and Torok as that which «works in the heart of the Ego as a special kind of Unconscious» (80). The crypt is a particular kind of psychical foreign body and in this respect belongs strictly neither to the ego nor to the unconscious. The crypt can be understood above all in relation to mourning, as a certain mournful commemoration which is irreducible to consciousness or the unconscious. In particular its theoretical elaboration by Abraham and Torok derives from Freud's «Mourning and Melancholia» and the logic of incorporation associated with so-called «abnormal» or refused or impossible mourning. The lost loved object is swallowed whole, incorporated, kept in a kind of suspended animation, a living death, encrypted: the refusal or impossibility of mourning in this context is linked to the concealment of an unspeakable secret. This secret would be an instance of a kind of *nescience* or unknown knowledge: one can carry a crypt without ever knowing it. In this sense, it should be added, it is closely allied to the notion of the phantom or ghost: Abraham in particular explores the idea that what we call a ghost is in fact the effect in one's unconscious of the crypt of another. A ghost, says Abraham in his «Notes on the Phantom», «is nothing but an invention of the living» — it is «the gap that the concealment of some part of a loved one's life produced in us» (287). Thus, as Esther Rashkin observes in her excellent essay «Tools for a New Psychoanalytic Criticism»: «The theory of the phantom... offers a new vantage point from which to consider the structure and motive forces of certain works of literature traditionally classified as uncanny, fantastic, occult, or supernatural» (32). Together with the inextricably related notion of the crypt, the theory of the phantom (i.e. of being haunted by the crypt of another) offers new ways of thinking about «the enigmatic behavior of a fictional character» (39). To be haunted by a phantom or the crypt of another, as Rashkin notes, is to be «inhabited by a *nescience*, by an 'unknown knowledge' that can be transmitted or passed down through an entire family line or community...» (41).

My interest here is not with any evaluation of the efficacy of the theory of the crypt or phantom in a so-called clinical, analytic context, rather my interest is in its exemplarity in the context of reading Bowen. A logic of crypt and ghost — as a logic of refused or impossible mourning, unspeakable secrets, and transgenerational hauntings — can be traced, I believe, in all of Bowen's novels. The effect of such a tracing would not be reducible to any form of psychobiography, for instance to a crypto-analysis of «Elizabeth Bowen» the author, even if one supposed the name «Elizabeth Bowen» to designate a single, proper, self-identical individual (a notion to which I do not subscribe and to which I do not believe Bowen's novels could be said to subscribe either). Rather such a tracing might lead us to an acknowledgement of the idea that there is fiction at the origin, that there is no «clinical» or any other purportedly «real» context which is not always already worked over by fiction, by literarity, by otherness. Regent's Park — in ways which remain perhaps unthinkable — seems something out of (or in) a book. This signifies no resignation to the multiple banalities of a privileging of «literature», «art» or «fiction» over «experience» or «the real», but rather a necessary displacement and subtilization of the latter in accordance

with a radicalization of «fiction» itself. Coming to London, or coming back to London, being inscribed or haunted by «London».

«Or why not», said Antonia suddenly, «go to London?»

«Good gracious», the other said vaguely, vacantly, frowning at a tea-stain upon her bosom, «whatever are you talking about?»

«You. — How would you like to go to London?»

Lilia became appalled. «After all these years?» She looked for a second time at Antonia. «Are you feeling peculiar?»

«No, only thinking.»

«What started you doing that?»

«You», reiterated Antonia.

«After all these years», Lilia said again, perspiring at the thought of them, bringing up her hankie to dab her face.

«Go back to *there* again like a lost dog?» (84-85)

Antonia and Lilia, Lilia's husband Fred, and Lilia's daughters Jane and Maud are in Ireland, in the uncanny claustrophobia of the house called Montefort in a sweltering summer of «ghastly endless sublime weather» (24). The «central» character is, as in other Bowen texts, absent: dead. Guy, Lilia's fiancé and Antonia's first cousin and first love, was one of the generation «mown down» (44) in the First World War. It is the power of Guy's erotic survival that haunts the other characters — Antonia, Lilia, but also Jane and, if less directly, Fred and (most enigmatically of all perhaps) the twelve year old Maud. It is Guy who imposes, above all, the necessity of a certain refusal or impossibility of mourning. It is in Guy that the cryptic force of the text is concentrated. The sense of Guy as living on, as one of «the not-dead» (45), as a figuring of death as an implausible fiction or «invented story» (44-45) — this sense not only haunts particular characters, such as Antonia and Lilia, but it pervades the narration, it marks the Bowen narration as what could be called *omniscience in mourning*. Finally, insofar as it also directly comports the «sense of [the] un-lived lives» (45) of all who were obliterated, subjected to holocaustic «dissolution» (44) by two world wars, the haunting «lease» of the «not-dead» Guy could be traced as a figuration of what Jean-François Lyotard calls the immemorial — of what can be neither remembered nor forgotten. This immemorialism, I would add, is the space of Bowen's writing and can be linked up both with a sense of its cryptic or cryptaesthetic power and with a logic of what I have referred to as «remembering the future».

No longer an omniscient narrator but rather omniscience in mourning. Bowen's narrator, a multi-personality like any allegedly omniscient narrator, speaks a royal «we» undecidably encrypted in a work of mourning and living on, appearing to accept death and mourning but at the same moment refusing them, appearing to refuse a world of ghosts and a language of the ghostly but (very much in the manner of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* or *The Jolly Corner*), by that very negation or refusal, encoding and encrypting them. Where are «we»?

Obstinate rememberers of the dead seem to queer themselves or show some signs of a malady; in part they come to share the dead's isolation, which it is not in their power to break down — for *the rest of us*, so necessary is it to let the dead go that we expect they may be glad to be gone.... But the recognition of death may remain uncertain, and while that is so nothing is signed and sealed. *Our* sense of finality is less hard-and-fast: two wars have raised their query to it. (44, my emphases)

This uncertainty of death, and especially that of Guy, both the uncertainty of Guy and of his death, is doubtless what constitutes the cryptic energy of the narrative. To the

extent that this is identified with a kind of secret, it would be the central moment of the narrative, the moment in London, at that «dreadful station... full of nothing but draught and darkness and echoes — Charing Cross» (91), when Lilia says farewell to Guy for what will turn out to be the last time, and when she is shocked to discover Antonia there for the same reason, and when, finally but most mysteriously, both women are encouraged to suppose that there is yet another woman, yet another «last-moment comer»: if she came «who was she; if not, what was she not?... Better uncertainty; best no answer» (96), thinks Lilia.

The uncertainty of Guy and of his death involves on the one hand the claim — specifically made on at least two occasions (45, 77) — that Guy is not a ghost but, on the other, a sequence of events or experiences in which Guy is indeed described as *coming back*. Ghostlike he comes back to Antonia, one night as she is standing in the doorway, when suddenly «time again was into the clutch of herself and Guy» (77). He comes back also to Lilia, in the garden: «...something more than human was at intensity. In depth, dead-still, branches screened the doorway — of whom was this the ghost in the afternoon?» (97). «I saw Guy» (99), affirms Lilia, shortly after this. And finally Guy comes to Jane, the sixteen year old who is (as the text in various ways emphasizes) his impossible, inexistent or phantomatic daughter. For instance at a dinner party at a neighbouring and «unusually banal Irish castle» (57): «there *had* been an entrance» (68), we are told, Guy «was *at* the party» (69): Jane «*saw* Guy» (70). This cryptic or phantomatic structure of the narrative leads Jane to suppose that she «could be a medium... without knowing» or else that she could be «bewitched» (120). And it makes way in turn for the omniscience in mourning in which Antonia's thought sums up: Guy «came back, through Jane, to be let go. It was high time» (135).

It's perhaps high time I stopped as well, but before that I'd like to make two final, interrelated points. The interrelation is marked by the notion of destination or destiny. *First*: the cryptic structure and cryptic drama of Bowen's novel is specifically an effect of *writing*, it is generated and determined by a «packet of letters» (27) discovered in the attic, love letters written by Guy but without specific dates and without a named addressee. These letters indeed determine their addressee: from the very start, for example, we are told that these letters «found [Jane] rather than she them» (27). They destine themselves to finding addressees in Jane, Antonia, Lilia and others in turn. It is a question of (in the words of Antonia) «Falling in love with a love letter» (39). In other words it is a matter of identifying oneself in fiction and as a fiction — for, as the serial effect of the narrative suggests, the letters are always capable of addressing themselves to another and thus are necessarily always destined to the other in general. This should not prevent us from noting, however, the implications of this logic of missives: there is no identification which is not fictive; identity is a matter of radical play; the acceptance of being the addressee, this determination of oneself as lover *will* be playing, will have been playing — but *there is nothing else besides playing*. The final and inexorable power of Bowen's novel is to suggest that — with the encounter and «love at first sight» between Jane and Richard Priam at Shannon airport — it is only on the basis of a crypt, on the basis of the fictionality and radical play of missives, that there is love.

Second, and correlating with this, *A World of Love* is constitutively oriented towards the future. The epigraph of the novel is from what Harold Bloom would perhaps call a highly Wordsworthian passage of Thomas Traherne: «There is in us a world of Love to somewhat, though we know not what in the world that should be... Do you not feel yourself drawn by the expectation and desire of some Great Thing?» What makes the novel's exploration of a crypt-structure or crypt-effect so extraordinary, I think, is that it is concerned not so much with a crypt as buried *history* (however secret or unspeakable) but rather with what I would call crypts of the future. Insofar as Guy figures a ghost, for example, this

is a ghost of the future. Thus we read the thoughts of Lilia in the haunted garden: Guy «had not finished with them, nor they with themselves, nor they with each other: not memories was it but *expectations* which haunted Montefort» (97, my emphasis). In referring to the idea that «one's lookings-forward are really memories» (147), the text ironically and perhaps in a necessarily unthinkable way draws attention to its own structure as a missive and as a strange performative. There is much in this narrative to do with presentiment and premonition, with expectation, with something great that is about to happen, there is much to do with the notion of being called or summoned. Jane, for example, just before finding the letters, «imagined she heard a call»: it is «that inexplicable feeling of being summoned» (27). And there is the «unlocatable» (77) call or calling which Antonia hears, when standing in the doorway. This is not simply superstition (though that there is no such thing as «simply superstition» is the burden of Bowen's, as of George Eliot's or Henry James's thought): it is also a figuration of the novel itself. Expectations are realized *within* the text. Guy's love letters determine — they «prove» the capacity for texts to create — their addressees. In this instance or example, then, *A World of Love* describes and inscribes its own potentiality as a call, as a love letter and as a performative. This, however, would only be on condition of recognizing that its call is a call from the other, from what is absolutely other, from an otherness which calls and traverses it, that *A World of Love* never arrives at its destination, that its arrival and its reading is always to come.

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Doubling and the *Despair* of Artistic Creation: Nabokov's Version of Freud's «Splitting of the Ego»

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When Vladimir Nabokov set out in 1965 to translate into English his original 1932 Russian novel (*Otchayanie*), he wrote that his original English translation, *Despair* (1937) had been «stylistically clumsy». Rather than «revamp» his earlier translation, however, he decided to «revise» the original novel. The result, *Despair* (1965), contains, Nabokov noted, «an important passage which had been stupidly omitted in more timid times.» As a result of the modifications, the older Nabokov announced in the introduction «how pleased and excited I would have been in 1935 had I been able to foreread this 1965 version. The ecstatic love of a young writer for the old writer he will be some day is ambition in its most laudable form. This love is not reciprocated by the older man in his larger library, for... he has nothing but an impatient shrug for the bungling apprentice of his youth» (8).

Embarking on a narcissistic act of publication, the older Nabokov looked back at what his younger self had produced and found it wanting. Now, in 1965, endowed with a «larger library», the old writer transforms the young writer into himself, acting to correct the negative transference that he feels toward his «bungling» younger self; he imagines that his younger self feels only «ecstatic love». Nabokov, in one measure, achieved an evasion, an elusion of his own historicity: does *Despair* date from 1932, 1937, or 1965? How does one transcend one's own developmental self, the ineluctable way in which one is always on the road to becoming what one will be? To place *Despair* as an early Nabokov novel assaults our sense of what role was played by the older author-as-reviser. It is for this reason that he asks in the 1965 introduction: «is this fair, is this wise from a scholar's point of view?» (8). The novel must be placed in a Nabokovland where old circles back to contemplate young and a loop is formed that resists historical analysis. That this evasion of history was Nabokov's desire and wish cannot be doubted from an examination of his public statements. But then why reveal to one's readers what was already a *fait accompli*? Why announce the difference between old man and young man if one's purported purpose is to fuse them into one man?

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One answer to the question would center on Nabokov's use of a pseudonym for his Russian language novels: V. Sirin was the author of *Otchayanie*, not Vladimir Nabokov. Only through language, in English, is it possible for Sirin to fuse with Nabokov. Only in English do we approach the young Sirin by way of the old Nabokov. Nabokov's revelation that he had changed the self he used to be is entirely dependent on seeing the one self as the other: in order to conceive of old Nabokov revising young Nabokov, we must first perceive Sirin as Nabokov. But Sirin is not Nabokov *exactly*: not only does he bungle, but his Russian language is different from Nabokov's English. To perceive them as one depends on a mode of perception — instilled by language — that evades certain differences and focusses on similarities.

Nabokov's narrator, Hermann, comes upon an itinerant named Felix who exists for him as a double: «it was this absolute sameness which gave me so piercing a thrill. He on his part saw in me a doubtful imitator» (23). Hermann develops an elaborate murder plot based on his perception of Felix as his virtual identical twin. The irony is that Hermann is the only individual who so perceives Felix. Everyone else sees Felix and Hermann as two discrete individuals. Hermann, then, is a being whose «basic theme [is] the resemblance between two persons», a theme which he believes to have «profund allegorical meaning» (168).

The allegory becomes even more suggestive when we recall that *Despair* in all of its versions is a metafiction, a fiction about fiction. It also concerns doubles, or false doubles. An early Russian emigre critic, Vladimir Weidle, described the novel aptly in a passage that also presents some of its plot:

The urge to transfer himself into his double, to turn the reality surrounding the narrator inside out, to achieve something like a frustrated suicide by means of murder, and finally the failure of the whole plan, the detection behind all the fictions and apparitions, behind the crumbling reality and the destroyed dream of the bare, trembling spiritual protoplasm which is condemned to death — does not all of this bespeak an intricate allegory behind which is concealed not the despair of a murderer scheming for money, but the despair of an artist incapable of believing in the object of his art? [Cited in Andrew Field, *Nabokov: His Life in Art*, 235]

In this light, it is appropriate to recall that Hermann's wife's lover, Ardalion the artist, has a different theme: «you forget, my good man, that what the artist perceives is, primarily, the *difference* between things. It is the vulgar who note their resemblance» (51). Thus, we are faced with Hermann: as the narrator, he is ostensibly an artist, but is he a false artist? Are Hermann and Ardalion false doubles in the same way in which Hermann and Felix are false doubles? And what of Nabokov and Sirin? Does Nabokov proclaim his «crime» of revision, of change, as a means of asserting his artistry over the «vulgar» desire of the man to make things the same?

Hermann described Felix «especially when he slept, when his features were motionless [as showing] me my own face, my mask, the flawlessly pure image of my corpse... we had identical features... in a state of perfect repose, this resemblance was strikingly evident, and what is death, if not a face at peace — its artistic perfection? Life only marred my double» (25). Change, revision, then, is seen as a form of life, struggling with the sameness that is evident in the «perfect repose» of death.

The «important» passage that Nabokov inserted in the 1965 *Despair* (and «which had been stupidly omitted in more timid times» [8]) describes Hermann's wife and their lovemaking practices:

She was plump, short, rather formless, but then pudgy women alone rouse me... Not only had I always been eminently satisfied with my meek bedmate

and her cherubic charms, but I had noticed lately, with gratitude to nature and a thrill of surprise, that the violence and the sweetness of my nightly joys were being raised to an exquisite vertex owing to a certain aberration which, I understand, is not as uncommon as I thought at first among high-strung men in their middle thirties. I am referring to a well-known kind of «dissociation»... I would be in bed with Lydia, winding up the brief series of preparatory caresses she was supposed to be entitled to, when all at once I would become aware that imp Split had taken over. My face was buried in the folds of her neck, her legs had started to clamp me, the ashtray toppled off the bed table, the universe followed — but at the same time, incomprehensibly and delightfully, I was standing naked in the middle of the room, one hand resting on the back of the chair where she had left her stockings and panties. The sensation of being in two places at once gave me an extraordinary kick...(36-37)

Eventually, Hermann finds that he must increase the distance from the bed where he makes love in order to maximize his pleasure: «the greater the interval between my two selves the more I was ecstasied» (38). He finds himself «sitting in the parlor — while making love in the bedroom» (38). Until one evening in April, watching himself make love to his wife as usual, he hears «Lydia's yawn and voice stupidly saying that if I were not yet coming to bed, I might bring her the red book she had left in the parlor» (38). He throws her the book and «this strange and awful jolt broke the spell... I tried hard to recapture the split, and perhaps would have at last succeeded, had not a new and wonderful obsession obliterated in me all desire to resume those amusing but rather banal experiments» (38-39). The new obsession, of course, is his discovery of his supposed double, Felix.

Nabokov felt the need to insert a passage about a false artist: not only is the artist estranged from himself but also from his artistic object. When object relations are impaired, the regressive self reverts back to the taking of oneself as the primary object. Thus we find comfort in the perception of oneself everywhere — but this cognitive distortion is a kind of death: for only in death-like repose are dissonant beings able to be misperceived as the same. Hermann tells Felix that he is a «film actor» (88), and this figure, too, is a metaphor for the otherness that describes the depiction of self in doubled form.

Nabokov's poetics of fiction is thus dependent on what Freud termed the «splitting of the ego in the process of defense»; I discussed this at some length in my recent *Freud and Nabokov* (1988) and will only allude to it here. Freud conceived late in his career («Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence», 1938) of the splitting of the ego as having wide application beyond fetishism and psychoses to generalized neuroses: such «alterations of the ego» are involved integrally with the process of artistic creation. In describing a particular instance, Freud noted that «this way of dealing with reality... almost deserves to be described as artful» (277).

In «The 'Uncanny'» (1919), Freud noted that «a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life... [and] there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life» (249). Freud noted that «the situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts as well all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life; and everything that would have an uncanny effect in reality has it in his story. But in this case he can even increase his effect and multiply it far beyond what could happen in reality, by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact. In doing this he is in a sense betraying us to the superstitiousness which we have ostensibly surmounted; he deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it. We react to his inventions as we would have reacted to real experiences; by the time we have seen through his trick it is already too late and the author has achieved his object.

But it must be added that his success is not unalloyed. We retain a feeling of dissatisfaction, a kind of grudge against the attempted deceit» (250-251).

Has there ever been such a concise description of the precise sort of dissatisfaction that has often been expressed about Nabokov's fiction? At the novel's end, Hermann asserts that «nobody will touch me, as it is impossible to say where the border was crossed» (220); but he also asserts that the entire performance has been «a rehearsal... a famous film actor will presently come running out of this house» (222). Freud noted (in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*) that «it is indeed a universal characteristic of neuroses that there are present in the subject's mental life, as regards some particular behaviour, two different attitudes, contrary to each other and independent of each other» (204).

It would be misguided, however, to «blame» this dissatisfaction on Nabokov. In his metafiction, he describes a poetics of fiction that doubles our metaphorical understanding of what fiction (and writing) is. There is not only the oedipal anxiety and despair of art and artistic influence (upon oneself as well as others). But since, in Nabokov's words, one writes to achieve «aesthetic bliss» (*The Annotated Lolita*, 316), and since one writes for «onself in multiplicat» (*Strong Opinions*, 114), only by splitting off the esthetic object from the ego do we avoid the narcissistic and onanistic implications of the way in which we currently envision fiction. That's not what we meant, is it? Is it? As Nabokov's Hermann says at the very end of *Despair*, «I want a clean getaway. That's all. Thank you. I'm coming out now» (222).

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Words and Music: A Psychological Interaction

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In an attempt to gain psychological insight into the dilemma of how words and music interact in opera I turned to Freud and his case [n.d.] of an opera singer who was seeking relief from anxiety attacks. She had just recently been married to a man whose work necessitated frequent travel. «... Something must have reminded her of her husband. She had been singing Carmen's aria 'Pres des remparts de Seville'. I asked her to repeat it for me; she could not even recall the words exactly. — At what point do you think the attack came on? — She did not know. — When I applied pressure [to her forehead], she said it had been *after* she had finished the aria. That seemed quite possible: it had been the train of thought brought up by the text of the aria.» (216) In the text of the aria, Carmen is trying to seduce Don Jose into untying her hands so that she may escape to the inn of Lillas Pastia where she and Don Jose could become lovers. Afraid that her words may persuade him, Don Jose tells her to be quiet and not talk to him; Carmen retorts that she is not talking to him. She is only singing to herself and only thinking to herself — out loud, of course. «I then asserted that before the attack there had been thoughts present to her which she might not remember. In fact she remembered nothing, but pressure [on her forehead] produced 'husband' and 'longing' ...longing for sexual caresses... Your attack was only a state of outpouring of love. Do you know the page's song? — 'Voi che sapete che cosa e amor...'» (216-217) It is here that Freud (in trying to aid his patient in coming to terms with her feelings and perhaps better understand them) quotes Cherubino's aria from Mozart's *Le Nozze de Figaro* where the character questions whether the contradictory feelings he has recently been experiencing are in fact love. Whether Freud sang these words to his patient or simply recited them doesn't matter as much as the ability of the combination of the text and music to elicit «the train of thought» that Freud wanted «brought up by the text of the aria».

Theodore Reik, in his book *The Haunting Melody*, states that «Language is at its poorest when it wishes to grasp and communicate nuances and shades of feelings — in that very area in which music is most efficient and expressive.» (9) «Music expresses what all men feel much more than what they think. Its language is an esperanto of emotions rather than of ideas.» (15)

What would happen if the question of word-music interaction in opera is explored not in terms of music versus text but instead emotions versus ideas? Reik presents an example

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through a case study of a patient who was a prisoner in a concentration camp. «... A certain melody followed him. The tune occurred to him when he woke up and was the last thing he thought of before he fell asleep, but he often thought of it in the middle of forced labor and in the most humiliating situations, even when he was in physical pain. He did not recognize the melody, but felt it had a Mozartian purity... He searched for a long time in his memory as to when or where he had heard it. Whenever the tune appeared, it had a comforting or consoling effect upon him...» (164) In trying to place the melody the patient's Mozart connection led him to think of Goethe who had liked Mozart's music. The patient's free association immediately reminded him that Goethe had not liked Beethoven's music yet the patient believed he associated Goethe's and Beethoven's names because their internal «storm and stress» personalities were similar. Goethe's poem «Prometheus» came into the patient's mind but was quickly replaced by Goethe's «The Wanderer's Night-Song».

Thou that from heaven art,
Every pain and sorrow stillest,
And the double wretched breast
Doubly with refreshment fillest,
I am weary with contending
Why this rapture and unrest?
Peace descending
Come, O come, into my breast! (164)

These lines led the patient to thoughts of the emotional transformations Goethe had encountered while in Italy. «In the next moment that haunting melody re-emerged in the man's thoughts, but this time with the first four words of the aria's text: 'Pace, pace, mio Dio...» This aria, from Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*, is sung by Leonora who is begging for the comforting peace of death. «It is remarkable that the melody that haunted the prisoner emerged first without words, so to speak, as the fullest musical expression of that longing for peace. The unconscious wish to attain peace by suicide was there long before the text was remembered. The tune had been the purest emotional expression of that deeply felt desire, an expression that did not need words and was self-sufficient in its emotional effect. The words were, so to speak, a later addition, like an incantation spoken by the sorcerer, as an extra spell added to his original magical action.» (166)

The emotional content conveyed in the melody mirrored the unconscious desire of the patient for peace without his remembering the exact word (which was, in fact, *peace*). The melody and words did manage to work together on an unconscious level; but the conscious brought forth the melody first — perhaps because of music's non-verbal yet strongly associative abilities.

It is interesting from a psychological perspective that the patient's first association had lead him to the music of Mozart. According to opera director Peter Sellars in his documentary video *Destination Mozart*, the libretti for the Mozart/Da Ponte operas «are all written with themes concerning the edges of sanity. Da Ponte... writing in the tradition of Dante [depicts a] triangle of longing for death and a strange unknowability of the world and of human beings.» Mozart's music creates an analogous expression of these themes of death and madness. Thus, the association (by Reik's patient) of a Mozartian purity to his haunting melody was perfectly logical: it linked innate qualities in the music to the prisoner's own state of despair and anguish. Significantly, what the patient recalled in association was an overall quality in Mozart's music rather than a specific text.

In his essay, «The Art Work of the Future», Wagner states «... music unfold[s] its full breath only where its capacity is greatest, while, in all places where dramatic speech, for example, is what is needed most, it... subordinate[s] itself completely to this; ...music, without becoming altogether silent, has the capacity to adapt itself to the thoughtful element

of speech so imperceptively that, while supporting speech, it scarcely interferes with it at all.» (163)

Does this mean that music has the capacity to overwhelm the words and the composer's job is to harness the music which at any moment could inherently cancel the text? Peter Sellars maintains that music does have the power to transcend and even overtake the text. He gives an example from *Le Nozze di Figaro*. *Canzonetta sull'aria* (Act III) «is the first time in *The Marriage of Figaro* that Mozart asserts the supremacy of music over plot, over character, over intrigue, over dialogue. You read the words and it's a woman dictating a letter. You listen to the music and it's two people entering another universe. The words in fact fade into just sounds.» (*Destination Mozart*)

Now how would I go about testing this theory from my perspective? Perhaps since I had just read Wagner's words I immediately started to sing: «Ho-jo-to-ho! Ho-jo-to-ho! Hei-ha! Hei-ha!» But wait! This is cheating — these aren't real words!

This first example of a personal musical association (which I shall now explore in a manner influenced by Theodor Reik's *The Haunting Melody*) is the theme of the Valkyries. Why did that theme occur to me? According to Robert Donnington, in his book *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*, «the Valkyries show both sides of [an] ambivalent character.» (145) On their negative side they provoke war and on the positive side they reward the heroes with an afterlife on Valhalla. Is that why it occurred to me? Could it be that I too am ambivalent about addressing the issue of words versus music? In fact, my ambivalence may be that as a trained musician I would have to believe that music would be more important than the words. On the other hand, if indeed that were the case, why did I need to take all those diction classes if the words were not as important as the music? But perhaps it is the exuberant spirit of the Valkyries that I was conjuring in my quest to reach Valhalla about the matter of the interaction of words and music in opera.

I decided to try once again. Let's see — «Wintersturme la la la la la». What words come after «Wintersturme»? I opened the score and the words «wi-chen dem Won-nemond» revealed themselves. I wondered why do I remember only the winterstorms and not the fact that they have subsided and give way to the spring? Could I myself be in the midst of a compositional «storm and stress» while trying to resolve a particularly difficult question?

Full of curiosity and anxious to hear what would happen, I tried a third and final time. «Nothung! Nothung!» and the familiar la la la la followed and not the appropriate «Neid-li-ches Schwert». Why in the world, I asked myself, would I choose to hum the sword's motif? A downward leap of an octave hardly constitutes a melody. But perhaps I was on to something: for the answer may lie more with the fact that «Nothung» bears a strong visual and aural similarity to the word «nothing». Hence the melody for Siegfried's «needful» sword was conjured by me for the simple reason that the words looked similar and I was despairing that «Nothung» in this paper would come to a better understanding of the question — words versus music.

It was as if the whole question had now become inverted or somehow turned around. Music or text? Text or music? Reik was looking at the «Haunting Melody» — a melody which permeates one's unconscious as a clue to the inner emotions which have not been able to be as yet verbalized but are nonetheless powerfully felt. I, on the other hand, remembered: a melody whose deliberate non-text, «Ho-jo-to-ho» was accompanied by forceful exhilarating music; a stormy word, «Wintersturme» attached to a soothing melodic structure; and a word, «Nothung» whose homonymic similarity and forceful melodic presentation emphasized my needful yet seemingly hopeless predicament.

Of my three examples, the Valkyries' theme as well as the «Nothung» theme may be the closest to Reik's «Haunting Melody». The «Wintersturme» theme, however, presents an interesting paradox which Reik also discusses in his book.

In the chapter «Tuneful Paradoxes», Reik examines the relationship between emotions and the type of music remembered. «Why are we sometimes attacked by a sad melody when we are in a serene mood or in high spirits? And why should a very gay tune pursue us in the middle of a depressed or even desperate mood?» (209) In one instance, a patient who was feeling particularly happy began humming a sad, doleful tune from Tchiakovsky's Fourth Symphony. Analysis provided the clue that guilt from overwhelming feelings of joy was tempered when the sad melody entered his unconscious. Reik, himself, offers a personal example. After an upsetting argument with his two adult daughters a happy tune entered his head. Wondering why such a tune would come to mind after this upsetting event, he endeavored to explore the circumstances and realized that the tune was a childhood tune and revealed his affectionate feelings for his daughters. The high pitched squabbling taking place between them at the time reminded him of an earlier time they had sung children's songs together. Paradoxes of this type do not only exist as psychological phenomena but also have counterparts in opera. Conductor Craig Smith states, in *Destination Mozart*, that «the real potential of opera is the ability to say many different, conflicting things at the same time. Over and over particularly in *Don Giovanni* we find Mozart's ability to say dark and light things at the same time, to say yes and no at the same time. That is a quality that Mozart finds in opera and [it is also] the thing music drama can do better than anything else.»

As an illustration of this paradoxical quality in opera two examples come to mind. The first is the aria «Che farò senza Euridice?» from *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Gluck. The aria is sung by Orpheus after he has defied the gods and turns to look at Eurydice, consequently causing her death. «What will I do without my Eurydice, where will I go without my beloved?... Ah, no help is left for me, nor any hope from either earth or from heaven.» It has always intrigued me that Gluck set Calzabigi's text in a major mode. Wouldn't a text which is full of despair, despondancy, and hopelessness have been better suited to the somber, dark tones of the minor mode? In the essay «Interpreting Orfeo», Hartmut Haenchen points out that this brisk tempo C major aria was «already a source of controversy in Gluck's day... Misunderstandings arose even in the first performances because the dramatic function of this aria was incorrectly interpreted. In his foreword to *Paride ed Helene*, Gluck was compelled to defend himself against accusations that this aria was too cheerful... [Gluck emphasized that] it is not a song of mourning... [It is] the artistic inspiration which the singer and composer Orfeo draws from his suffering [that] is the focus of attention.» (n.p.)

Could the use of the major mode have been a creative inspiration that represented a psychological ploy on behalf of Orpheus to once again seduce the gods with the sweet sounds of his voice in order to bring Eurydice back to life? In fact, Gluck may have wanted to musically telegraph the optimistic ending of the opera since it does end on a happy note (Orpheus and Eurydice are reunited) which is quite different from the savage ending of the original myth. In the myth, Eurydice remains dead and Orpheus gets torn apart limb by limb because of his constant mournful singing. The aria, in fact, is conveying the various psychological and emotional states that Orpheus is experiencing — sadness, despair, etc., verbalized in the text and happy remembrances of his life with Eurydice as expressed in the music. In essence, then, the combination of the sad words and the sad minor sounds within this dramatic context may have been too devastating for 18th century opera audiences who liked happy endings.

The second «Tuneful Paradox» aria is «Una furtiva lagrima» from *L'Elisir d'amore* by Donizetti. At this point in the opera, Nemorino has inherited a large fortune and all the town girls flock around him except for Adina whom he sees shed a tear before leaving him to his new admirers. It is from this moment that he realizes Adina truly loves him. However, the nine measure introduction in the minor mode is certainly no indication of Nemorino's new found happiness that Adina loves him. The next twelve vocal lines continue

in minor as he revels in the possibility that she may even be jealous of the other girls' attentions. Finally on the words «M'ama, si, m'ama, lo vedo» («She loves me. I see it») we are in a major mode. But this new found happiness expressed in both the words and music is only temporary (three and a half measures) because the music returns to minor as soon as the last syllable is sung. In the second verse (which continues in the minor mode) Nemorino fantasizes how it would feel to hold Adina in his arms, to feel her heart beat next to his, and to hear sighs mix with his. The text (which is full of sensuous excitement and joy) is sung, once again, to the sad music which opens the aria. When Nemorino realizes that to know such happiness would make it acceptable for him to die, he calls out to the heavens, «Cielo, si puo morir — di piu non chiedo»: these words invoke the major key which this time continues and ends the aria.

The intriguing aspect of the music in this aria is that it conveys the function of human thought processes. These thought processes are experienced as emotions and words that interact while psychological insight occurs. Nemorino witnesses a tear fall from Adina's eye; hence, he interprets her sadness (at seeing him surrounded by the other women of the town) as the happy confirmation of her love for him. The music and text also convey the contrary and often simultaneous emotions (joy/pain; happiness/sadness) experienced when one is in love; hence, the minor music at the beginning (capturing the sadness of both lovers at the moment they realize they are in love but face rivals) as well as the major music at the end (as Nemorino wishes to die of this longed for happiness).

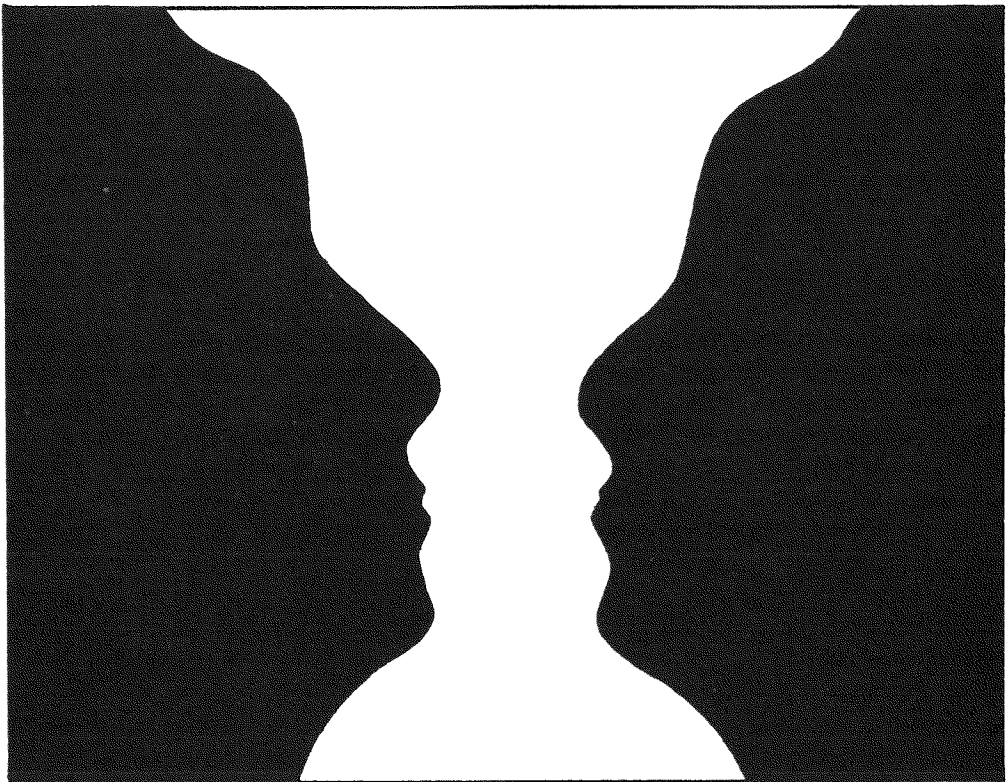
A most entertaining example of how the words in this aria seem to work against the music occurred in a master class given by the tenor Luciano Pavarotti. One of the students elected to perform it. At the end of the student's performance, Mr. Pavarotti inquired whether the student realized that the aria is indeed a happy one because it is about a man who has discovered that the woman he loves loves him in return. He also mentioned that many people do not realize that this popular aria is uplifting since the music sounds sad. The student, he cautioned, was allowing the minor sound of the music to govern the interpretation; in fact, Pavarotti suggested that the student think happy thoughts since the tear reveals Adina's love. After a few attempts, the student performed the aria again and received Mr. Pavarotti's approval.

Finally, bass-baritone Sanford Sylvan offers an example from the end of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. In *Destination Mozart*, he speaks tellingly of the difference in tone and stylistic nuance between the innate flowing legato — hence, the calming effect — of the final spoken Italian words, «*Bella calma trovera*», and the disturbingly syncopated and agitated music which interacts with this text. The music serves to question the true meaning of the words at the end of the opera.

How do these psychological examples lead to a clearer understanding of the issue — words versus music? Perhaps it depends on your perspective — much like the figure-ground illusions. Do you see two faces or a vase? In his book, *The Psychology of Music*, John Booth Davies uses figure-ground relationships to help explain the «principle underlying the spontaneous organization of sounds into definite patterns... People learn from their past experience that particular visual stimuli are normally used as objects or 'figures', which occur against some sort of background... [Musical] accents are the figures which stand out whilst the ground comprises those tones in the sequence which do not stand out... [Further], the performer [may] present rhythms which conflict with the obvious ones that the listener is probably using, and thereby [may] show him new ways of grouping. If the listener is not careful, he may even be seduced into a blind alley if he interprets the objective (played) accents as 'the beat' when they in fact are not.» (198-200) Having already been seduced by the question — music versus text or text versus music? — I decided to apply the figure-ground theory to the topic at hand.

Looking at this well known figure-ground picture [Figure 1], you may see the black

FIGURE 1



M.S. BOEHM —

faces as the foreground on a white background or you may see a white vase as the foreground on a black background. How the picture is seen depends upon your perspective. With a certain amount of concentration you may be able to willfully flip the picture back and forth. But no matter how hard you try concentrating on just one figure, the presence of the other figure will always be felt; in fact, it may no longer be possible to look at just the vase or the faces alone without the other figure popping into view.

Recitatives and arias comprise the operatic picture. Recitative, as defined in *The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, is «a vocal style designed for the speechlike declamation of narrative episodes... Its main characteristic is a strictly syllabic treatment of the text with careful attention to word accent.» (241) Here, then, is where the words would become the foreground in an effort to expedite the narrative. Aria, on the other hand, is defined as «an elaborate composition for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment... characterized by a vocal part of considerable complexity, often including elements of virtuosity... and a regard for purely musical design.» (16) In the case of arias, which in general are governed mostly by the emotions of the character, the music would come to the foreground.

In the case of duets, trios, quartets, and sextets each character has different words and different music and is singing in various combinations with the other characters. In order to guide the listener to what is going on in the text with many characters singing simultaneously, the composer may highlight (or temporarily move to the foreground) one of the character's parts by setting certain words to a higher (or lower) vocal register, increasing the dynamic level of one part or by setting the text to a distinctive rhythmic pattern. Each

character's part is then able to move in and out of the foreground much like the movement in the picture between the two objects.

Davies also suggests that the performer and listener may be operating on two different levels of perception resulting in new rhythmic groupings. In the case of words versus music, new awarenesses about text or the music may be revealed depending on the performer's diction and vocal abilities. One performer's vocal abilities may be such that diction suffers in order for the music to survive — that is to say, for this type of singer the words would be put in the background in order to concentrate on producing beautiful musical sounds yet another singer may be able to sing the same selection without compromising diction or the music.

The figure-ground illusions may be one way of understanding how music and words relate in opera. The words or music of opera would then be perceived depending upon your perspective. At times you will hear the words as the foreground and at other times you will hear the music. But both the music and words together form the total picture known as opera. To remove one figure from the presence of the other would only serve to lessen the uniqueness of the whole picture. The figures come to life because of their unique and interdependent arrangement within the frame of the picture. Similarly, the combination of music and words alone does not generate the art form known as opera. It is the unique situational perspective of the words and music — taken together — that gives opera life. The juxtaposition of words against music in order to study the genre of opera may be tantamount to being «seduced into a blind alley». Yet it is precisely this elusive and seductive element which tantalizes our intellects and continues to foster investigations into the psychological interaction between words and music.

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Camera I-s: Representations of Identity in the Photographs of Suzanne Lafont

ANCA CRISTOFOVICI (*)

It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis.

Walter Benjamin, «A Small History of Photography»

Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Do not try to interpret them, but look at them until illumination bursts forth. In a general way, a method of exercising the intelligence based on looking. Application of this method for discriminating between the real and the illusory. In sensory perception, if you are not sure of what you are seeing, you move around, still looking, and the real appears. In inner life, time plays the role of space. With the passing of time, you are changed, and if through the changes, you keep your gaze fixed upon the same thing, the illusion eventually dissipates and the real appears. The condition for this is that your attention must take the form of a gaze, not an attachment.

Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*¹

THE EFFECT OF BLINDNESS

In 1989, 150 years after the invention of photography, a *New York Times*' article

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¹ This is a quotation Suzanne Lafont herself mentions as being related to her way of thinking photography, see interview by Christian Milovanoff in *Une autre objectivité/Another Objectivity*, Jean-François Chevrier and James Lingwood eds. (Milan: Idea Books, 1989). Bilingual edition. All further references will be indicated in brackets.

dramatically announced: «Now, the Camera's Eye Turns Inward».² Heralding a new era in the role of photography, the title's irony actually voices what has become a tacit, menacing presence in everyday life: that of the intruding eye of different kinds of cameras.

The inflation of «the visible» predicated by the mechanical reproduction of photography, or by what Susan Sontag called «the recycling of images» has brought about as we can all see, disquieting effects. And this oversaturation of images has naturally given rise to a new anxiety: that of «the death of the image».³

However, having already mourned and survived «the death of the novel», «the death of the author», the artist's intuition and the reader's or the viewer's common sense will certainly find a way out of this maze. The question, then, is how? And more specifically — given the overwhelming presence of different kinds of images in our everyday life — how can the subject as subjected viewer overcome this invasion of «the visible»? How can it find continuity in a discontinuous series of representations and thus recover a freshness of perception? In other words, how is it possible to control an «effect of blindness» developed as a defense against the shifting borders between «fact» and «fiction»?

Because of its ambiguous status and multiple usage photography brings up this question in particularly poignant ways. Recent developments in the art of photography attempt to undermine a pervasive interpretation of photographic images as representing the disintegration/fragmentation of the individual. Photography has always been in a state of renewal. Photographers today challenge both the status of their profession and «the visual habits» they have inherited from their respective traditions. Through freshness of perception, they provide alternatives for handling received images of the self and of the social environment.

WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY

The present inquiry into the identity of the photographer's discourse is a virtual inquiry into the role and effect of images on the process of thinking — and thus on the structuring of identity. Among contemporary photographers, representations of identity are sometimes particularly spectacular. Cindy Sherman's work is exemplary. I have chosen however to discuss quite an opposite case, that of the less well-known French photographer, Suzanne Lafont, whose work surprises the viewer in different ways than does Sherman's.

The works of women photographers are certainly related to their perception of their own identity as women, and, more specifically, as women photographers. And yet, with less spectacular attitudes, such as that of Lafont, the issues of a «feminine» discourse — still very much at stake — are so only in an *indirect* and *implicit* way. Approaching these works both as representative of and surpassing gender distinctions will enable the viewer to look at these photographs less restrictively, more freely. According to Lafont's own formulation in an interview in 1989: «the instrument [the camera] and art do not enable you to interpret the world; they simply allow you to think» (171).

I would hold that respecting the artist's own ordering of priorities is essential to a proper understanding of her work. This prevents it from being ghetto-ized or appropriated to the critic's own theoretical *a priori*.

Consequently, in talking about a selection of images from Lafont's work, I will adopt a stand close to the artist's own gaze, that is, «against interpretation», so to say. In the above-mentioned interview by Christian Milovanoff, Lafont repeatedly states this imperative

² Andy Grundberg *The New York Times*, May 28, 1989, pp. 18-19.

³ Jacques Aumont, «Image, visage, passage», *Passages de l'image* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1990), pp. 61-71. My translation.

detachment from interpretations that might limit the scope and intensity of experience. «The world», she says, for instance, «is not there to be interpreted; it simply has to be seen» (172).

But in order *to see* these images one has to take into account that *seeing* is for Lafont far from a passive attitude or a merely sentimental attachment. Her photographic thinking is based on «the mobility, displacements and reversals characteristic of paradox» (169). Her pictures foreground not new information on reality (they are not, as Lafont puts it «a kind of exhaustion of the visible»), but an awakening to the nature of the real and the illusory. More specifically, they provide an insight into the understanding of psychological processes as aesthetic processes. It is precisely such a reading that I want to suggest.

My approach to Lafont's work is focused on the progressive configuration of identity depicted in different series of portraits of both sexes and different ages. The portraits are related to other representations in her work (landscape, architecture), so as to emphasize the artist's constant concern with the connection between identity configuration and the subject's situation in space and time. This preoccupation is at the center of her creative efforts despite what may appear as absence of concrete information on the photographed subject (i.e. absence of psychological or sociological effects).

WHO IS SUZANNE LAFONT?

Suzanne Lafont is a late-comer in the world of photography. Born at Nîmes in 1949, she studied literature and philosophy before devoting herself entirely to photography in 1984. She is currently living and working in Arles. Lafont's new place of residence is not only the area which served as an inspiration to many Impressionist painters, but also one of the most famous centers of photography in France.

Lafont's work has not been widely exhibited. It has, however, been quickly recognized for its rigorous and uncompromising approach as well as for the artist's authority and independence from the photographic community. Lafont's 1984-1988 work was shown in a first retrospective exhibition in 1989 (Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille). That exhibition demonstrated a very consistent progression within such a short span of time. Her photographs have also been shown in international exhibitions in Lausanne, London and Cleveland.

In 1988, Lafont participated in the group exhibition *Another Objectivity* shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and then in France and Italy. Though not representing a particular trend, this eclectic show brought together photographers as apparently different as Jeff Wall, Craigie Horsfield, Jean-Louis Garnell. It showed them all to be related through their preoccupation with the possibilities of photography today.

In the introduction to the exhibition's catalogue the artists define their «borderline» situation between the notions of «objective» photography (i.e. the «New Objectivity» of the 1920's-1930's) and «subjective» photography (i.e. the various eclectic trends rejecting that type of representation). Their position is probably closer to the notion of «objectuality», a coinage used by Régis Durand in relation to the status of photographic representations: between the real, the fictional and the simulacrum.⁴

Given the impact of photography on our «vision», Durand considers that through their very ambiguity photographic images will necessarily create «new forms of reality». It is possible, he suggests, that in the present situation, «that of a distancing or a 'deficit' of the real, of the consciousness we have of the real», photography will «reconquer (imaginarily) the real, to insure its presence under the form of a simulacrum».

Durand refers here in particular to a tendency in recent photography toward «larger-

⁴ Régis Durand, «La force de l'évidence», *La Recherche Photographique* n. 7 (1990), p. 10. My translation.

than-life» size, tableau-like photographs, and close-ups, that is to say over-emphasized proximity of the photographer's objective to its object/subject. He relates this need for «closeness» to what Paul Virilio calls «the crisis in our faith in perception»,⁵ or what Jacques Aumont, talking about «the ends» of modernity, calls «the end of an era, that of the eye» (Aumont 62).

Lafont's humanistic studies have naturally led her towards an analytic, reflexive approach that takes into account all of these concerns. And yet, despite her literary and philosophical training, she refuses both academic idiosyncrasies and the rituals of contemporary culture. This detachment is not one of pose but of inner choice. Jean-François Chevrier, describing Lafont's relation to the cultural moment in which we are living, emphasizes her position with respect to the confusing sense of «fiction» and «reality» engendered by the inflation of images:

She knows perfectly well that the cultural industry has spoiled the dream — which is nothing more now than a bazaar, a rhetorical model, or the domain of psychoanalysts [...] She would like to consider that the miraculous (or fiction) is not necessarily an escape route, that it might also be a real world... But she also knows that «fantasy» is a publicitary instrument and irony a device of adaptation.⁶

Lafont's works strikes the viewer with its apparent simplicity and lack of ostentation. Yet, these «plain» images based on the elementary conventions of the portrait are extremely powerful and disturbing.

PORTRAITS: EXPOSURES AND SCREENS

In a series of 1987 portraits, Lafont captures characters between an over-emphasized foreground detail and a blurred fake background («Like a curtain between the subject and the world of things», she explains, 170). Black and white — like all of her photographs — these portraits also capture an incertitude, a helplessness in the contrast of the subject's attitude and her/his fixed gaze.

The vegetal element in these portraits functions like a screen. It thus creates a disturbing sense of distance from something that the viewer can only see through the photographed subject's eyes. This remoteness is also reminiscent of the subject's astonishment in front of the camera when faced with the possibility that a reversed/negative identity will eventually emerge on paper. In photography's vocabulary, the invisible image that may be developed is called a *latent image*!

Lafont produces this same screen effect in a series of photographs of an abandoned industrial site.⁷ And in other works of the portrait series (1987-1988), 19th-century studio photographs are mimicked with subjects in Pre-Raphaelite poses. These portraits — a reminder of Julia Margaret Cameron's attempt to mimic the atmospheric effects of 19th-century painting — also use photographic convention and quotation as a screen.

In some of these portraits, the body of a schizophrenic is helplessly suspended in space (Figure 1).

As if cut off from the landscape (mirrored in the pond), the subject remains imprisoned

⁵ See particularly Paul Virilio, *La Machine de vision* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1988).

⁶ Jean-François Chevrier, introduction to the catalogue of the Marseille exhibition *Suzanne Lafont, 1984-1988*, Centre de la Vieille Charité (Musées de Marseille et Actes Sud, 1989), p. 3. My translation.

⁷ Photographs published in a volume with texts by Pierre Gaudin, Jean-Pierre Nouhaud: *Blancs d'oubli. Onze photographies de Suzanne Lafont* (Editions Royaumont, 1987).

FIGURE 1

Sans titre, 1989, 45x34,5 cm. Reproduced from the Marseille exhibition catalogue *Suzanne Lafont 1984-1988*, Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille (Musées de Marseille et Actes Sud, 1989)



In his own representation of the world. These photographic subjects' fixed attitudes express their absence (their «abstraction») from the world. Those same attitudes also express the fear or superstition primitive or hyper-sensitive people sometimes manifest in front of the camera. In Chevrier's words:

Lafont has found here the most disquieting echo of this «prise d'identité» (or false revelation of a model to itself) which is the photographic portrait (Chevrier 6).

Paradoxically, like Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, Lafont's originality is situated in her investigation into the common-place. Indeed, she herself states that she came to the ideas of «commonplace» and «convention» while doing research on Flaubert's later work, and that she was led from Flaubert's use of quotation to the idea of the «ready-made» as used by Duchamp and from there to the mechanical reproduction of Pop Art.

Lafont's incursion into the conventional is firm yet unobtrusive. It points to the ambivalence of the relation of the self to the environment, a relation expressed in terms of both clear-

FIGURE 2

Sans titre, 1987, 53x42 cm. The Cantini Museum Collection, Marseille (reproduced from the Marseille exhibition catalogue)



cut distinctions and blurred outlines. The screens (technical or metaphorical) disclose as much as they conceal.

BODIES OF SPACE

The subject's relation to space is most obvious in the series *Children in the Garden* (1987), defined by the author as «an attempt to describe *space* through the familiar conventions and the stereotypes of amateur photography» (170). For this series, Lafont reproduces the same «false» scenery as in the portraits. Set against an artificial vegetal background, the doll-like children acquire dynamism through the blurred outlines of parts of their bodies (Figure 2).

The children were placed on garden chairs or stones. Their movement, which is always circular, creates a vortex engulfing and reviving the false background, while simultaneously creating a link between themselves and the world. The gesture is so quick that the body

part in motion (usually the head) is totally blurred. The photograph thus acquires the qualities of the painter's brushstroke. The relation between the geometrical framework and the fluid movement — «le flou» — recalls Francis Bacon's blurred, dissolving faces, that manner of representing the tension between motion and stasis that painting has borrowed from photography.

«My idea», says Lafont referring to this series, «was that it is not things that are in space but that it is *the relation of things and beings to the world* that is itself constitutive of space» (170). Her concern with space comes as a natural development of her reflection on the necessity of more nuanced distinctions between subject and object, reality and illusion, the natural and the artificial. It is as if she were attempting, with the photographic image, to find a point of contact and a space of interaction between the different functions of photography, which more than any other form of representation, mediates our access to reality and our sense of identity.

In Lafont's view, objects to our gaze are objects of thought. In her own words, they are «*of the order of thought*» and, as such, «possess *the immateriality* of thought». Her distrust of objective space leads to an annihilation of distance (of the «here»-«there» distinction), as shown in her landscape series *Le Littoral* (1986). In that series, she presents flat surfaces where land, sea, and horizon are all situated on the same plane, as if photography were denying its very capacity of creating the illusion of space (Figure 3).

In this respect, the progression of the human presence in her successive series is significant. Lafont started from a body suspended in the landscape. She proceeded to the movement of the child's body, or the portraits to which a slight gesture or a vestimentary detail might be attached. More recently she has moved to large format close-ups.

However, the relation of Lafont's eye to space (and consequently to time) is slowly changing. In the «landscape-portraits» of mad people, there is separation (actual *split*) between the body and space («they are mere bodies standing in front of a space», says Lafont). In the portraits, and mainly in the *Children in the Garden* series, the body becomes the container of space, «the body *is* space». As Lafont explains:

If indeed one defines spatiality by experience, the world ceases to be a place where things and beings are situated and comes to be seen as being shaped and as unfolding through a «here» which is the site of experience. (170)

ARCHITECTURE AND THE SHAPING OF SPACE

The investigation of space has been present in Lafont's work from the very beginning. An early series dating from 1984 is a rethinking of the architectural photographic representation of the 1920s-1930s. These photographs are devoid of human presence, but through the problems of perspective they pose, they contain what one may call an «implied» eye. This «eye *cum* objective» perceives its relation to space and, simultaneously, through the historical reference, its relation to a tradition. Lafont replaces the reversed perspective of photographs like those of Moholy-Nagy, the low shot angle or any camera speculation with the point of view of «the natural gaze». She thus eliminates any of the spectacular effects inherent in the rhetoric of the «New Objectivity» photographers.⁸

Due to this static perception, her «structures» have a closure that prevents «the dissolution of things into images» (Chevrier). Her photographs are thus closed individually. She does nonetheless maintain continuity from image to image through the problem of perception at the center of each series. The poised relation of the eye to a constructed environment

⁸ For Lafont's relation to traditional representations of perspective see her own article «Nature et classicisme. La leçon du XIXème», in *Photographies* n. 7 (1985), pp. 12-17.

FIGURE 3

Le Littoral, 1986, 24x18 cm. Reproduced from the catalogue *Une autre objectivité/Another Objectivity* (Milan, Idea Books, 1989)



makes for the force of these images (as metallic structures) and for their fragility (as a network perceived by the eye). The same balance is noticed in connection with her historical reference, with her manner of «quotation» that avoids both sharp irony and nostalgia.

What Lafont seems to be doing in the *Architecture* series is to reconstruct the modernist utopia of «pure forms» from a naturalistic, human-scale point of view. Her portraits, on the other hand, have something of the poetic rigour of her pictures of industrial architecture. The cunning «submission» to models and conventions thus defines Lafont's own view as that of an autonomous and unitary self, implied or fictional though it may be.

PORTRAITS: TRACES OF TIME

To give a closure to this survey on Lafont's work, I would like to come back to her most recent photographs, the close-up (*Untitled*, 1988-1989). A certain scenario seems to be obvious in the cyclical progression of her work: that of the process of identity configuration. Lafont started her work with representations of actual «blurred» outlines. An early series from 1980-1981, entitled *Flou*, shows landscape details and chairs. The artist focuses here

FIGURE 4

Sans titre, 1988-1989, 107x85 cm. Reproduced from the catalogue of the Centre Pompidou exhibition *Passages de l'image*. (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1990)



mainly on the effects of light and shadow creating matter, as if she were preparing the material for her future works.

In the *Children in the Garden* series the «fuzzy» representation of head and body parts translates a search turned towards the world, an attempt to seize it all at once, without distinction, in that rapid movement.

In the next series, the «waist portraits», the subjects with the fixed look, are tense as if they had managed to capture something they still don't understand and that they want to fix with their gaze (thus imitating what the camera itself is doing). The blond woman in black, as if mourning a loss (that of her natural presence?), the doubles (mother and daughter?) with emblem-like stylized facial features, the man in a striped shirt, sunglasses in waist pocket.

And then the camera stops on the face itself, the topos of identity *par excellence*. These narrow shots recall instant pictures, identification photographs (but also painting and cinema close-ups). If the body is *space*, these faces are containers of *time*. And the very technique of the close-up shot is indicative of this time awareness. As Lafont puts it: «The instant is spread out over a span of time and yet the image's ability to represent a single moment is preserved» (172). The attitude her photographic subjects adopt, their expression, translates this embodiment of time. Their gaze is turned inwards. The circular movement of the head is powerfully suggested in these portraits whose faces are turned towards an undefined center. Even in the frontal portrait of an adolescent, the subject looks «somewhere else» than the «waist portraits», his gaze is veiled and paradoxically even more inwardly oriented.

These portraits evolve melancholy, but they also convey an understanding of an «immaterial» message (Lafont talks about her interest in the iconography of the Annunciation) (Figure 4). These otherwise conceptual portraits emphasize an understanding through the senses, as in the three photographs that each foreground one sole sense organ (the mouth, the eyes, the ear). Though well individualized, the close-ups maintain the ambiguity of the image due to a slight androgynous touch transpiring in all subjects' traits.

These facial portraits are almost the size of a human body. They seize the onlooker as both extremely close and strangely remote. (One actually needs distance to see them better). Through this impact, they engage the «reader» in that inner voyage the photographer's eye has captured. They do so even physically through the very movement their perception requires from the spectator: both eyes and body moving back and forth in the artificial space of the museum, to grasp now the detail, then the whole, then back to the detail, registered as an after image.

«The gazing I constitutes itself in its perception of the work».⁹ And we do so in a movement of infinite regression stopped here and there abruptly by these narrow shots. The eye itself is a space of passage between private fictions and public fictions. Through her reflection and minute work, Lafont recaptures a freshness of perception which allows for a prolonged moment's gaze on more balanced landscapes of the interior.

⁹ From an essay by Chantal Pontbriand on an installation of close-ups by the Canadian photographer Geneviève Cadieux presented at the Pompidou exhibition: «Le Je regardant se constitue dans sa perception de l'oeuvre», *Passages*, p. 148.

Re-stigmatizing Medusa: Female Rage and the Male Gaze

MARY ARENSBERG (*)

The abandoned and then anathematized woman from Vergil's Dido to Alex Foster in the film «Fatal Attraction» to the play «M. Butterfly» is represented in literary texts, film, and drama as a *femme fatale* and psychopathic borderline. Her origins can be traced to the myth of Medusa and its later reading by Freud and Camille Paglia and to her male creator who invents her as a self-projection, over-identifies with her androgynous power and then kills her on the phallic sword or death rite of his own pan-sexualism or gender without borders. There is, then, a doubleness about the term borderline itself that both stigmatizes the female and marginalizes her psychic distress, at the same time it discloses the blurred gender of the male gazer.

The pattern is initiated with the an erotic encounter, an acting out, a sexual transgression that corrupts or overtures the existing social order. As a figure of fantasy or wish-fulfillment, the tragic heroine enters the hero's life as an aggressive, passionate woman who allows him to participate in the Dionysian excess of the pleasure principle with seemingly no super-ego attachment. Yet when duty calls — Rome must be founded; the wife is back from the country — the hero returns to the male world of law and order and the family, while the heroine copes with the reality of the abandonment and the deceptions figured by her false self. Her sexual acting out, even the pathologic pleasure, had been a defense against abandonment depression and is preferable to the feelings of helplessness, rage and lack of control she experiences when the reality principle intrudes. Safety comes only with more acting out, as her rage doubles back on itself and she falls into the abyss of female narcissism and phallic death.

My son tells me, via a recent film, that there are two kinds of women in relationships: «low maintenance and high maintenance». Homer's Penelope is definitely a «low maintenance woman». Abandoned for nineteen years while her husband is off re-capturing another man's wife and then wandering for another 10 years in the arms of Calypso and Circe, the faithful Penelope raises their son alone and then fends off 108 suitors by inventing a domestic deception, the unfinished tapestry, that postpones her re-marriage. Even when Odysseus tells her, on the first night of his return as they are talking in bed that he must leave again, she accepts his compulsion to wander and her conditioned mode of existence: waiting.

Low maintenance is not only confined to the traditional wifely values of unending

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patience and fidelity: other 1.m. qualities include independence, grace under pressure, detachment and the willingness to accept loss and abandonment. On film, Katherine Hepburn, Audrey Hepburn, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly and Lauren Bacall are all low maintenance, precisely because their personae and behavior shatter male stereotypes; they are un-neurotic, non-hysterical and never whine: sophisticated, elegant and self-possessed, they are, women «imperiously eluding the world and definitions of men.»¹ Sexually dual, the beautiful woman with the «male» voice, these neatly coifed ice-queens are characterized by Camille Paglia as «the western personality as thing, matter cleansed of the chthonian.»²

Clytemnestra is high maintenance and chthonian. The «chthonian» refers to the feminine connection to the earth and the powers of earth, Mother Nature, the primal mothers of world mythology. It is the female counterpart to the Dionysian and is linked iconographically and in Greek drama with the omphalos (the navel at the center of the earth) and with the tomb of the serpent-god, Tython. Snakes, menstrual blood and female rage are signatures of the chthonian. Enraged by her husband's murder of their daughter, Iphigenia, and his flaunting of the concubine, Cassandra, the queen of Argos plots a homecoming of horror. She is no Penelope. Taking up the lover that Penelope is able to resist, Clytemnestra murders her husbands and his mistress, dreams of nursing a serpent, a phallic son who will kill her and her effeminate paramour, and then, in the shape of three furies, returns to haunt his dreams. Definitely high maintenance.

Penelope is an idealization, a romantic longing; Clytemnestra is a projection of male fears, the mother divorced from tenderness, but still, like Gertrude, the seductive-mother who evokes ambivalence. Ethel Person outlines three different developmental images that concretize males' fear of the female and his rage: «fear of the pre-Oedipal mother of infancy who abandons/engulfs»; I call her the oceanic mother.³ The second is the «phallic-narcissistic mother who confirms/denigrates masculinity»; she is the mother as Medusa. And the third is the Oedipal mother who cannot be fulfilled, who rejects and falsely seduces, and who prefers the father.⁴ All three, oceanic, phallic and Oedipal mothers, are the abandoned and anathematized women represented in literary texts, film and drama whose origins can be traced to the gorgon Medusa and to her male creator who invents her as self projection. From Vergil's Dido to Alex Forster in the film, «Fatal Attraction», she is the *femme fatale* as psychopathic borderline.⁵

The invention of the phallic mother is both a construct of male panic and his envy of female sexuality. «The little boy invents a fictitious penis for his mother in a moment of panic over the safety and importance of his own penis», according to Louise Kaplan in her book *Female Perversions*. Again, later in life, the adult male in response to subsequent panic over sexual identity, revives this infantile «phallicizing» of the female in more elaborate form: she not only becomes Medusa with «a multitude of phallic heads» but also needs to be decapitated. Her decapitation stems from rage at the multiplicity of her orgasms and the anxiety caused by the male's over-identification with her androgynous power. The necessity is to kill (or skin as in the recent film, «The Silence of the Lambs»), or mutilate her in some way on the phallic sword of his own pansexualism or gender without borders.

There is, then, a doubleness about the term borderline itself that both stigmatizes the female (female borderlines are high maintenance patients) and marginalizes her psychic distress, at the same time it discloses the blurred gender identity of the male gazer. To

¹ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), p. 34.

² Paglia, 82.

³ Ethel S. Person, *Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters: The Power of Romantic Passion* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 92.

⁴ Person, p. 93.

⁵ «Fatal Attraction», screenplay by James Dearden. Paramount Pictures, 1987.

gaze at the gorgon is to phallicize the female, but in order to gaze at her, according to the myth, the male must perceive her indirectly, bounced off the mirrors of his own narcissism. «The borderline», according to Kristeva's linguistic reading of the term, «is where something wild, something irreducible to language, emerges...: bits of discursive chaos.»

The borderline pattern is initiated in an erotic encounter, an acting out, a sexual transgression that corrupts or overturns the existing social order. As a figure of fantasy or wish fulfillment, the tragic heroine (Dido, Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Alex Forrest) enters the man's life as an aggressive and passionate woman who allows him to participate in the Dionysian excesses of the pleasure principle with seemingly no super-ego attachment. Yet when duty calls — Rome must be founded; the wife is back from the country — the hero returns to the male world of law, order and family or mistress, while the heroine copes with the reality of abandonment and the deceptions figured by the false self that had convinced her she had fallen, this time, into love and/or marriage. «By and large», Person concludes, «women escape into love, whereas men fear being made vulnerable by love.»

Dido's attraction to Aeneas is fatal. To compensate for the murder of her husband Sychaeus at the hand of her brother, the Queen of Carthage constructs a lush, glamorous city where Aeneas arrives on his way to found Rome. «His face, his words hold fast her breath», and finally they consummate their passion in a cave where «primal Earth and Juno, queen of marriages, together give the signal. For in that cave, a navel of earth, Dido makes love that is her ruin and «calls it marriage». Throughout the long winter, they become «the slaves of squalid craving». Until, summoned by the gods, Aeneas hears the call of his super-ego and steals away with his ships in the night. Dido's response is rage, a regression to the primitive and self mutilation: in her dreams she identifies with Pentheus, decapitated by his possessed mother, and Orestes, fleeing from his mother, Clytemnestra, who is armed with «torches and black serpents. On the threshold, the awful goddesses of vengeance spuat.»

Dido's response to abandonment is a regression into primitive ritual and suicide; her madness, her evocation of chaos and the powers of darkness, her disheveled hair, and self-immolation are male images of female decompensation. As all hell breaks loose, the borderlines of the personality open up to expose the phallic mother, «her passion profaned», lying on the unsheathed sword of her betrayer. Gazing back at the blaze of Carthage from the vantage of his ship, Aeneas is described as knowing how a woman, gone wild, can act.

«Hell hath no fury, like a woman scorned.» Narcissistic rage, verbal assault turned, phase-appropriately, into physical assault is expressed, metaphorically, as heat: Dido burns to death on the pyre of her own making. Alex Forrest in the film «Fatal Attraction» blows her stack, lifts off the lid, to expose a modern Medusa. She appears, at first, as cool, low maintenance, the blond New York City career woman of the eighties who has it all together. They meet on a Saturday, in town; his wife is in the country with their daughter, and they are caught, like Dido and Aeneas, in a rain storm. Their cave is her apartment. She is hypersexual, uninhibited: the *femme fatale* «masquing in the brilliant luminosity of Apollonian high glamor.»⁶ He is a lawyer, family man and phallic narcissist, frustrated because of a three year old in the marriage bed and willing to participate in a Dionysian one-nighter. They make love over the sink as water boils over and steam pipes blow their stacks.

But Alex Forrest, as her name implies, is a thorny descendent of the androgynous Medusa: the «castrated and castrating woman»; Glenn Close in moussed-stiff, high-style curls that turn snaky once her true cthonian nature is disclosed. Her greatest fear, it turns out, is abandonment, and her favorite opera scene: the sword piercing love-death behind the rice paper screen in *Madame Butterfly*. Instead of «pulling a Butterfly», and dying for love, Alex Forrest acts out another cultural stereotype: the discarded *femme fatale*

⁶ Paglia, p. 15.

as Medusan borderline whose rage has no boundaries and whose acting out is not only self-mutilative but is intended to viciously expose the male who has exploited and seemingly wronged her.

Alex Forrest's «fatal attraction» on film is what the psychoanalyst Ethel Person calls «the psychology of extreme unrequited love».⁷ We discover, in the James Dearden screenplay, that her father has died at an early age, a cinematic hint that her obsession with Dan Gallagher is a displaced but still intense incestuous fixation. «Such individuals appear unusually sensitive to object loss. For them, love relationships do not simply assuage past losses and separations; they seem absolutely essential to maintain the integrity of the self.»⁸ When she finds out that Dan has no intention of carrying on the affair, but will return without a thought to his faithful Penelope, Beth, Alex gashes her wrists. Her act of self-cutting expresses aggression towards herself, but it is essentially rage towards that part of the self that has merged and fused with the lost love object. Bent on retrieving that piece of herself he has stolen, she invents his child, a speck of him, with which to destroy his world order. In the end, after boiling Dan's daughter's rabbit, sadistically stealing the child and attempting to murder his wife, the Medusan mother, glimpsed only in the mirror of the Gallagher bathroom, is submerged into the tub, plunged back into the waters of the collective unconscious. Our final vision of her is as a daemonic lady of the lake who cannot reclaim the phallic sword of the father.

Alex's archetypal fall into the female abyss of bottomless rage and phallic death, is parodied and deconstructed in the recent play «M. Butterfly» by David Henry Hwang. Basing the «arc» of his drama on the true story of a French diplomat who falls for a Chinese woman who turns out to be not only a spy but a man, Hwang turns female rage and abandonment depression into a male construct. He writes: «I knew Butterfly only as a cultural stereotype; speaking of an Asian woman, we would sometimes say, 'she's pulling a butterfly', which meant she's playing the submissive Oriental number.»⁹ In the play, the Frenchman fantasizes that he is Pinkerton, Madame Butterfly's betrayer and she is his butterfly. «But in the end of the piece, he realizes that it is he who has been Butterfly, and Song Li, the butterfly of his invention, is in reality the deceiving Pinkerton. As the borderlines of gender and culture break down, Gallimard falls on the phallic sword of his own invention dressed in the traditional robes of Madame Butterfly.

⁷ Ethel Person, 297.

⁸ Idem.

⁹ David Henry Hwang, «M. Butterfly», Dramatists Play Service, 1988, p. 87.

Poltergeist: Divorce American Style

ANDREW GORDON (*)

Steven Spielberg's *Poltergeist* (1982) is a curiously optimistic horror movie. A friend of mine, a baby boomer who grew up in the suburbs in southern California, says that sometimes when she is feeling down she plays videotapes of Spielberg's *Close Encounters* (1977; rev. 1980) or *Poltergeist*. These movies show families like hers in backgrounds she is familiar with. I told her I could understand the comforting appeal of *Close Encounters*, but to turn to a horror movie like *Poltergeist* for reassurance, to overcome depression? She said it was because the family sticks together. In the film's climax, a mother is willing to enter the mouth of hell itself in order to rescue her child.

Over and over again, Spielberg creates rescue fantasies of parents distraught over the little child lost (*The Sugarland Express* [1974], *Close Encounters*, *Poltergeist*, and *The Color Purple* [1985]) or the child distraught over separation from the parents or parent figure (*E.T.* [1982], *Empire of the Sun* [1987]). I believe that the primary psychological axis of Spielberg's films involves questions of separation versus fusion with the mother. At one end of the spectrum, they are horror stories of being devoured by a sadistic monster, as in *Jaws* (1975) or *Poltergeist*; at the other, they are fantasies of ecstatic union with a benign and loving other, as in *Close Encounters* or *E.T.*. His most psychologically profound film, *Empire of the Sun*, combines the ecstasy with the terror.

Poltergeist is such a reassuring horror film because it is part of Spielberg's suburban trilogy, which begins with *Close Encounters* and ends with *E.T.*, all comforting movies which might even be considered three different versions of the same story: the invasion of average, middle-class households by strange forces and the kidnapping of children. All three films end with reunion or transcendence; they are fairy tales in which the pure of heart win out.

One way of viewing Spielberg's suburban trilogy is as three movies about divorce and separation anxiety: in *Close Encounters*, that anxiety is overcome through union with a space family which functions as a transformational object, and in *E.T.*, the single figure of the alien becomes substitute father, mother, and child to heal a fractured family. Although it might seem odd to discuss *Poltergeist* in these terms since it features the only intact family in the trilogy, nevertheless I would argue that divorce is actually its unspoken subject.

On the surface, *Poltergeist* seems to be not about divorce but about the fear of death, of the unknown, of what lies beyond the grave. But nobody alive can know anything about existence after death; death is the great *tabula rasa* and we must fill in the blank. We

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simply inscribe it with fears with which we are already familiar: fears of the dark, of sleep or unconsciousness, of bodily injury, of age or decay, or of whatever most terrifies the particular individual. In Spielberg's case, those appear to be fears of separation from the parents, of a family torn asunder.

In *Poltergeist*, Spielberg creates the happy Freeling family only to scare them out of their wits and give them a terrible battering: first the son is almost killed and then the younger daughter is kidnapped. Their house turns against them; it becomes haunted, unsafe and uncanny. In the end it is destroyed: it is, literally, a broken home. As Douglas Kellner remarks, «The scenes of separation throughout the movie express fear of impending disintegration of the family and fear of separation from the haven of the family» (125). Spielberg arouses these fears in order to overcome them; like *E.T.*, the film is part of his rehearsal for marriage and parenthood.

One way of explaining *Poltergeist* is that Spielberg seems to be recapitulating certain early conflicts over separation or fusion with the mother, conflicts which in his case were perhaps repeated in exacerbated form in his adolescence due to the trauma of his parents' divorce. He says, «*Poltergeist* is what I fear and *E.T.* is what I love... One is about suburban evil and the other about suburban good...» (Kakutani 30). But there is nothing in the suburbs except isolated nuclear families: mothers and fathers with their children, each family in its own house. What Spielberg loves, what is good about the suburbs is family closeness; what he fears, what is evil, is the breakup of the home. He writes:

I was about 16 when our family moved from Phoenix to Northern California, and soon after, our parents separated. They hung in there to protect us until we were old enough. But I don't think they were aware of how acutely we were aware of their unhappiness — not violence, just a pervading unhappiness you could cut with a fork or a spoon at dinner every night. For years I thought the word «divorce» was the ugliest in the English language. Sound traveled from bedroom to bedroom, and the word came seeping through the heating ducts. My sisters and I would stay up at night, listening to our parents argue, hiding from that word. And when it traveled into our room, absolute abject panic set in. My sisters would burst into tears, and we would all hold one another. And when the separation finally came, we were no better off for having waited six years for it to occur. (Spielberg 63)

In *Close Encounters*, the aliens try to invade the home and kidnap a child through the heating ducts. And in *Poltergeist*, Spielberg recasts that anxiety over divorce into scenes of the children terrified by strange noises at night, clinging together in a panic over «ghosts». He seems to split his object representations into good and bad in the film: the idealized Freeling family, with good mother and father and children (and even a kindly substitute grandmother in the parapsychologist Dr. Lesh), is attacked by a poltergeist Manson family which is really their bad, distorted mirror image.

That is the weakness of the film as I see it. *Poltergeist* is too well defended, disguising its real subject: the flaws in ourselves or in the people we love which break families apart. That is the real «suburban evil». The Freeling family is too nice, which makes the film too reassuring and superficial. We get the usual Spielberg warmth, comedy, and wonder, along with plenty of thrills, chills, suspense, and beautiful or gruesome special effects, but it lacks *psychological* horror.

Since the parents in *Poltergeist*, Diane and Steve Freeling (he is even given Spielberg's first name), are such good parents and sympathetic people, the bad parents are symbolically represented by the ghosts. These ghosts first manifest themselves through the television set; the movie opens and closes with images of a television. Spielberg says that when he was growing up, «my step-parent was the TV set» (Crawley 12). In *Poltergeist*, TV plays

the role of the evil step-parent, seducing and swallowing children; it functions like the witch who entices Hansel and Gretel with a gingerbread house so she can eat them or the wicked queen who offers her stepdaughter Snow White a shiny poisoned apple.

THE OPENING SCENE OF *POLTERGEIST*

The disturbing opening shot of *Poltergeist* shows an abstract pattern of wavering black and white dots to the sound of «The Star-Spangled Banner». The visual disorientation continues until the camera pulls back, as the National Anthem concludes, to reveal the statue of the Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima; it is a television station signing off at the end of the broadcasting day. Like Hitchcock, Spielberg upsets the audience by temporarily subverting a familiar national icon (Canby). In a similar fashion, the sacred institution of the American family will be assaulted in the film by the uncanny. After the station goes off the air, what remains is black-and-white static and white noise. The camera pulls back further to reveal the father, Steve Freeling, asleep in his chair; he is bathed in the flickering rays of the set. We are introduced to the family when it is asleep and most vulnerable, and the forces of chaos and the void are loose in the home. As the first draft of the screenplay says, «Transmission ends and a BLAST of disturbing static rules the airwaves» («Poltergeist» 1), and later, «Transmission ceases and the soft roar of dead air fills the room as the static white snow colors the walls, making shadows flicker and warp» («Poltergeist» 14). The static could represent the power of the unconscious mind, of the repressed, the anarchy which reigns when ordinary, daytime mental «transmission» ceases and we sleep. One of the parapsychologists later suggests the television may be receiving messages from «inner space». The static is characterized as an evil, roaring beast which emerges at night out of «dead air» to rule the household.

In contrast to this beast is the friendly family dog, who trots upstairs and through the bedrooms, searching for food. As the camera tracks the dog, we are introduced to the other sleeping members of the family: the mother Diane (a memo pad on her nightstand is, significantly, heart-shaped), the sixteen-year-old daughter Dana, eight-year-old Robbie, and finally five-year-old Carol Anne. There is something creepy about this opening camera movement: the camera seems to emerge out of the TV and prowl the house while the occupants are asleep, and it knows what's going to happen (the camera also does this in several later scenes when the family is asleep). The omniscient camera is another force at large in the Freeling home, and it seems to have more in common with «the TV people» than with the family dog.

Little Carol Anne senses something; she wakes up and walks downstairs, as if hypnotized or sleepwalking, into the flickering light of the TV. She has been summoned by voices that only she can hear. As in *Close Encounters* and *E.T.*, the children's sleep has been disturbed by strange spirits (Denby 71). Carol Anne talks to the TV as if she were addressing a person, but we hear only her side of the dialogue. She kneels before the screen and touches it as if praying at an altar. (In *Close Encounters*, Roy and Jillian also touch the screens of their TVs, but in that film the set is a benign totem whereas here it is evil.) The rest of the family, which by now has also woken up, is baffled and upset as they watch her. Later in the film, ghosts emerge from the static and pull Carol Anne through to «the other side», so that she can only communicate with her parents as a faint voice out of the TV set.

POLTERGEISTS AND ORAL AGGRESSION

In contemporary American culture, viewing television is often denigrated in terms suggesting

oral passivity: «boob tube» or «couch potato». The flip side of those fears is the notion not only that we feed off television images but also that TV will swallow us. Many American parents are afraid that their children have become hypnotized, consumed by the TV set; *Poltergeist* literalizes those anxieties (Kellner 127). Television here becomes the bad breast which does not nourish but devours.

In both *Close Encounters* and *E.T.*, the aliens are associated with sweets: ice cream and cookies in *Close Encounters* and candy in *E.T.*. But in *Poltergeist*, the supernatural creatures prevent the characters from eating: they disrupt a breakfast by shattering a glass and bending the silverware and they disrupt a dinner by turning the meat rotten and maggotty. Another way of putting it is that the extraterrestrials are orally gratifying or nourishing figures whereas the ghosts are orally sadistic, akin to the shark in *Jaws* (Diane teases Carol Anne that if you overfeed goldfish they turn into sharks, and in the first draft screenplay, Robbie says «This place's got jaws» («*Poltergeist*» 56).

There are numerous examples of oral aggression by the poltergeists: Carol Anne and everything in the children's bedroom gets sucked into the closet; Marty, one of the parapsychologists, is bitten when he tries to enter the bedroom; and in the climax, the closet develops a giant mouth which threatens to devour the children and Diane (it looks like the Sarlaac in *Return of the Jedi*). In the script, the effect is described as «a living mouth, all gums and blinding light and at the very back, a pale yellow esophagus that spirals to abysmal depths» («*Poltergeist*» 112). Alternately, this image can be read as vaginal; Andrew Sarris says «the most harrowing effects in *Poltergeist* tend to be return-to-the-womb» (Sarris 59). If the aliens in *Close Encounters* function for the hero as the good mother or the good breast, then the ghosts in *Poltergeist* are the reverse.

POLTERGEISTS AS CHILDREN

Nevertheless, even if the ghosts suggest the bad mother, they are also in a sense children like the aliens and *E.T.*. According to Freud, ghosts are simply the child's (or the neurotic's) imago of the bad side of the parents (65). As expressions of the child's imagination, they are themselves childlike. The psychic Tangina tells the parents, «To her [Carol Anne], it simply *is* another child. To us, it is The Beast.»

«*Poltergeist*» means «bratty ghost». Right after the opening scene comes a piece of comedy in which a group of bratty children play a mischievous prank on a grownup. A hefty man holding a case of beer laboriously pedals a too-small child's bike. Some kids sitting on the curb send their remote-control toy cars after him, causing him to fall off the bike and drop the beer, which sprays in all directions. The farce continues in the same scene when Steve Freeling engages his fat, obnoxious neighbor Ben Tuthill in a battle of duelling remote controls. Ironically, on their television sets the macho aggression of a football game battles the gentle Mr. Rogers, who sings, «Please, won't you be my neighbor?» We see a series of connected motifs: bratty children, or adults who behave like children (Synder 150), and remote control devices used to play nasty tricks at a distance. The poltergeists too begin with this sort of playful, juvenile stunt, although their pranks gradually escalate into the truly vicious.

A similar mixture is at work in the Spielberg-produced *Gremlins* (1984): the gremlins begin with malicious mischief and build to total carnage; like the poltergeists, the gremlins can be likened both to playful children and to unleashed aggression from the id. *Poltergeist*, however, wants to be a horror film whereas *Gremlins* plays it strictly for laughs.

Poltergeist expresses not only Spielberg's boyhood fears but also his aggressive way of overcoming those fears by playing scary tricks on his sisters: «*Poltergeist* is the darker side of my nature — it's me when I was scaring my younger sisters half to death when

we were growing up...» (Kakutani 1). All those jokes via remote control in the film could be a metaphor for the power of the filmmaker to play pranks on an audience through technology that operates at a distance: it's Spielberg who is the «bratty ghost» trying to scare us.

POLTERGEISTS AS ALIENS

As pranksters and powerful spirits — both children and adults at the same time — the poltergeists are similar to the aliens in *Close Encounters*. Both have psychic powers, behave irrationally, play tricks, and never speak. The scene in *Close Encounters* in which the aliens kidnap little Barry Guiler from his home resembles the kidnapping of Carol Anne from her bedroom in *Poltergeist*: both involve penetrating beams of light and objects which animate themselves. The poltergeists are the aliens turned nightmarish rather than benign.

Nevertheless, the other characters respond to the poltergeists with the same mix of emotions with which the characters in *Close Encounters* respond to the aliens: terror but sometimes also wonder and delight. One reviewer even complained that Spielberg «treats the title spirits as if they were extraterrestrials. The film's tone is more one of wonder and awe — fine for an outer space film — than of thrills and chills» (Chanko 430). For example, when the characters in *Poltergeist* watch the parade of ghosts down the staircase, they are awestruck, like witnesses to a religious miracle, or like the characters at the the end of *Close Encounters* and *E.T.*. The emotion is more appropriate when directed toward the benign aliens than toward these demons and lost souls. Such inappropriate affect suggests again that the creatures in all three films have a similar unconscious origin, although in *Poltergeist* Spielberg has reversed their polarity from good to bad. According to Chris Auty, «Suburbia for Spielberg is like the libido — a lake of contradictory wishes and impulses which can be expressed in forms either beatific or horrific» (205).

POLTERGEIST INVASION AS SEXUAL ASSAULT

The beatific aliens in *Close Encounters* and *E.T.* are significantly lacking in one aspect of the libido: sexuality. His extraterrestrials all seem neuter, asexual or presexual, like children before they have developed an awareness of gender. In Spielberg's films, adult sexuality is scary. As the ghosts of adults, the poltergeists are sexual beings, and that is part of what makes them so horrible. The movie hints that the poltergeist attacks are disguised sexual assaults, directed primarily against women. When Carol Anne begins sleepwalking, the worried Diane recalls an incident from her own childhood. When she was ten, she went sleepwalking outside her home and wound up asleep in a strange man's car; her father, fearing the worst, had her examined «for bruises and hickeys». Although now she laughs about this embarrassing incident, it was obviously traumatic then, and she seems to fear Carol Anne may be molested. In the climax of the film, when the teenage daughter Dana returns home from an evening with friends, hickeys are clearly visible on her neck.

Through match cutting, the poltergeists are associated with a team of male construction workers who invade the home and harass the women. When the ghosts first emerge from the TV, Carol Anne ominously announces to the family, «They're here!»; immediately, there is a cut to a tractor gouging out the earth in the backyard for a swimming pool, a kind of phallic invasion. (This hole in the ground later becomes a place of terror, like an open grave.) Diane catches one of the construction workers sticking his hand through the kitchen window to steal a taste of the sauce from her cooking pot; the sexual symbolism in this incident hardly needs elaboration. Later, another of the men makes crude remarks to Dana, who gives him the finger in response.

The most erotically suggestive scene in any Spielberg film occurs when Diane, clad only in panties and a nightshirt, is bounced on her bed by unseen forces. Just before this occurs, she takes a long bath: shots of her removing her clothes, lingering shots of her luxuriating in the tub, and closeups of the drain are obvious allusions to the shower scene in *Psycho* (1960). But the suspense is prolonged and the attack delayed until she is stretched out on the bed. As she thrashes up and down, it suggests a rape by an invisible assailant. The first draft screenplay is even more explicit: «The nightgown is suddenly torn away revealing her breasts. They are kneaded and flattened. Hulking finger impressions can be seen sinking deeply into her» («Poltergeist» 110). As he did with *Close Encounters*, Spielberg toned down both the language and the amount of skin shown so that the film could be rated PG.

Poltergeist has a great deal of what could be called «primal scene» imagery: the one time Steve and Diane are about to have sex, Robbie barges in on them, and the rest of the movie is about horrible things that go on behind closed doors, about strange noises and things that go bump in the night. The attack of the poltergeists, then, may represent in part a child's distorted version of violent adult sexuality.

There seems to be a contradiction here: how can poltergeists symbolize simultaneously the bad mother — bad breast or devouring womb — aggressive children, and the bad, sexually assaulting father? The contradiction, however, is only an apparent one. Inside every unconscious mind, there is an entire family constellation of object representations: ourselves as children, along with the ways we internalized our relationships with mother, father, and siblings. Often these objects battle it out against one another, repeating the conflicts of childhood.

THE CLIMAX OF *POLTERGEIST*

The climax of *Poltergeist* combines imagery of separation anxiety, divorce, death, and rebirth — all the central concerns of the film, and for that matter, the concerns of *E.T.* as well. The climax occurs when the mother enters her children's closet (a true anxiety closet!) to rescue her kidnapped daughter from the poltergeists. Passing through the doorway represents transit into the spirit world, a descent into the unknown, into limbo or the inferno. A rope is tied around her waist; her husband promises not to let go of the rope, so that she can retrieve the child and return safely. But he panics and releases it prematurely. One obvious interpretation is that the rope equals their marriage, the ties that bind. His premature release of the rope represents the fear of divorce, which here becomes equivalent to *death*.

Diane tumbles down the rope and lands on the living room floor, clinging to the child. We don't know if they are alive or dead. Like *E.T.*, they appear to die and then are reborn. In a graphically obvious birth scene, mother and child, both covered with red slime, are rushed into a water-filled tub and told to breathe. They revive. The rope has now changed in symbolic value from the bonds of matrimony to the birth cord. The father's failure has imperiled both mother and child, who descend into death but return.

But even this climax seems insufficient to resolve the anxiety behind the plot. Spielberg gives us a second climax which replays the first: Steve leaves the house and Diane and the children are again in danger of being kidnapped or killed by the evil spirits. Once more, the mother rescues them. The father returns only at the last minute to get his family away as the house collapses.

In real life, Spielberg's father left the household permanently and the mother remained with the children in a broken home. In the movies, he can replay it with a happy ending.

CONCLUSION: *POLTERGEIST* LACKS INTERNAL STRUGGLE

The weakness of *Poltergeist* is that its conflicts are too external. The truck in Spielberg's *Duel* (1971) or the shark in *Jaws* are powerful symbols that seem to emerge because the heroes are already paranoid or phobic. Similarly, in *E.T.*, the alien arrives because the family is fractured and the child is alienated. In contrast, in *Poltergeist* there is no internal struggle because the family is too normal; the horror doesn't reflect any problems in their character or in their relationships, so the poltergeists lack real psychological power. And since we don't find out the cause of the disturbances — the desecration of the cemetery — until very late, for most of the movie the events have no apparent reason for happening. Pauline Kael writes, «What's lacking is what *E.T.* has — the emotional roots of the fantasy and what it means to the children. There is nothing about Diane and Steve and their kids that relates in any way to what happens to them. The parents show their love for Carol Anne, but it was never in doubt» (353). Tom Genelli and Lyn Davis Genelli believe *Poltergeist* lacks «true eeriness». In *Dead of Night* (1946), another horror film about the transit into an afterlife, transit «is the experience of the unravelling of our own minds into their primordial components. *Poltergeist* fundamentally portrays transit as something that *happens* to people because of things beyond their control» (111).

Poltergeist might be usefully compared to another, truly disturbing horror film with a similar premise, which preceded it by two years: Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980). Based on the novel by Stephen King, *The Shining* is also about a family living in a haunted house (in this case, a hotel) constructed over a cemetery, an innocent child with psychic sensitivity who first makes contact with the spirits of the dead, and a courageous mother who rescues her child. But whereas the family in *Poltergeist* begins as utterly normal, the family in *The Shining* is dysfunctional to begin with. The father is abusive and, under the evil influence of the hotel, becomes a crazed killer. *Poltergeist* lacks the disturbing power of *The Shining*, in which the terror comes from a father bent on murdering his wife and child.

The best horror presents us with a mirror in which we may glimpse our worst selves. Instead of a mirror, *Poltergeist* gives us a television set. *Poltergeist* hides its true subject, the terror of divorce, a subject Spielberg deals with more openly in *Close Encounters* and *E.T.*. And compared to a horror movie such as *The Shining*, *Poltergeist* looks like the story of an average American family assaulted by special effects.

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Creativity and Family Mythmaking: A Case Study of Literary Responses to Inherited Depression

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The historian or literary biographer who employs psychoanalytic theory runs a number of risks. By and large they are well known. The most obvious is the limitation that scholarly convention imposes by an insistence upon convincing documentary evidence. With no patient to consult or probe, the biographer can only observe past actions through such testimony, usually in written form, that has fortuitously survived. When beginning a study of the novelist Walker Percy and his forbears, I was aware of such intellectual difficulties. But other problems, some amusing and others exasperating, have materialized with alarming regularity. The question that these complications pose is this: how to bring before the public past problems of depression in a family with literary talent when made all too aware that some family members, not at all artistic, show symptoms of the affective disorder themselves?

A few words of explanation are required because I would guess that most of the audience has no idea who Walker Percy was or why anyone should write a word about his even more obscure progenitors, as I intend to do. These ancestors were all enormously wealthy Southern plantation owners and attorneys, but their fame was only regional, not national. Even in the South today, much less America, Walker Percy is not a household word, although his admirers are a hardy breed and their numbers seem to grow. Percy, who died of cancer at age 73 just about a year ago, was one of the leading post-Faulkner Southern novelists. He is also notable because, along with Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate, he was a convert to Catholicism and has therefore earned a special niche in the overwhelmingly Protestant regional culture and also in the heart of a grateful Catholic church, not renowned in America for a vigorous literary heritage.

The number of his published novels is modest — only six — but each was greeted with acclaim and all are still in print. (Two others are still unpublished.) Time allows me only to mention them in order — in hope that you may have perhaps heard of one of them: *The Moviegoer*, for which he won a National Book Award, 1962; *The Last Gentleman*, *Love in the Ruins*, *Lancelot*, *The Second Coming*, *The Thanatos Syndrome*, the last, published in 1987, being his most popular but also least interesting work. He also published many essays, published in two significant collections¹.

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Like so many Southern intellectuals, including Faulkner, William Styron, Randall Jarrell, and much earlier, Edgar Allan Poe, Walker Percy suffered from depression. While serving as a resident pathologist at Bellevue Hospital in New York City at the end of the 1930s, he sought help from Janet Rioch, a protegee of Harry Stack Sullivan. He later reminisced, probably disingenuously, that his two years or so under intensive analysis did not reveal what ailed him. Most likely, those sessions saved his reason and certainly deepened his experience as both an individual and an artist.

Percy's novels and essays are largely concerned with the cultural malaise of modern times, particularly in a brazenly prosperous New South. His heroes generally show marked symptoms of unipolar depression, sometimes combined with mild forms of epilepsy. The heroes' objective in the course of the novels is to find both spiritual and heterosexual gratification and the results are generally problematic — a tentative yes to life, but only after consideration of the benefits of suicide. The fiction is freshly comic, sometimes gothic, and religiously profound and, as critics have by now made a cliché, it has a European, existentialist perspective not found in other Southern writers.

If his fiction emphasizes the issue of despair, the reasons are not hard to locate. Both Walker Percy's father and his grandfather committed suicide in the same part of the house, where sporting equipment was stored, and used the same kind of weapon. Twelve years separated these events. In July 1929, Walker Percy's father, a Birmingham, Alabama, attorney, shot himself when Walker was thirteen and the two other sons, LeRoy and Phinizy, were considerably younger. As if that loss and that pattern of loss were not enough, in 1932 the boys' mother had an automobile accident in which she drowned. Phinizy, the youngest child of nine, only barely escaped after vainly trying to save his mother. A further complication was the nature of the orphans' upbringing thereafter. The Percy boys were raised in Greenville, Mississippi, by their father's first cousin, William Alexander Percy. He was a bitingly witty and engaging gentleman-bachelor-poet who somehow combined a love of Southern chivalry — which he identified with Aurelian Stoicism, and a subtle and largely sexual denial of the all-male value system of the antebellum and post-Civil War South. He was both intellectual and gay, a disappointment to his sports-loving father, LeRoy Percy of Mississippi, sometime U.S. Senator for Mississippi and a leading powerbroker in the Delta. We need not enter into the details, but suffice it to say Will Percy, author of a classic 1941 memoir called *Lanterns on the Levee*, was a friend of Norman Douglas and a frequent visitor to Capri and Taormina which, ever since the 1880s, had been special vacation spots for individuals who celebrated that sort of sexual interest. The boys literally worshipped him and continue to do so to this very day, unwilling ever to admit the nature of their guardian's love life².

Among the purposes of my study, now nearing completion, is one particularly appropriate for presentation here. It is the investigation of how depression has played a role in the literary creativity and the imagination of Will Percy and Walker, his legal ward. The work

¹ His major works are as follows: *The Moviegoer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961); *The Last Gentleman* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966); *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971); *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975); *Lancelot* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); *The Second Coming* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980); *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983); *The Thanatos Syndrome* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1987); and posthumously, Patrick Samway, ed., *Walker Percy: Sign-Posts in a Strange Land* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1991).

² See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, «Will, Walker and Honor Dying: The Percys and Literary Creativity», in Winfred B. Moore, Jr. and Joseph F. Tripp, eds., *Looking South: Chapters in the Story of an American Region* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1989), 229-58.

of Anthony Storr, Howard Kushner, and other specialists has been most helpful³. In addition, a major objective is to broaden the historical scope of this psychoanalytic inquiry to include a number of nineteenth century female Southern writers belonging to the lineage. They included Catherine Ann Warfield, a novelist with eleven works of fiction to her credit, her sister Eleanor Percy Lee, a poet⁴. These Southern women were Walker Percy's thrice great aunts. A third was Sarah Ann Ellis Dorsey, Walker Percy's cousin several generations back. Niece of the two writers mentioned, Sarah Dorsey wrote four novels and a very impressive biography of a Confederate governor of Louisiana, a most unpromising topic, but a very rich and rather critical exposition of Confederate mentalité⁵.

Another Percy descendant was poet Eleanor Lee's daughter, Kate Ferguson. She published a romance about horse-racing and high society in 1889. More fiction might have followed, but ex-Confederate General Samuel Wragg Ferguson, her husband, brought scandal upon himself. After the disappearance of tax funds in his care, he absconded to Ecuador. The calamity doused the flames of his wife's literary inspiration.⁶

With the exception of the last novelist, these writers articulated in some of their work their anxieties about the family proclivity for melancholy and sometimes suicide. Charles Percy, the founder of the family in America, served all these artists, both past and recent, as a ghostly and gothic hero or antihero representing alienation, intellectuality, and Faustian ambition. An elusive figure, Charles — in real life — arrived out of the mists of the Caribbean, leaving one wife in England, a second in Bermuda, before marrying the third, a sixteen year old plantation heiress of English and then Spanish West Florida, during the American Revolution. Robert Percy, the only son of the English wife, who had died in the slums of Soho in 1785, left his career in the Royal Navy long enough to locate his father, the bigamist. Charles Percy refused to recognize his son's legitimacy but openly acknowledged

³ See Anthony Storr's numerous studies: *The Dynamics of Creation* (New York: Atheneum, 1972); *Solitude: A Return to the Self* (New York: Free Press, 1988); *The School of Genius* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1988); *Churchill's Black Dog, Kafka's Mice, and Other Phenomena of the Human Mind* (New York: Grove Press, 1988); Howard I. Kushner, *Self-Destruction in the Promised Land: A Psychocultural Biology of American Suicide* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989); also, see Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good, eds., *Culture and Depression: Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁴ Mrs. Catharine Ware and Mrs. Eleanor Percy Ware, *The Two Sisters of the West, The Wife of Leon, and Other Poems* (1843; Cincinnati: E. Morgan & Co., 1845); and *The Indian Chamber, and Other Poems* (New York: private printing, 1846). Ellen Lee did not continue her literary career and died in 1849, but Mrs. Warfield published: *The Household of Bouverie, Or, the Elixir of Gold* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860); *The Romance of the Green Seal* (New York: Beadle, 1866); *The Romance of Beauseincourt: An Episode Extracted from the Retrospect of Miriam Monfort* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1867); *Miriam Monfort* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1873); *Lady Ernestine, Or the Absent Lord of Rocheforte* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Bros., 1876); *Ferne Fleming* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Bros., 1877); *The Cardinal's Daughter* (New York: T. B. Peterson and Bros., 1877).

⁵ Sarah A. Dorsey's major works were: *Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen, Brigadier-General Confederate States Army Ex-Governor of Louisiana* (New York: M. Doolady, 1866); [Filia], *Agnes Graham: A Novel* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1869); [Filia], *Athalie, or A Southern Villeggiatura: «A Winter's Tale»* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, Haffelfinger, 1872), [Filia], *Lucia Dare: A Novel* (New York: M. Doolady, 1867); [no pseud.], *Panola: A Tale of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1877); see also, Charlotte Lewis, «Sarah Anne Dorsey: A Critical Estimate», M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1940, and J. B. Smallwood, «Mrs. Sarah Anne Ellis Dorsey», in James B. Loyd, ed., *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 137-40.

⁶ Kate Lee Ferguson, *Cliquot: A Racing Story of Ideal Beauty* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1889); see also William Alexander Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son* (1941; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1973), 70-75.

him as his bastard.⁷ Within a few months of Lt. Robert Percy's unexpected reappearance, Charles Percy, as his thrice great-grandson Will Percy put it, «walked down to the creek with a sugar kettle, tied it around his neck, and hopped in.»⁸ Some years later this Robert Percy left the royal service and established a second branch of the family in Louisiana within thirty miles of the first, a line that also continues to the present but contains no literary figures comparable to Will and Walker Percy. The latter stem from the illegitimate, American line, as Walker Percy acknowledges in *The Thanatos Syndrome*.⁹

In 1819, Charles Percy's eldest daughter Sarah Percy, thirteen at the time her father drowned himself, lost her reason upon the birth of her second child by a second marriage. The diagnosis at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia was melancholia. Like Charles Percy, she figures in the work of Catherine Warfield, Eleanor Lee her daughters, and Sarah Dorsey, her granddaughter by her first marriage to a wealthy and ancient Judge John Ellis. All three of these «scribbling women», as Nathaniel Hawthorne would haughtily have called them, wrote in the gothic tradition, concentrating in their major work on the problems of inheritable insanity.¹⁰

Interestingly enough, Catherine Warfield's bestseller of 1860, *The Household of Bouverie* concerns a mad grandfather who is self-imprisoned in a plantation attic where he conducts electrical experiments with a galvanic battery and toys with alchemy, using a process that requires him to quaff down human blood mixed with melted gold sovereigns. Needless to say, in the gothic tradition of the times, they symbolize eternal sexual potency and material power. Parenthetically one is reminded of Walker Percy's hero Tom More in *Love in the Ruins* who operates what he calls a lapsometer, an electronic device, to penetrate human thought and shape conduct. Erastus Bouverie must hide in the upper reaches of his mansion because he had murdered his wife's former suitor in a paroxysm of outraged honor and jealousy. Accidentally he blows up the house and must flee with a Catholic priest to a cave, the significance of which we need not amplify.¹¹

One hundred and twenty-five years or so after *The Household of Bouverie* was published, Walker Percy's *Lancelot* appeared in 1977. It is his darkest, most troubled novel, and concerns a latterday Arthurian figure who lives in a New Orleans «Center for Aberrant Behavior». Lance, owner of an old plantation called Belle Isle, conducted various experiments with video cameras to detect the lovemaking of his wife and a movie producer. When I told Walker Percy the plot of his twice great aunt's novel — of which he had never heard — he declared with a smile, «I would never use a hokey plot like that.»¹² The point here is to show that in this case, both the gothic tradition with its very specific conventions and paraphernalia combined with a very strong awareness of family tradition and paternal mistrust and grief to produce so similar a result.

Other objectives for the work include a study of how the unhappy family legacy, which has probably cultural, genetic and psychological roots, found expression in screen memories, silence, and legend-making. The latter took two forms in particular: the translation of the family saga into fiction, a subject only briefly touched upon here, and also into genealogical searches. All branches of the family have insisted that somehow Charles Percy was directly related to the earls and dukes of Northumberland. On one occasion Walker Percy wrote

⁷ See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy*, a study in preparation.

⁸ Percy, *Lanterns on the Levee*, 40.

⁹ John Hereford Percy, *The Percy Family of Mississippi and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: priv. prnt, 1943); Percy, *Thanatos Syndrome*, 136.

¹⁰ See Mary Tardy [Ida Raymond pseud.], *The Living Female Writers of the South* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, & Haffelfinger, 1872), 17-28, 74-80.

¹¹ Catherine Ann Warfield, *The Household of Bouverie, Or, the Elixir of Gold* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860).

¹² Interview, at Covington, June 17, 1987.

me with tongue-in-cheek: «Don't give up on old Charles — Could he have been a pirate? (I still want to establish my claim to Northumberland.)»¹³ Unfortunately Charles Percy — the family founder who drowned himself in the swollen creek in 1794 — left no clues about his origins but called his vast plantation estate Northumberland House, the name for the noble Percys' princely domain that stretched from the Strand to the Thames. He also claimed to be an officer in the Royal Army. Actually, however, since Walker Percy died, I have discovered something more about the mysterious Charles. He was an Irishman, not a Northumbrian, who served as a private in a very undistinguished regiment in the lackluster and brief Portuguese campaign during the late stages of the Seven Year's War.¹⁴

Legend and repression are very much a part of the family tradition stretching back to the founder himself. It follows that the historian cannot help but represent something of a danger to long cherished notions of self-identity. It would be best, however, not to present on paper problems of this sort when matters of litigation may appear. Suffice it to say that threats of a lawsuit have already arisen, less because of public revelations but rather because of fears about future disclosures. The complaints arose when an article was published in a state historical society journal, one with low circulation.¹⁵

Curiously enough, however, within the family structure there are those who resent the oppressiveness of the old Southern order and react against family reticence and denial. Early in my researches, a descendant of the Robert Percy line wrote me from Gulfport, Mississippi, to explain that she had heard of my project, wished to help in discovering Charles Percy's origins — not because she sought connection with the border lords of Northumberland, but because she was sure that he had epilepsy as well as depression just as she herself had. I have never met her, but from her letters there is no doubt that her condition of mental health is somewhat problematic but not by any means disastrously so. Another woman from the opposite end of the country, upper New York State, recently wrote me out of the blue about her depression which she thinks has genetic and chemical causes. In a phone conversation, she was quite open and most explicit about the symptoms. Whatever her condition is, however, she is not one of the descendants of Charles Percy, but does have clear genealogical ties to a cadet branch of the House of Northumberland.

Despite these problems with the present generation and others better left unmentioned, it is hoped that this study will illuminate the ways in which depression has helped to shape family culture over two centuries. The Percys have somehow had the courage to sustain a degree of political power and literary creativity for one generation after another — a kind of Southern version of the notable Adams family of Boston, a lineage that also produced its literary geniuses and its share of melancholy and suicidal descendants. One means, and a very effective but emotionally costly one, has been denial. Walker Percy wrote in an essay that was published just a few weeks ago concerns his place of residence. He lived in Covington, Louisiana, not far from the site of old Charles Percy's first plantation in the 1770s. Nor was he unaware of his proximity to the eighteenth-century Percy domicile. After *Lancelot* appeared in 1977, Walker Percy felt the depression which always had accompanied the publication of another novel. He wrote his friend Shelby Foote, «I don't know whether I'm looking forward to doing a great thing like Kant or Spinoza and Verdi in the 1980s or whether I'll jump in the Bogue Falaya next week with a sugar kettle on my head (lately

¹³ See Percy to author, quotation, *ibid*, March 9, 1988.

¹⁴ Hardy Page, Lincoln's Inn, London, to Edwin Freshfield [for Jane Percy Duncan], No. 1, Fifth Avenue, New York, February 3, 1896, Duncan Longcope-Mrs. J. L. Johansen Papers, Cornhill Farm, Lee, Massachusetts.

¹⁵ See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, «LeRoy Percy and 'Sunnyside': Planter Mentality and Italian Peonage in the Mississippi Delta», *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 50 (Spring 1991), 60-84.

it's been close to the latter.)»¹⁶ The remark reveals the customary wit with which he and Will Percy always treated the subject of the family illness — a kind of curative relief in the pleasure of image-making. The reference to the first Percy and the manner of his death in a state of despondency also suggests the impact of the family past upon a hard-won but strong sense of himself.

At the same time, Covington is quite distant from Birmingham where his father and grandfather killed himself. It is also several hundred miles south of Greenville where his mother drowned and Will Percy raised him. His choice, he wrote, reflected his needs as a writer. To live too close to where one's family has lived for two hundred years is very dangerous he insisted. «Such places are haunted. Ancestors perch on your shoulder while you write. Faulkner managed it but only by drinking a great deal and by playing little charades, like pretending to be a farmer.» Percy concludes by noting, «It is necessary to escape the place of one's origins and the ghosts of one's ancestors but not too far.»¹⁷ Indeed, without those shadows upon the family past, one wonders if he would ever have produced the masterpieces that he did.

¹⁶ Walker Percy to Shelby Foote, October 19, 1973, Foote-Percy correspondence, Walker Percy Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

¹⁷ Samway, ed., *Walker Percy: Signposts in a Strange Land*, 9.

Abimelech's Interpretation of a Dream and the Dream of Interpretation

ILONA N. RASHKOW (*)

Gen. 20.3-7 is usually read as a dream consisting of a conversation between Abimelech and God. God says to Abimelech:¹ «Look! You are a dead man because of the woman you took. She is a man's wife.» The narrator interjects that Abimelech had not come near her, and the dream continues with Abimelech's response: «Lord, will you slay even a righteous nation? Did he not say to me 'She is my sister'? She, even *she* said, 'He is my brother.' In the innocence of my heart and in the purity of my hands I did this.» God responds: «I know that in the innocence of your heart you did this. It was *I* who withheld you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now, restore the man's wife. Because he is a prophet he will pray for you, and you will live. But if you fail to restore her, know that you will surely die, you and all that is yours.» At this point Abimelech awakens. Abimelech's dream is preceded by the information that Abraham has once again resorted to the subterfuge of claiming that his wife, Sarah, is his sister²; the narrative continues with Abimelech consulting his courtiers and upbraiding Abraham for his deceit; the narrative ends with Abraham praying to the deity (as foretold in Abimelech's dream), and the narrator's report that God «healed» Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves so that they all bore children, sexual dysfunction having been the apparent restraint. In other words, his spirit was willing enough, only the flesh turned weak.

If read from a psychoanalytic perspective (the topographical model rather than structural theory)³, only verse 3 is the dream (God telling Abimelech «Look! You are a dead man because of the woman you took. She is a man's wife»). This verse describes the very primitive,

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¹ All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

² In three places in Genesis (Gen. 12.10-20, 20.1-8, and 26.1-16) different combinations of patriarchs, matriarchs, foreign kings, and social settings are recorded, but the scenario and key terms basically coincide. All three passages give essentially the same story: a patriarch and his wife visit a foreign land. Fearing that the woman's beauty might become a source of danger to himself as the husband, the man claims that his wife is his sister. In Gen. 12, the encounter involves Abraham and Sarah with the ruler of Egypt; in Gen. 20 the same couple confronts Abimelech of Gerar; and in Gen. 26 Abimelech is similarly embarrassed by Isaac and Rebekah.

³ See Jacob Arlow and Charles Brenner for a general description of the structural and topographic theories of dream analysis.

fantasy-based primary process of dream-work: condensation and displacement. As Hillel might have said, the rest is commentary. In the secondary, later waking process, Abimelech translates his dream images of verse 3 into the coherent narrative of verses 6-7, mingling generic opposites: fantasy/reality, abstinence/lust, punishment/reward and a reader, caught between Abimelech's night dream and Abraham's day fiction, unwittingly participates⁴. Although it is Abraham's discourse which sets the plot in motion, and his intercession with God to heal Abimelech and his household ends the episode, it is Abimelech tracing his dream back to past desires that enables me as a reader to weigh its significance to future events. Thus, I wish to propose a re-reading of Abimelech's dream as *only* verse 3, and Abimelech's *interpretation* of it as verses 4-7. At the same time, my reading is *about* reading; that is, how the text and I as reader collaborate in its creation.

Recently, post-structuralist criticism has been of great interest to biblical scholars and aspects of psychoanalytic literary theory have been appropriated by our discipline. The focus has shifted to the *reader* of the text, the *process* by which individuals confer meaning, and there is a close correspondence between reading and dream analysis. In both cases, «raw materials» are transformed in ways which must be analyzed, deciphered, and decomposed, with the focus on «symptomatic» places in the text (distortions, ambiguities, absences, and elisions) which expose a «sub-text» the work both conceals and reveals. The dynamic interaction between text and reader, dream and interpreter, is a free-ranging play of mind and organizing response, a two-part process consisting of disorganization and reorganization, taking the text apart and putting it back together again. Both rely on two simple strategies: paying attention to everything, and mistrusting seemingly obvious implications, that is, being open to the sudden switches and rearrangements that reveal alternate messages and expose the dynamic play of meaning behind what may seem to be a simple statement. Elements of narrative cohesion constantly shift, blurring the distinctions between provisional and «fulfilled» meanings, between shadows and truth. This gap is always present and always different in extent. As Frederic Jameson states: «...interpretations are generated out of an ontological lack in the text itself... a text can have no ultimate meaning... the process of interpretation... is properly an infinite one» (42). A reader as/and a dreamer continuously shifts from the metaphorical expression to the literal meaning, from indeterminate to determinate signifiers, conferring a meaning to textual elements by allowing them to be successively displaced, and revising personal dramas into a «scenario»⁵ of remembering, repeating, and working through. Both dream images, and what Norman Holland refers to as «carbon black on dried wood pulp», are rendered into texts and contexts by reordering seemingly *arbitrary* contiguity to *meaningful* contiguity, parataxis to syntaxis. Opposing two competing strategies, a reader as/and interpreter perceives symbols that enable the authentic image to be reconstructed from its distorting fragments and, simultaneously gives meaning to textual elements by allowing them to be successively displaced⁶. The text (whether dream or literary) and its interpretation form a mirror-image: the text transforms concepts (wishes or ideas) into symbolic images and interpretation travels the same road in reverse, from the semantic to the semiotic. Thus, the literary narrative and the dream are tales told *by* the unconscious to the unconscious.

⁴ As Shoshana Felman notes (in a very different context), whichever way the reader turns, he or she can but be turned by a text, he or she can but *perform* it by *repeating* it (101).

⁵ This is Samuel Weber's descriptive term which calls attention not only to the scenic, theatrical aspects of the dream, but to its narrative moment as well (171 n. 1).

⁶ Ken Frieden focuses on this tension between correspondence and association (or displacement). The dreamer searches for similar dream thoughts that lie behind the manifest contents in a condensed yet *corresponding* form. Drawing from the associative approach, the analyst uses connections provided by the dreamer which relate to the dream contents by *contiguity*, not by resemblance. The two interpretative models stand opposed, yet they also tend to blur into each other. The opposition has heuristic value

In reading, however, there is a shift at work: the shift between reader as dreamer and reader as analyst. In reading, these roles are not as clearly defined as in the psychoanalytic process because the status of that which is analyzed, the text, is not that of a patient: the text has authority, the very type of authority by which Jacques Lacan defines the role of the *analyst*. Just as a patient views an analyst as «a subject presumed to know», I as reader approach the text as the very place where meaning, and *knowledge* of meaning, reside. That is, the text also functions as *analyst* in eliciting responses from me. Thus, both the text and I simultaneously occupy the place of dreamer *and* analyst. Both senses of the term «transference», as the mainspring of psychoanalysis⁷ and as the rhetorical function of any signifier, intermingle in the process of reading. I as dreamer *and* analyst am caught up in and reenact the narrative I thought was being analyzed from the outside. The process of reading, like dream interpretation, divides the text against itself⁸, creating a need for a response and a response to the need. The narrative exists in the differential space between me as the dreamer and me as the analyst. As a result reading, *like* dream interpretation, does not produce or induce a closure in which the text *is* the thing it describes, but rather leads to a multiplicity of representations, a plurality of meanings. And plurality, here, does not mean *several* meanings, but rather that the text, like the dream, cannot be reduced to *a* meaning. Meaning is within the text and outside it, as am I as a reader.

Although the lure of all texts lies in the unveiling of the hidden, this is particularly evident in narratives *about* dreams, narratives which, by design, confuse readings and confound explanation. Reading about dream images is particularly problematic since they, and the words used to describe them, are semantic. However, in exploring the ground of images beyond what the text may *apparently* control, readers find pleasure in the reversal of their own «great expectations», of seeing a hitherto unperceived figure, one «hidden in full view» (Lacan 72). Although Abimelech is the narrative dreamer, I as reader experience Abimelech's dream *and* my reading of it. As *dreamer*, I must collaborate with Abimelech, supplying meaning where the text is indeterminate or discontinuous, where explanations are required to fill narrative elisions; as *analyst*, I open the text to a comprehension, providing a correlation between Abimelech's semantic translation of the primary process dream images of verse 3 and the secondary process «explanation» of these images of verses 4-7, Abimelech's fantasized past and an intrusion of a present «reality». However, since this is a narrative about a dream, a fiction-within-a-fiction, full of equivocations, *reading* about it signifies everything and nothing, veers further away from authenticity, employs distorted images which do not superficially correspond to what they represent, and undergoes transformations at every

here, as does the related distinction between metaphor and metonymy. (See, for example, Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle 72-76, 90-96; for a discussion of the unstable interactions between metaphor and metonymy, see Paul de Man 12-15.)

⁷ As Freud discusses in «The Dynamics of Transference», the structures of the unconscious are revealed by the analyst's encounters with the analysand's discourse: the analyst, in effect, repeats the experience described by the analysand. In general terms, transference refers to the processes by which feelings toward and perceptions of one person are displaced onto another. The analysand's perception, feelings, and treatment of the analyst are shaped largely by his or her own fantasies rather than by an accurate reflection of reality. The analysand tries to force or coax the analyst to play out a scene he or she has in mind, although the analysand is not aware of either the coaxing or the scene as such. Thus, transference is a repetition linking the analyst to the analysand.

⁸ Jacques Derrida has devised a set of terms («writing», «trace», «Difference», «Dissemination», to name only the most persistent) designed to show the way any text undermines itself. Words, whether spoken or written, are subject to «difference», differing from and deferring any transient fixation of meaning. Derrida refers to this process as the sign being «under erasure», the rubbing out being performed by past memories («traces») in the unconscious, «archives which are *always already* transcriptions» (211), not copies, but unconscious interpretations. The unconscious, through memories non-verbal as well as verbal, thus becomes active in the production of meaning, its traces being present in every word.

turn, in every new context, preventing a *definitive* reading; moreover, due to intertextuality, parallel texts combine with the interpretation of Abimelech's dream to focus attention on what I as reader know about earlier narrative events, «see» in the present text, and anticipate later in the story.

Of course, just as some psychoanalytic interpretations are more compelling or effective than others, certain commonalities in reading exist within Stanley Fish's «community of like-minded readers». However, «meanings» are not fixed; they are dependent upon the individual. As Norman Holland⁹ observes, individual reading responses disclose essential psychological characteristics; that is, readers «use» literature to rediscover themselves through «transactions» with texts. Each reader and each dreamer, in interpreting a text, makes it his or her own. Thus, while nineteenth-century philology sought meaning *behind* the text, in authorial intentions or ideas, current theorists recognize the innumerable possibilities for meaning *beyond* the text, in great part as a result of Freud's demonstration of unconscious meanings. Meaning does not lie inside the text or psyche; what is supposedly *inside* depends upon what is *beyond* it. Meanings of texts are multiple, mutable, personal, and historical.

It may sound as if I am invoking Freud to justify the kind of free associational play in biblical scholarship that has become familiar in literary studies¹⁰. Indeed, when Freud came to America in 1908, with his strange discoveries about the way the mind works, he warned, «I bring you the plague» and certainly current literary criticism has plagues of its own, whether caught from Freud or not. And, of course, there is a certain irony in the application of literary theory to biblical texts¹¹. On the one hand, literary critics view all texts as disunified, deconstructed, or in the Lacanian model, a hodgepodge of disconnected symbols. Yet, at the same time, they paradoxically welcome the acceptance of the biblical text as a «quasi-unified whole» in order to «rescue» the Bible from source critics¹². The problem seems to be polar thinking: texts make meaning and readers are superfluous or readers make meaning and texts are superfluous. But neither makes meaning alone. It is not texts *or* readers; it is texts *and* readers. We are interdependent.

Abimelech's dream is simple: he is charged with the abduction of a married woman and threatened with death, rhetorically and linguistically, a very forceful statement¹³. In «The Interpretation of Dreams», Freud explains that dreams fulfill repressed desires by allowing the unconscious to communicate to the conscious. The unconscious sends overwhelming urges upon the sleeper's mind¹⁴ condensing a set of images into a single picture (in Abimelech's dream, the threatening deity), and displacing the meaning of one object onto another.

⁹ Norman Holland has appropriated Freud's interpretive models of fantasy-and-defense to describe a similar transaction between an author's characteristic psychic style and a reader's, a distillation of what he calls an «identity theme».

¹⁰ For a brief history of the development of psychoanalytic critical style, see Leo Bersani; see also Sherry Turkle's study on psychoanalytic politics.

¹¹ Lynn Poland, among others, discusses some of the difficulties involved in applying literary criticism to biblical texts (and the tensions which have developed in the academy as a result), particularly with regard to a unified «intention» on the part of the biblical writers.

¹² See, for example, James Kugel's polemical reproach that literary methods ignore the Bible's religious character («On the Bible and Literary Criticism»); see also the reply by Adele Berlin («On the Bible as Literature») and Kugel's response («On the Bible as Literature»).

¹³ The grammatical construct, (see Gesenius' discussion on the use of the *futurum instans* [360]), emphatically marks this as an unexpected turn of events (Andersen 94; Berlin *Poetics* 62).

¹⁴ Part of the dreamer's relative freedom from the censor derives from sleep's paralyzing effect on the motor end of psychic apparatus. As Donald Moss discusses, idea is stripped of its dangerous capacity to influence action. «Detached from an active, erotic, body, the dreamer is also detached from that active body's linguistic proxy, syntax. Syntax mediates the formal demands of time, place and person. Such demands turn superfluous as the erotic body, paralyzed with sleep, turns superfluous. Sentence, unobliged to that body's spatial/temporal coordinates, unravels into rebus» (357). In other words, the unconscious «charitably conceals, softens, and distorts its meanings» (Eagleton 157).

Dream images are like «primitive hieroglyphics» (Freud «Claims» 132), signs to be individually translated¹⁵ into a creative story, or a dream, by the preconscious or conscious mind. These raw materials are context-bound¹⁶ and cannot be analyzed in isolation. Dream work, with its characteristic turns analogous to figures of speech, simultaneously presents and distorts, represents and misrepresents. The figurative activity of a dream does not stand for determinate literal contents, but is the symbolic fulfillment of unconscious wishes.

In Abimelech's dream, the manifest dream images consist of a verdict of imminent death. The narrator says that Abimelech, like Pharaoh, had «taken» Sarah. In fact, Abimelech is «a dead man» because of the woman he «took»: characteristic of primary process, Abimelech is unable to distinguish between reality and fiction, his repressed wish for Sarah and consummation. But the «taking» is of special note since in this case it is a literal transporting of Sarah's person, not the usual euphemism for sexual relations. Unlike the incident in Gen. 12 where there is no doubt that Pharaoh and Sarah had sex, in this narrative nothing happens conjugally. Abimelech's dream, then, represents the fulfillment of his *repressed* wish to sleep with Sarah. Since the repressed and unconscious dream thoughts are modified by condensation and displacement in the process, Abimelech's dream is not his unconscious wish, but rather the *distortion* of it. Just as the unconscious is revealed not by the manifest text of the dream as such, but by the lacunae latent within it (Lacan 65, 74), a reader's dream is a product of the larger narrative's past and present that fantasizes a future, a *regression* in the service of a *progression*. I as dreamer have a wish based on intertextuality: to humiliate Abraham for prostituting his wife once again.

Secondary process, characteristic of the waking state (here verses 4-7), attempts to return from the pictorial imagery of dreams to ordinary waking expressions, from Abimelech's fantasy to the introduction of a reality. It reorganizes the dream into a relatively consistent and comprehensible narrative, filling in its gaps, smoothing over its contradictions, and reordering its chaotic elements, thus coalescing the unconscious and conscious. But why the death threat?

Freud discusses repression as the «preliminary stage of condemnation» («Repression» 148). For Abimelech, this condemnation is in response to his desire for Sarah as evidenced by the repetition of the words *fear* and *sin*. Abimelech's aides «fear greatly» when they hear of the king's dream. Abraham later says that he declared Sarah to be his sister because he felt «there is surely no fear of God in this place.» (Of course, Abraham's excuse takes on a certain irony; his «fear» serves rhetorically to emphasize Abimelech's fear.) Equally significant is Abimelech's use of «sin» in the dream discourse («It was *I* who withheld you from sinning against me»), and in Abimelech's subsequent rebuke to Abraham («How have I sinned against you, that you have brought upon me and upon my kingdom a great sin?»). The *threat* of punishment in Abimelech's dream, the «intermediate stage between a defensive reflex and a condemning judgement» (Freud «Jokes» 175), is in response to

¹⁵ Freud elaborated upon the concept of «translation» in «The Claims of Psycho-Analysis»:

If we reflect that the means of representation in dreams are principally visual images and not words, we shall see that it is even more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with a language. In fact, the interpretation of dreams is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphs. In both cases there are certain elements which are not intended to be interpreted (or read, as the case may be) but are only designed to serve as «determinative», that is to establish the meaning of some other element (132).

On the Freudian «metaphor» of translation, see Dalia Judovitz (29-38).

¹⁶ As Freud observes, «the same piece of content may conceal a different meaning when it occurs in various people or in various contexts» and must be «inserted into the psychical chain that has to be traced backwards» («The Interpretations of Dreams» 137, 133): that is, the meaning of a dream, like that of a literary text, varies according to the language and culture. The dreamer must decipher symbols which have no fixed meaning just as the reader must interpret signifiers which are indeterminate.

Abimelech's repressed desire and ultimately frees him from its consequences. Abimelech protects himself by disavowal (he does *not* want to sleep with Sarah; Sarah and Abraham tried to trick him into sleeping with her...). To paraphrase Freud's general description of defence («The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence» 58), Abimelech rejects the incompatible idea (his desire for Sarah and fear of Abraham) together with its affect (Sarah as his, but also Abraham's wrath), and behaves as if the idea had never occurred to him at all.

Andreas Resch explains the dream as Abimelech's inner psychological struggle; unconscious guilt assails him for *taking* another man's wife. Read this way, the narrative is not a dream story, but a madness story, a study of neurosis. I disagree. However systematically simplified the notion of repression is in this paper, it is ultimately interpreted in terms of intentionality, putting into question the notion of causality¹⁷.

Dream interpretation is associated with power struggles. Although this is Abimelech's dream, Abraham is favored by God, and Abimelech is aware of the consequences. The should-be «adversary» in Genesis 20.1-18 is the victim, so Abimelech's problem and its rectification is a focus of the tale as important as the continuing saga of Abraham and Sarah. Reading only verse 3 as the dream provides a coherent, rational explanation of the assorted imagery and Abimelech's need for forgiveness, with the morally questionable Abraham as intercessor, long before any verification of his interpretation could be had. Twentieth-century psychology has been marked by tensions in connection with the dream text and its interpretation. Freud searched for the meaning of dreams in the past, as if to say that the dreamer's psyche interprets itself by exposing its underlying causes. Yet many post-Freudians look beyond thoughts that may have inspired a dream, shifting the focus from past causes to present conflicts and future possibilities¹⁸. So too with Abimelech. Abimelech recognizes the power of Abraham. Abimelech never receives explicit reassurances from God who *openly* intervenes in Abraham's life. Abimelech's need for forgiveness emphasizes his recognition of Abraham as the principal instrument of power. Abimelech sees Abraham as the «prophet» who must intercede¹⁹. Significantly, it is Abimelech who uses the word «prophet» in the Bible for the first time. Although Abimelech cannot comprehend the exact nature of the covenant between Abraham and God, the foreign king's understanding of Abraham's status provides the needed forgiveness in no uncertain terms: «Abraham *will* pray for you and you *will* live.» But it is only *because* Abraham will pray for Abimelech, that he will live²⁰. The irony, of course, is that Abimelech did nothing wrong; it was the duplicity of Abraham which caused the entire incident, and Abimelech knows this. As Abimelech interprets his dream, the predictive elements become dominant. Textually, Abimelech's dream is not simply a transformation of the narrative, a commentary on another level, but an integral part of it.

Dream texts, and Abimelech's is no exception, receive meaning retrospectively. It is the status of words and signs which are at issue. Looking back on the narrative from the closural vantage point, details, like dream images, assume new shape and meaning. Although the king gives Abraham a complete choice of where to settle in addition to sheep, oxen, male and female slaves, his words mark his sarcasm which I as reader share when he tells

¹⁷ See Paul de Man, especially chapter 5.

¹⁸ Although Freud discusses dreams as expressions of past wishes and not omens of future events, he does say that dreams and their interpretations may enter a cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy. In Freud's terminology, this is linked to the problem of suggestion. No dream in itself, but only an interpretation that has consequences for the dreamer's future, in prophetic.

¹⁹ For the prophet as intercessor, cf. Exod. 32.11; 34.8f; Num. 14.13-19 (Moses); 1 Sam. 7.8f; 12.19; 23 (Samuel); Amos 7.2; Jer. 7.16; 37.3; 42.2f. (A.B. Rodes 107-28).

²⁰ The Hebrew imperative frequently expresses a consequence expected with certainty, or an intention. As Gesenius describes, this is particularly the case when depending (with *waw copulative*) upon a jussive (cohortative) (325).

Sarah «I gave a thousand pieces of silver to your *brother*»²¹, and by telling Sarah «you have been... vindicated»²² Abimelech vindicates himself.

But interpretation does not stop with the story itself. *Reading* the text represents a continuation of Abimelech's hermeneutic process. Just as I as reader become Abimelech's double as he tries to make sense of his dream, I also experience Abimelech's skepticism about Abraham, while striving, as Harold Fisch states, to «make sense of the story» (50). Reading, by a dialectical play, moves the text on to a new meaning, undermining its old power and deriving new power by exposing its major contradictions. Abraham is neither inside nor out, neither wholly king nor wholly servant, a husband who is no husband, a brother who is no brother, a picaresque character who, having played this game before, succeeded in gaining great wealth from Pharaoh by pandering; yet he is favored by the deity.

On one level, there is no distinction between Abimelech as reader and myself. Trying to make sense of the dream implicates us both: we are caught in a net of signs. But the earlier scene of disguise and false recognition reverberates, and its meaning is both cognitive and performative. Abimelech's dream sets the stage and enacts a narrative; but I as a reader produce further texts. From the interpretation of Abimelech's dream and my dream of interpretation there is no escape. In a world permeated by deceit, only Abimelech sees beyond appearances, Abimelech as/and a reader.

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²¹ This clause, «I have a thousand pieces of silver to your brother as a 'covering of eyes'», is a unique phrase with very ambiguous meaning. Some traditional commentators claim that Abimelech is instructing Sarah not to appear in public with an uncovered face so that her beauty will not be a temptation to men; others claim that Abimelech is making a payment to «cover the eyes» of everyone else to protect himself from scorn. Rabbinic commentary (Gen. R. 52.12) is quite divided on this verse. Shadal reads this verse literally; Rashbam and Bekhor Shor figuratively. See also M. Weinfield for a contemporaneous legal interpretation.

²² While the causative stem of II-]-' is sometimes used in the sense of «decree» (Gen. 24.14, 44) or «to set right, give judgement» (Gen. 31.42), or other similar legal or disciplinary connotation (see, for example, Gen. 21.25), the Hiphal (passive or reflexive) while rare, is not unrelated in meaning (Isa. 1.18; Job 23.7). Here, as E. A. Speiser points out, Abimelech uses the term in this same legal sense (150).

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The Capgras-Delusion in Fiction: Dimensions of Interpretation

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«Identity is not found but made — ficted.»

Norman Holland

There is a constant interest on the appearance of the double motif in literature. In his book, Tymms (1949) examined the mythological origins of the double theme. He refers to myths and legends whose central motif is impersonation by doubles. European folklore is richly endowed with accounts of the hallucinatory double, *doppelgänger*. Todd (1981) suggests, that in modern times, the idea of doubles and impersonators is kept alive by the natural occurrence of identical twins, by romantic fiction such as Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and by the doubling of actors by acrobats and pianists.

In his psychoanalytical study on the double in literature, Rogers points out, that most attention has been given to the obvious or manifest doubles, such as Dostoyevsky's short novel *The Double*. The latent doubles are characters, who appear on the surface as autonomous personages but who can be seen as two or more components of a psychological whole. Rogers distinguishes between subject doubles, which relate to conflicts within an individual, and object doubles, which relate to an individual's incompatible attitudes toward other characters.

There is a specific, psychopathological form of the double motif, which is seldom mentioned in the literature of the double. The name of it is the Capgras syndrome, in acknowledgement of Capgras's outstanding contributions to our knowledge of this psychiatric entity. In 1923, Capgras and Reboul-Lachaux presented the case of a woman suffering from a chronic paranoid psychosis, who asserted that her husband her children and a host of other people had been replaced by impersonating doubles. The syndrome is rare, the associated psychosis is most frequently paranoid schizophrenia, and less often a paraphrenic, schizoaffective or organic psychosis. The Capgras-delusion may be short-lived, recurrent or of long duration.

Two variants of Capgras-delusion can be distinguished. In the first variant the patient believes, that other people have been replaced by doubles. In the second variant the patient insists that he himself has been impersonated by a double. One of our schizophrenic patients

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believed that her parents had been replaced by impersonators, who wanted to kill her. An other patient, believed that Alan Delon was an impersonator of him, who was supposed to be the real Delon.

There is one striking example of the Capgras-phenomenon occurring in fiction, as was pointed out by Coleman in 1933. He draws attention to an episode in Dostoyevsky's novel *The Possessed* in which Marya Timofyevna has been secretly married to Stavrogin, but at a social function in their home town he fails to acknowledge her as his wife. He draws her aside and says: «Only think that you are a girl, and that though I'm your devoted friend, I'm an outsider, not your husband, nor your father...» When Stavrogin visits her a few days later, Marya refuses to recognize him and laughs in his face. «You are like him, very like him, perhaps you're a relation, only mine is a bright falcon and a prince, and you're an owl and a shopman.» She accuses him of having murdered her prince, calls him an imposter and demands to know how big a bribe he has demanded for such a crime.

The episode can be interpreted on a psychopathological level, where the delusional world of Marya Timofyevna can be observed. We know from the novel, that she had problems with her memory, was disoriented in time and delusionally misidentified her surroundings. From a freudian-kleinian point, the key mechanism behind the Capgras-phenomenon is thought to be ambivalence, the person loving and hating the subject simultaneously, and being unable to cope with the conflict. The hate is usually directed towards the impersonator. The person, being unable to tolerate the ambivalence, splits the subject into good/old/and bad/new persons, allowing hate to be revealed without any associated guilt.

Observing the dialogues and the relations of the characters to Stavrogin, we are able to recognize a strong ambivalence towards him, mostly described in his position to Varvara Petrovna and other women.

It is interesting to note, that on the Capgras-delusion a psychoanalytic interpretation was first attempted by Capgras and Carnette in 1924. They believed that the so-called «illusion of the doubles» (the Capgras-phenomenon) was a final attempt to veil the incestuous desire. We put in mind, that in his analysis on the author of the *Double* and the *Possessed*, Freud (1961) focuses on «Dostoyevsky's hatred for his father and his death-wish» against him.

Reporting an existentialistic analysis of the phenomenon, Cargello and Della Beffa (1955) state that in the delusional experience of the patient three persons enter: the patient, the alter/the other, the person who was well known to the patient (and the alius) the double. They conclude that actually it is the alius who is lived intensely in the Erlebnis of the patient, and although misidentified, is the closest to the ego of the patient.

Studying the psychopathological and literary aspects of the Capgras-phenomenon, my life has become a part of the «story», referring here to postmodern conceptions. We understand the «becoming a story» in the narrative paradigm, from a psychological point, we can connect it to psychotic transference and identity-diffusion. In connection with postmodern psychoanalytic thought, we refer to Andre Green's (1971) and Norman Holland's writings.

During the days when I was dealing with a patient's documents, who was treated with the diagnosis of Capgras-syndrome, me and my wife were looking for a nurse, who would take care for our baby, while we were working. I talked to a likable 54 years old woman, who applied for the job, who later got the job, and whose name I for got at that time, when first conversation was over. At that night I tried to recall the face of the patient who was treated with the Capgras-syndrome, but again the face of the nurse appeared. I became anxious and I had phantasies that the nurse was an impersonator, I thought that the truth was that the patient with the Capgras-symptom applied for the job in the name of the nurse. In my phantasy I was not able to distinguish between the two faces. My own, short and transient Capgras-psychosis made relative and partial every psychopathological and psychoanalytical interpretation which was given from an outsider's position. In the

identity-diffusion with the universe of Capgras stories the reality or irreality of my double-story remained unfinished.

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